

# **Vermont Arts Council**

## **Transcript**

### **Vermont Made, Episode 4**

#### **“Wearable Eco Art with Tara Lynn Bridal”**

##### **Desmond Peeples (00:04):**

This is Vermont Made. The show where you come along with me, Desmond Peeples, to meet Vermont creatives for a taste of the magic they make. In this episode, I visited fashion designer, Tara Lynn Scheidet, at her home studio in Sutton, where she creates custom wedding gowns and more with an eco twist. Not only are Tara Lynn's garments made with sustainable materials, they're adorned with scenes from the natural world, brought to life in sumptuous detail. I spoke with Tara Lynn about the creation of a dress featuring a dazzling seascape, which we'll call Alicia's dress, made for a summer 2021 wedding. We talk about the research and technique behind all the detail in

her garments and we dive into her evolution from typical New York City fashion student to eco conscious couturier in the woods, with gowns featured on the Miss America stage and in People Magazine.

It was a real pleasure to visit Tara Lynn at her studio, as I'm sure her clients find. It's not far from Crystal Lake, which is a stunner, and though it's on the third floor of her home, it feels like you're stepping into a dreamy atelier, complete with sunny fitting area. Keeping it COVID safe, we recorded outside on the balcony. So in the background, you may hear some occasional wind chime and bird song. Oh and a heads up, there is just a pinch of adult language in this episode, found in the name of one of Tara Lynn's brands. If you prefer a bleeped version, find that in the show notes on our website [vermontartscouncil.org/podcast](http://vermontartscouncil.org/podcast).

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (01:33):**

When Alicia first came to me, she talked about having... She talked about the dresses on my site, like which styles she liked.

**Desmond Peeples (01:42):**

A wedding dress?

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (01:44):**

A wedding dress, yes. The wedding dresses on the site, like little details that she liked about this dress and that dress and the fabrics and the colors that she liked. And she really wanted a dress that was an ocean scene, like an underwater scene.

And originally she wanted... She talked about starfishes and octopus. And I was really excited because I had one other customer contact me once about doing an underwater scene on my Farfalla dress, which usually has butterflies embroidered

on it. And I was really excited about making a dress like that, but she was getting married in a month and I can't make a dress in a month, so I couldn't take the order.

So I was so excited to have somebody else come to the studio that wanted something like that. And there ended up being a hermit crab and some sea horses and starfish and an octopus and a couple of little fish. And she wanted a Cardinal, a Cardinal on the dress was symbolic of her late father. So I said, "Well, we're going to nestle this Cardinal near your heart." And then it's always about figuring out how to make all the little components that somebody's asking for work together, because now you have this ocean scene and where's this Cardinal going to go?

And she was from New Jersey, so I researched a lot of the wildlifes and plants in New Jersey and found a specific shrub in New Jersey that the

Cardinals would sit in. And so above the ocean, there was this little shrub and he's perched right in that branch.

**Desmond Peeples (03:39):**

Wow.

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (03:40):**

Yeah. I wanted to pull red in wherever I could because there's a Cardinal sitting on the dress. So anywhere I could pull in red, and there's so much red in the ocean. You don't realize until you start looking.

**Desmond Peeples (03:52):**

Like what?

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (03:54):**

Well, there's a lot of red and orange seahorses, first of all, and there's corals and... I was really

able to pull in a lot of vibrant colors into her dress, vibrant greens and purples and turquoise and things like that. And then after I bead the seahorse, I'd cut him out. I leave a little edge that can get turned under in silk organza and then I hand stitched them into the dress. So I can start by just pinning them around and I can be like, "Oh, maybe he'll live over here. Maybe these two are smitten with each other over here." And then I did the octopus like that, but I hand embroidered him on organza and I watched the movie, highly recommended, My Octopus Teacher. I watched it twice while I was working on the dress and I cried.

**Desmond Peeples (04:51):**

What's My Octopus Teacher?

