

WHAT'S IN STORE

Don't overlook the obvious. Next time you're in your local fabric store ask if they offer classes. You may be surprised to find out the services they provide. Many small independent fabric stores bring in guest instructors for demos and lectures. Some have a space where regular classes are held. The offering may be small, but the intimate setting may provide more personal one-on-one time with the teacher. Larger chains like Jo-Ann and Hancock, have a wide variety of sewing and crafting classes, dependent on the size of their stores. Some are free, while intensive three week/three hours per week advanced apparel sewing classes can run between \$60 and \$100. They even have beginner classes for children. You can go online (www.jo-annfabric.com and www.hancockfabrics.com) to see what they offer. Both sites have search engines where you can type in your zip code and find a store near you that offers classes; then you can download their monthly schedule.

Europe. Go to their Web site to download the current list. Local PACC chapters hold classes, workshops, seminars and retreats for members which are sometimes open to the public. www.paccprofessionals.org.

When I founded **The Sewing Workshop** back in the early 1980's I was advised against starting a business that offered only sewing related classes, which turned out to be bad advice. The Sewing Workshop continues to be a supportive and dynamic sewing/arts community in the same San Francisco location and offers a wide selection of classes ranging from beginning sewing to jewelry construction to corsetry to home decoration to dyeing techniques. Maximum class size is ten and prices range from \$90 for an all-day class on Fit or the Bias Skirt to \$950 for a five-day Classic French Jacket intensive with Susan Khalje. The Sewing Workshop takes advantage of the many renowned fiber artists in the area, so you can take a weekend on Shibori with Anna Lisa Hedstrom or sculpted wool with Jean Cacicedo. www.thesewingworkshop.com or (415) 221-7397

G Street Fabrics in the Washington DC area offers up a delectable selection of sewing classes. The beginning sewing courses range from in-depth, multi-session courses to "Express" classes for time-conscious novices; and

there are classes for children as young as five-years old. The star-studded cast of instructors on construction techniques are authors and professionals—like Threads author Connie Long teaching how to tailor a jacket or make a bra, or Vogue Patterns designer Joanna Lyon's one-session course on making Designer Bridal Veils and Headpieces. Download the entire mouth watering (16 page!) course schedule at www.gstreetfabrics.com.

Located in a storefront in Hayes Valley, one of San Francisco's hip shopping and restaurant districts, **Stitch** is part sewing studio-school, part retail store and boutique. Stitch provides a sewing lounge where you can use their sewing equipment (sewing machines, sergers, cutting tables, dress forms, tools, etc.) and get friendly advice for a reasonable \$10. per hour. It's also a great learning space for 20- and 30-somethings who have never used a sewing machine. Classes like Uber Sewing Basics, Handbags, and T-Shirt Reconstruction (average \$50 for 4 to 6 hr classes) are aimed at beginners and those with minimal skills; the approach is informal, non-traditional and DIY no-rules influenced. www.stitchlounge.com or (415) 431-3739

If you are creative but clueless about how to use a sewing machine, **Sew Fast Sew Easy** in the heart of the Garment District in New York City will teach you how to navigate a machine and make a bag in one easy class. After that you can advance to fashion sewing where you learn to fit, cut and sew a simple skirt (men make pants). Continue learning with more detailed garments—each class teaches a new skill while completing a garment. Save money with their Starter Combo Classes where you get five 2 1/2-hour sessions for \$285. Then move on to their Hip Home Series and learn how to make curtains and pillows. www.sewfastseweasy.com or (212) 268-4321

Make Workshop on Manhattan's Lower East Side is a school, studio, place for crafty types to get together and make stuff, and a store for sewing/crafting supplies and handmade products. You can sign up for beginner classes that include learning how to use a sewing machine, or try dressmaking, handbags, pillows or patternmaking. But this school is not just for sewing—they also have classes in knitting, crochet, jewelry making, shoemaking, soapmaking and silkscreening to name just a few. See their entire schedule at www.makeworkshop.com or call (212) 533-9995

Located in a spacious self-contained building, featuring a gallery and state-of-the-art dyeing studio, the **Textile Center** in Minneapolis is a national center for fiber arts offering classes and workshops in basic sewing, surface design

and many other fiber-related topics including fabric dyeing, weaving and quilting. Their Textile Mobile takes to the road, bringing textile arts experiences to schools including all necessary supplies plus a teaching artist. www.textilecentermn.org or (612) 436-0464

Apparel Arts in San Francisco is aimed at people with aspirations to enter the fashion industry, but welcomes inexperienced beginners as well, offering courses from basic construction to an in-depth study of the patternmaking system used in French couture. Other courses cover Tailoring, Draping and Grading. Founder/instructor Suzy Furrer conducts the couture Patternmaking and Design Course in two- and three-day intensive seminars (\$250-\$375) for out-of-towners. The weekly patternmaking class is \$202 a month which includes four three-hour classes. Class size is limited to nine students. www.apparel-arts.com or (415) 436-9738

The **University of Philadelphia** offers an intriguing series of classes on Industrial Fashion methods that is open to hobbyists or would be professionals. Courses such as Design Room Techniques and Grading are taught by Laurel Hoffmann, who wrote the program and its textbooks to present the education she wanted when she worked as a professional production patternmaker; offering high-end designing, drafting, and sewing skills useful to anyone who sews. Students include design room personnel, would-be entrepreneurs and home sewers. www.laurelhoffmann.com or (215) 884-7065

MTM Design Studio in Laurel, Maryland offers a wide variety of classes in the Fiber Arts from sewing fashion and home decor to silk painting and knitting. Students of all ages are welcome to join any class, from the intensive study program to one-session or garment specific classes of several weeks. An Open Studio Sew With A Pro program allows anyone to bring in a "problem" project and receive help and advice along with access to specialized equipment. Mentor and internship programs are available for class credit at both the high school and college levels. New this fall are Creative Parties where a hostess may choose from a menu of options and host her party in the Studio as everyone creates something to take home. www.mtmdesignstudio.com or (301) 604-4139

For history buffs, **The Vintage Pattern Lending Library** in Oakland, California offers beginner to couture level classes that focus on working from vintage patterns. Students have access to the library's collection of more than 3000 patterns ranging from 1840 to the 1960s. www.vpl.org or (510) 655-3091

(continued on page 10)