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A Life, Styled

At the ripe age of 34, Holly Stalder has already left Portland a lasting legacy with Seaplane, the indie-fashion mecca she co-founded eight years ago. She recently sold the store, and is now reaching out to boutiques around the world with her own designs, like the signature vintage lace collar we found her making in her Southeast Portland studio.

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photograph by Shawn Records



Holly Stalder loves the natural light that streams in through her living room windows. The Legacy-paneled wall and fireplace are the only interior elements she and husband Ryan Baldoz haven't altered in their home.

The romantic, vintage-inspired designs of Seaplane co-founder Holly Stalder transcend her clothing line.

Something Old, Something New

FEW PEOPLE have sown more seeds to grow Portland's grassroots fashion scene than Holly Stalder. Over the last eight years, Seaplane, the local clothing boutique that Stalder co-founded with Kate Towers, has been a local DIY mecca, hosting a rotating cast of 80 independent designers and artists.

Of course, "DIY" is just a new name for the kind of thriftiness, inventiveness, and competence that many American women have long practiced. But even against that historical measure, Stalder's own handmade, romantic, unmistakably vintage-infused aesthetic is a classic. Her sincere appreciation for the well-loved object (as opposed to wink-'n'-smirk

kitsch) also carries over into the Roseway neighborhood ranch home she shares with husband Ryan Baldoz. Furnished with mid-century estate sale finds and all manner of creations from Portland artists, the home, like one of Stalder's dresses, places vintage elements in contemporary compositions.

"I feel like, coming from a retail background, everything is on display," Stalder says. "I think the reason I like to change things around a lot also definitely comes from merchandising the store."

The house was a disaster when the couple bought it in 2006, but it had good bones. "It definitely wasn't our dream house, but

we were exhausted from hunting," Stalder recalls. "It was big, and we got a good deal."

Stalder and Baldoz, a carpenter, got to work. "It was rough—'70s yellow linoleum peeling up in the kitchen," Stalder says. "We fixed windows, replaced all of the light fixtures, the appliances—everything."

With the recent sale of Seaplane to new owners, Stalder plans to focus on her apparel line and custom dressmaking business. She moved her studio out of the basement of her home and into a shared space in Southeast Portland to better accommodate client visits and production. "Now I can come home," Stalder says, "and truly leave work behind." [▶](#)

“The art in my home is very sentimental. **Most of the pieces are gifts**, things people have made for me.”



LEFT: *The piece over the sofa*, by Portland artist Chandra Bocci, features lines of machine stitching traversing a collaged field. It speaks to Stalder, who has one foot in the world of garment manufacturing and surface design, and one in the realm of visual art.

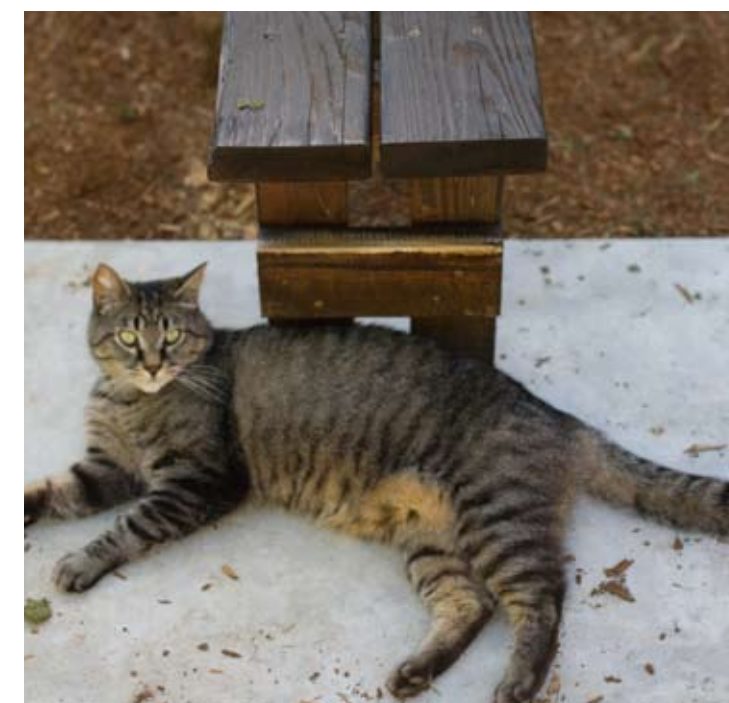
BOTTOM LEFT: *Stalder and Baldoz* met in 2004 at a karaoke bar. “We were the only two not singing,” Stalder recalls. Since moving into the house two years ago, they’ve done all of the renovation work themselves (almost exclusively using materials from the ReBuilding Center). “Almost all of what we did was damage control,” Stalder says, “fixing the ugly bit by bit. For the first year we lived in the house, we were constantly under construction. It’s finally coming together.”

BELOW: *Stalder made the home’s* curtains, with their relaxed appliqué, organic form, and a subtle color palette suggesting a weathered, lived-in provenance. They are a nod to the homemade curtains that graced most middle-class windows before the advent of inexpensive, foreign-made goods—an era when doing it yourself was a given, not a novelty.



LEFT: *Stalder in a She-Bible dress*, a Small Things necklace (both carried at Seaplane), and a vintage shrug. Of the home’s three bedrooms, this is the one she calls her “boudoir/dressing area.” It’s essentially a giant walk-in closet with rolling racks. Now that Stalder has moved her studio out of the house, Baldoz will use the basement for “Man Town,” his workshop and recording studio.

BELOW: *The couple made these* concrete pads with materials left over from pouring their countertops; they’re for the bench Baldoz built with wood salvaged from a deck demolition. “Our garden is a work in progress,” Stalder says. “We’re learning as we go.” Henry, their cat, is a natural ham, drawn to a camera like moth to candle.



FAR LEFT: *Like the composition* of vintage lace, button, or pearl playing corsage on the shoulder of one of her dresses, Stalder’s home is rich with arrangements of the found and the made. Here, a Patricia No self-portrait (in which she is wearing a dress by Stalder) is grouped with two cameras. One is Stalder’s beloved Diana camera. “I use it all the time. I love its blurry pictures,” she says. The other is a piece of mail art she made to announce her first solo show in Portland.

LEFT: *A Trish Grantham painting* (featuring Stalder’s pug, Sophie) and a photo by Marissa Kaiser look down on the mantel, which is lined with pharmacy bottles containing miniature collections of things like antique buttons, rusty nails, and dead flies; the bottles were part of an installation Stalder did at a group show at Portland State University just after she moved here in 1998. In the show, the bottles hung from long strings, casting shadows of their contents on the wall.

"I'm inspired by found materials," Stalder says. "Vintage fabrics tell me what they want to be. Or I get highly theatrical ideas for photo shoots; then I make things that fit into my vision."

RIGHT: "An old sewing machine is like an old car: It's easy to fix; it just drives. There aren't a lot of bells and whistles so there's less that can go wrong with it," Stalder says. Though she also owns modern models, Stalder's vintage Singer is her workhorse. Above, inspiration boards display past designs and future possibilities: a sketch, a photo, a button, or bit of ribbon. "It's choice stuff I'm saving to use on something really special."

BELOW: The light-filled Southeast Portland studio Stalder shares with knit designer Laura Irwin is a treasure trove of textile bolts and pieces, skeins of luscious yarn, containers of antique lace, and eccentric buttons. Where do Stalder's raw materials come from? "I take a trip to New York or Los Angeles once a year," she says. "Buttons, lace, and other trim come from estate sales or is salvaged from vintage garments. Plus, friends and clients bring me things. That's the best."