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (04:52):**

It's an incredible movie about this guy who films an octopus every single day, the same female

octopus. He goes out into the ocean and films her, and he learned a lot about octopuses that some people didn't know. Like oceanographers just didn't know these little details yet. Like one particularly incredible thing that the octopus would do is if she was being attacked by sharks or chased, she would use her tentacles and suction cups and grab onto all sorts of things on the sea floor, all sorts of sea shells and rocks on the sea floor. And she would wrap herself up in a ball covered with seashells. And then when the shark came, he couldn't get her.

**Desmond Peeples (05:48):**

Wow.

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (05:48):**

Yeah and just things like that.

**Desmond Peeples (05:51):**

Yeah, I need to learn that lesson.

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (05:52):**

It's... you got to watch it.

**Desmond Peeples (05:54):**

Yeah, I will.

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (05:55):**

It's so good.

**Desmond Peeples (05:56):**

So you watched that movie as research for while you were embroidering this octopus.

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (06:02):**

Yes. Yeah.

**Desmond Peeples (06:03):**

I love that.

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (06:06):**

And there was a jellyfish on the dress also. And so between the internet and book... I have tons of books on nature and wildlife, so from my library, from the Internet, from movies, I just gather as much real inspiration as I can, because I like things to capture nature in a real way. Sometimes I'll make something that's a little more make believe, but I really like to capture... I don't know, it's just, it's nature is just forever inspiring and wild and incredible.

**Desmond Peeples (06:48):**

Do you have a botanist or a naturalist life outside of your tailoring?

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (07:00):**

I would say naturalist. I would... I think my sewing takes up the most of my time in my life. Maybe sewing and eating.

**Desmond Peeples (07:14):**

Well, good.

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (07:14):**

And cooking. But I have all sorts of little books. I love to go out and sketch nature and observe things that are going on, or I follow a lot of different threads and learn things about insects and wildlife, constantly studying wildlife. Reading *The Moths of Limberlost* right now and things like that, that just...

**Desmond Peeples (07:40):**

The Moths of Limberlost?

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (07:42):**

Yeah. Gene Stratton Porter studies moths in a cabin for a year, I think. I'm only a quarter of the way through the book and it was written in the late 1800s, and it's just really interesting how she is... It just takes so much patience and so much time, like the My Octopus Teacher.

**Desmond Peeples (08:10):**

Yeah, I was going to say.

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (08:10):**

This guy just spent every day, and he didn't dive with tanks. He would hold his breath and go under water and observe.

**Desmond Peeples (08:19):**

Oh wow.

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (08:19):**

And then sometimes something really significant would be happening and he'd have to come back up and get air and go back down. So that's intense. So I get inspired by those people.

**Desmond Peeples (08:34):**

Do you see yourself ever going on one of those isolation research journeys?

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (08:39):**

Yes.

**Desmond Peeples (08:39):**

Yeah? You're game to do that?

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (08:40):**

Yeah. And I've also dreamed of locking myself in my studio for a month with peanut butter, jelly and cider, hard cider. It's just sort of having no interruptions and no phone calls and living in

Vermont, that's a big part of why I moved here. I could be working on a dress for somebody with butterflies and I just go out in my yard and take pictures and observe wildlife, and my... I didn't show you this, but my studio is full of boxes of dead insects.

**Desmond Peeples (09:20):**

Oh, really? Okay. Well, we'll be right back folks.

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (09:25):**

We'll go check those out.

**Desmond Peeples (09:28):**

Tell me a little bit more about that.

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (09:31):**

Well, like I'm working on a jacket right now with mushrooms on it and I... It's an Earth Bitch jacket and last November I went out in the woods, and

there's not a lot of mushrooms out in November. There's a lot of fungus of different kinds and there's a lot of the hard mushrooms that grow on trees, but the little soft cap mushrooms are harder to find. And I was able to find... I would sit there and use a microscope and I would take photos and I would study and just wait and watch for insects to come along and things to happen, and I found a slug underneath a slimy mushroom, like one of those gelatinous brain looking fungus.

**Desmond Peeples (10:22):**

Oh yeah, great.

