



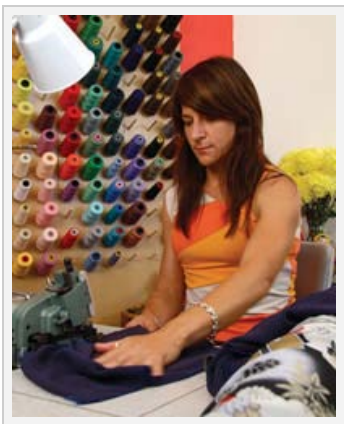
FASHION, FEATURES

## Size Is Relative: Matrushka Construction

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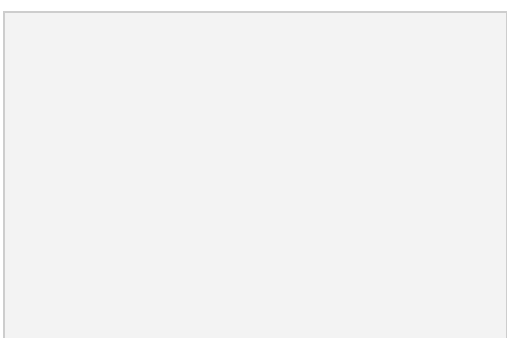
Artist and designer Laura S. Howe sews “*Size is Relative*” onto some of the labels identifying her clothing line. The practice informing this admirable flexibility can be experienced through her clothing store, Matrushka Construction. Every single one of the garments showcased in Howe’s airy and intimate Silverlake atelier is made by hand, on site, usually during store hours. New clothes appear weekly, if not daily. And although one might expect this constant production to create a bustling environment, the space is distinctly serene. Imbued with sensible irony, the clothes Howe creates embrace different shapes and many sizes. She even offers on-the-spot alteration to ensure a perfect fit. Her trademark stretchy fabrics invoke vintage looks while deconstructing classic cuts, often with a touch of wryness. As the collections on hand are always evolving, with no two items being exactly alike, customers feel compelled to return. This savvy strategy helps sustain Howe’s business and creativity.



Laura Howe, Matrushka Construction

Utilizing an industrial sewing machine, Howe and primary designer Lake Sharp “build” garments with inside out fabrics and multiple layers that playfully expose seams while integrating numerous loose threads that remain as purposeful traces of the designers’ handiwork. Howe’s political sensibility and environmental awareness (she’s on the board of WildPlaces, a nonprofit committed to ecological restoration, land use advocacy and education) is reinforced by her use of “remainder” fabrics from L.A.’s Garment District, upon which she silk-screens birds, trees, and other curiosities from the natural world, occasionally with slogans exhorting us to “Plant A Tree” or “Consume Less, Share More.” Howe’s motto for Matrushka Construction is “fashion for the people” and she envisions an intelligent, self-aware and involved proletariat.

Howe’s singular vision, enriched by her experience and training in sculpture, reveals a transparency of process found more often in nature than fashion. Although she references the urban energy of goth, punk and street styles, Howe grounds herself by running daily in Griffith Park and spending time whenever possible in Huntington Gardens. Her commitment to preserving the urban wilderness of Griffith Park has resulted in a laudable stewardship. Recently, Howe campaigned for and was elected to the board of the Greater Griffith Park Neighborhood Council (GGPNG). In her role as representative, she advocates tirelessly on our behalf to protect the park from politicians and developers seeking to monetize this sanctuary into a developed facility. Howe is working with the board as well as other preservationists to obtain Historic-Cultural Monument status for Griffith Park.



Although influenced by early Soviet Constructivist ideals of objects being more than commodities, and art as a practice directed towards social purposes, Matrushka clearly resonates with Silverlake denizens as evidenced by the popularity of well-attended events, on-going performance pieces and rotating art exhibits held in the space. Opening September 20th, Matrushka presents the work of artist and curator Steve Wong. Having found a way to infuse fashion with meaning, Howe also makes it fun. Music playing in the store often finds

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Matrushka Construction Store

expression in what she sews. Some local bands she loves listening to include Silversun Pickups, Radar Bros., and The Bird and the Bee. With Matrushka, Howe effectively erases the anonymous character of shopping for clothes and replaces it with the

authentic and sustainable community we're hard-pressed to find in densely populated urban environments, and perhaps especially Los Angeles.

Store Hours: Monday – Friday 12 p.m. - 7 p.m., Saturday – Sunday 11 a.m. - 6 p.m.

Location: 3822 West Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90026

Contact: Fax & Phone: 323-665-4513 • <http://www.matrushka.com>



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#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR: APARNA BAKHLE

Bollywood born and bred Aparna Bakhle-Ellis studied film at Emerson College in Boston before checking into Hotel California. A writer enthralled by the consonance and dissonance of being specifically in Los Angeles, she is also Fabrik's managing editor. Her interests include modern art, l'écriture féminine and conscious parenting.

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| › <a href="#">Commentary (3)</a>        |         |        |      |
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