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (10:22):**

And he was hanging out in there and there were these little flies that were hanging out around the white capped mushrooms that I was looking at. And I bring a little basket with a sketchbook and my camera and a magnifying lens and just start

taking notes. And then I learn about the names of the different mushrooms, not that I always retain them, but I like to look things up and figure out what they are. And then I bring little samples back into my studio, so I might bring some lichen, I might bring a dead moth that I found or something. And then I print out pictures and I just surround myself with all of these things that I collected while I work. And then I play with the fabrics and I come up with ways to, you know... And again, it's like I'm just inventing the technique as I go for every piece that I work on.

**Desmond Peeples (11:22):**

Now, you were just talking about the jacket that we saw up in the studio, right?

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (11:28):**

Yeah.

**Desmond Peeples (11:28):**

The mushroom Earth Bitch jacket. So Earth Bitch is your other business. You have your bridal business and then also this...

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (11:37):**

Earth Bitch is my other brand.

**Desmond Peeples (11:37):**

Your other brand, okay.

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (11:38):**

So there's Tara Lynn and then there's the Earth Bitch brand, which is... was my nickname in college.

**Desmond Peeples (11:46):**

Yes. At the Fashion Institute...

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (11:49):**

Yes.

**Desmond Peeples (11:49):**

... of Technology. Oh yeah, cool.

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (11:51):**

And I just embraced it.

**Desmond Peeples (11:52):**

Yeah. As one must. Well, yeah, I mean, that jacket, the... I mean, all of the jackets you showed me are this really incredible, just like the dresses, bringing nature to life on a natural beautifully tailored garment. But this mushroom jacket in particular, I'm obsessed with. Like it...

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (12:16):**

Oh, you are?

**Desmond Peeples (12:17):**

I really am. I love it.

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (12:17):**

Cool.

**Desmond Peeples (12:18):**

Because you can really tell you took a microscope to this little scene, this little tiny world and brought it... It's popping out. It feels real.

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (12:28):**

Awesome.

**Desmond Peeples (12:29):**

There's a slug. I loved it. So yeah, I can't wait to see the finished product.

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (12:35):**

Yeah, I was excited because I wanted the mushrooms to pop out and I played around a bunch of times with, how do I get the gills to look?

**Desmond Peeples (12:44):**

Yes.

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (12:44):**

Like, do I want to embroider this? Do I want to applique it? And then I just started to make gills and I call them rejects. I have boxes full of rejects of things. There making them like, "No, that's not quite what I'm going for." And I ended up pleating the fabric and then as I was pleating it, it couldn't be even. They're not always evenly spaced. It had to be a little bit organic, and so I tacked down each individual pleat to get it exactly the size that I wanted. And I used... Have you ever done pattern making, slash and spread?

**Desmond Peeples (13:25):**

Slash and spread?

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (13:26):**

Oh, you'll have to come take a pattern making class.

**Desmond Peeples (13:28):**

I'd love to.

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (13:30):**

So when you're making a skirt, you make yourself a straight, basic skirt pattern. And then if you want some fullness, you slash the paper and spread it and that gives you an A line, or a full circle skirt, or a half a circle skirt. And so that's what I was doing with... I'd draw out the mushrooms, the size I wanted them to be and then I made a little pattern piece for the mushroom cap, and then I would slash and spread it. And then bringing that fullness

back in, into these delicate little pleats, is what gave me the gills on the underside of the mushroom.

**Desmond Peeples (14:09):**

Let's get back a little bit to Alicia's dress.

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (14:12):**

Sure.

**Desmond Peeples (14:12):**

So you said that you can't make a dress in a month and Alicia's wedding was in June?

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (14:24):**

Yes.

**Desmond Peeples (14:25):**

How long did her dress take?

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (14:27):**

Well, I think she ordered that dress in February and we had to jump right on it, but this was during COVID. So COVID, things slowed down a lot and things got postponed and canceled and moved out. So usually January, February, March, by March, I'm fully booked for the year. But that year, Alicia's dress was the order that I got, except I had a bunch of dresses carry over from the year before that all got postponed. So normally with a dress like Alicia's, I would want a year. I'd want a year to make her dress.

**Desmond Peeples (15:10):**

Wow.

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (15:10):**

But I had five months and I would just work very intensively and I brought the artwork with me everywhere. I have a little carry box. It was my late cousin's. She was 88 when she passed away,

and she gave me this beautiful little suitcase that she traveled around Europe with and it's super small, cute little, old fashioned.

**Desmond Peeples (15:36):**

It is really cute. I've seen it. Yeah.

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (15:37):**

Yeah. So I put everything in there and I'd bring it with me when I go places and I just am constantly working on... late at night, like I just make my own hours and I just enjoy what I do... I love what I do, so I just kept working on it. And then it got... It was difficult doing the fittings because we, none of us were vaccinated yet, so I had to wait till everyone was vaccinated to fit everyone in person. And so then I ended up having two months to finish three wedding dresses and the other two dresses didn't have any artwork on them, so I was able to do it. So really, for about four months, I

was just intensely working on her dress and nothing else, because I was waiting once the vaccines happen. I couldn't do anything with anyone else's dress until we were all vaccinated and everyone's out of state, so...

**Desmond Peeples (16:34):**

Yeah. You said Alicia is in New Jersey, and so you were kind of doing research into New Jersey flora and fauna.

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (16:44):**

Yeah.

**Desmond Peeples (16:44):**

I love that. Well, so yeah, where do your clientele usually come from? How do they find you?

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (16:51):**

They find me online, unless... Before the huge financial crisis, I used to travel a lot and do art shows with my jackets.

**Desmond Peeples (17:02):**

Yes.

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (17:03):**

And I had started making custom hemp clothing. Oh yeah, we hadn't mentioned that. All my garments are natural fabric.

**Desmond Peeples (17:11):**

Right, right. Yeah. You are a known entity in the eco fashion world. Yes.

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (17:18):**

Yes. Yeah, so that's how I started was... And that's how I got the name Earth Bitch. It's because I used to work with, in college, hemp and organic

cottons and color organic cottons. I did knitting in college, so I would work with these beautiful color organic yarn and there's so much more available today than there was, like that was like 1999, '98, 2000. And there's so much more available now. So I started doing art shows around 2005, 6, 7, 8, and I had a portfolio of custom garments, custom hemp clothing that I was making for people in New York City when I was living in New York. And so more and more people at the art shows, they'd be there. I'd be selling jackets, but they'd look through my portfolio and they would order wedding dresses, more hemp wedding dresses, hemp and silk wedding dresses. These are not hemp wedding dresses that look like burlap sacks, these are refined hemp fabrics, hemp and silk blends, hemp and organic cotton blends, hemp and tencel. So they're nice quality, beautiful quality fabrics.

More and more people would order dresses at the art shows, so I launched my website. I think it was 2011 when I launched taralynnbridal.com, and I had launched a collection of about 15 dresses. And some of them were dresses that I might have custom made for people in the past that I modified and made it a collection piece and some of them, I just designed for the collection, thinking of my customers. My customers are... some of them are entomologists, some of them are teachers, some of them are moms, some of them are artists.

**Desmond Peeples (19:22):**

Is entomologist bugs?

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (19:23):**

Yes.

**Desmond Peeples (19:23):**

Okay, nice.

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (19:24):**

I've had several clients, as you can imagine, that are entomologists, including my sister in law. And I love when they follow me on Facebook and they see something I'm making for somebody else and they're able to give me the name of the butterfly...

**Desmond Peeples (19:42):**

Nice.

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (19:42):**

... or the insect and I go, "Okay, I did it." I did a good job on that one because she knows what it is. So yeah, and just nature lovers and artists and they... And then I stopped doing the art shows because the financial crisis that the art shows were just so expensive. And then, of course, I wanted to start doing them again and then COVID happened, so I wasn't going to start traveling to

Massachusetts and New York and Chicago again. And that was a bummer because I was trying to gear myself back up for that, because the economy was going back in a good direction before COVID. And now they just find me online. I spent a lot of hours optimizing the searchability on my site, keywords, understanding what my clients were looking for. A lot of them are not looking for the traditional wedding dress, but they don't know what they're looking for, so they're searching the internet for something that's... they don't go to bridal stores.

In fact, the two girls that came Sunday for a consultation, like neither one of them even walked into a bridal store. They have no interest in going. So it's kind of an interesting niche. So they get really excited when they find my site. And a couple of people recently found me from venues, the websites of the venues they were looking at

getting married, because other customers of mine got married at those venues. So they saw a picture of my dress when they were on the venue's website and somebody credited the dress to me and then they searched me out, so...

And some... Alicia, Alicia, actually, I can't believe I almost didn't remember this. She bought an Earth Bitch jacket from me when she was 13 years old...

**Desmond Peeples (21:57):**

Oh wow.

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (21:58):**

... at an art show. I think it was in Stowe, Vermont, actually. Because at first I thought it must have been at a show in New Jersey, but they told me this. They were visiting Stowe, Vermont and they... or maybe it was in Southern Vermont,

and they got this Earth Bitch jacket, and ever since then she knew, "I'm going to get an Earth Bitch wedding dress."

**Desmond Peeples (22:18):**

Wow.

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (22:19):**

And so I was really excited when she called me. Yeah. And during COVID there was a customer, too, that... I swear sometimes you just feel like somebody's watching over you, but I had a customer, Beth, who had bought a T shirt from me at an art show on Long Island years ago, 10 years ago. And she reached out to me for a custom butterfly jacket, which is part of the Earth Bitch collection. And so that kept me busy during COVID, too, that piece. Yeah.

**Desmond Peeples (22:56):**

Let's talk a little bit about how you started on your eco fashion path, how you kind of made the shift into being really conscious about the materials you use and approaching fashion at a different pace, and maybe what you started out with. Because you went to school at the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York City, correct?

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (23:22):**

Mmhmm (affirmative).

**Desmond Peeples (23:23):**

How was that experience?

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (23:25):**

Well, it's funny. I loved FIT. Loved it. I really thought I wanted to go to school in California, but my parents were like, "No." Because I'm from New York, so FIT was a state school and...

**Desmond Peeples (23:41):**

Oh, really?

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (23:42):**

Yes.

**Desmond Peeples (23:43):**

Cool.

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (23:43):**

Yes. If you're going to go there, move...

**Desmond Peeples (23:45):**

That's right.

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (23:45):**

... to New York for a year and then go to school. And not only is it a state school, it is one of the best fashion schools, and it has only gotten better and better since I've been there. And now they actually have a lot of eco conscious classes. When

I was there, they didn't. I was the weird one making hemp clothing.

**Desmond Peeples (24:08):**

The Earth Bitch.

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (24:09):**

Yeah. And there was a boy, there was a boy in my class too that was working with hemp, and he had a very hippie aesthetic and it was just the two of us, and we were weird. But before that, growing up, I was obsessed with Harpers Bazaar Magazine. I wore crazy makeup. I don't think... I must have had 100 pairs of shoes. I was not eco conscious in any way, except I would recycle clothes. My mother saved all of her clothes from the '70s. I'm wearing her blouse today. And even my undershirt was hers. Yep. Right.

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (24:53):**

So I have like... Anything that I still fit into, I wear. But I haven't gotten rid of her bell bottoms and her outfits, and so I used to... Now I hate myself for cutting up some of her jumpsuits, and I used to make my own clothes in junior high and high school.

**Desmond Peeples (25:16):**

Used to?

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (25:18):**

Yeah, I can't remember the last time I made myself some... who has time for that now?

**Desmond Peeples (25:23):**

I guess that makes sense, yeah.

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (25:26):**

I want to. I was thinking the other day, I need to go to TJ Maxx and get some underwear and I'm

like, "No, just make them." When am I going to have time to make my own underwear?

**Desmond Peeples (25:35):**

My butterfly underwear.

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (25:37):**

Yeah. I have made... I've made underwear with pockets before.

**Desmond Peeples (25:41):**

Oh?

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (25:42):**

Yeah, those are cool because if you want to go out dancing in the city and you just put your credit card, you can either put it in your boot or you put it in the pocket in your underwear.

**Desmond Peeples (25:49):**

Perfect.

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (25:52):**

Yeah, I should start a little line of pocketed underpants.

**Desmond Peeples (25:56):**

Yeah.

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (25:57):**

They'll be in the Earth Bitch brand, of course.

**Desmond Peeples (26:00):**

Okay. How much for custom made pocket undies?

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (26:03):**

No, they won't be custom. They'll be... We'll cut them out in little stacks, so we can make them affordable.

**Desmond Peeples (26:10):**

Well, I'll definitely... I didn't know I needed pocket undies, but I do.

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (26:17):**

So yeah, I mean, I used to wear crazy makeup and my underwear would always match my outfit.

**Desmond Peeples (26:24):**

Yes.

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (26:25):**

I never wore the same outfit twice in a year. I'm much more practical nowadays. I think I only have 60 pairs of shoes and I don't wear any makeup. I don't shave. And I just like... in college I started researching, I think it started with sweat shops. I started researching sweat shops and wrote a story about that, and I started to see this other side of the fashion industry that, as a young person admiring all these high end fashion designers, and

I love Jean Paul Gaultier and admiring all these creative, famous people, I started to realize what was really behind the scenes and it was ugly. It was not...

Fashion can be so beautiful and weird, but when you learn about how it was dyed and what it's done to the water in India... the leather industry has destroyed the water in India. The cotton, just growing cotton, it's one of the biggest polluting crops on the planet.

**Desmond Peeples (27:51):**

Really?

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (27:51):**

Because of the pesticides you need, and then I started to research natural fabrics, which at that time, where it was hard... the internet was newer. God, I'm dating myself now. And the... I started

looking for a place to work in New York and I, like I said, I was recycling a lot of clothes. I started to make a little collection of clothes for a small boutique around the corner from school, out of recycled and repurposed fabrics, or things that I bought from yard sales and fabrics that I bought from yard sales. And then I found Hemp Instead. Up in Hell's Kitchen was a hemp store and I started working there, and there was another hemp store in Soho. I can't remember the name of it. I don't even think, neither store is still there that I know of.

And there was a sweater company, a store in New York, that made sweaters out of recycled... they would take old sweaters and take them apart and make new sweaters. That was all I could find, but working at Hemp Instead was awesome because people would come in and I started to learn so much about hemp, and I learned about color

organic cotton. And I started to network with some people and I started making custom natural fiber clothing. Customers would come in, we had pants, there was Manastash, there was like Hempies, there was wash cloths, and we sold oils and seeds and books. And there were some backpacks, but there really wasn't like... there wasn't anything I wanted to wear. I still have my backpack. I love my Manastash backpack. My husband and I both have one.

But most of the clothes, the women's clothes, were not my style or anything I would wear. And so I started making hemp suits and hemp underwear and hemp pajamas for people, just custom things that people would come in, leotards, dance wear. And then somebody came in for a wedding dress and I made Aphrodite, which is a wedding dress on my site. It's a hemp and cotton wedding dress with a sea shell train, and so I just love... What I love

about the wedding dress, natural fabric wedding dress and making people custom wedding dresses is getting to know the customer and then designing the garment for them. And that, Regina, was my first, that was the name of the customer, and it was such a personal experience working with her on this dress and learning so much about her life and her struggles in life and things like that, and making this dress that just made her feel beautiful and empowered and special on her wedding day.

And we went, my husband and I, went to her wedding and I made her husband's pants and his button down shirt, and the embroidery that I did on his shirt told a story about who they were as a couple and how they came together.

### **Desmond Peeples (31:19):**

Wow.

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (31:19):**

With little symbols. Yeah.

**Desmond Peeples (31:21):**

Oh my gosh.

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (31:22):**

And that was it. I think I was hooked at that point. I was like, "This is something." Like...

**Desmond Peeples (31:27):**

Yeah, you, also, you make suits pretty regularly.

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (31:32):**

I do and I don't, because what happens with... not that I want to stereotype men in any way whatsoever, but they always call me at the last minute.

**Desmond Peeples (31:44):**

Really?

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (31:44):**

Yeah. There are brides that call me at the last minute too, but at least 75% of the brides are planning six months to a year in advance. And guys always call me like a month before.

**Desmond Peeples (31:55):**

Yeah. "I need a suit."

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (31:56):**

Yeah. And I'm like, "I want to make you a suit." I had to tell... There was a guy that called me in August and it was October 1, he needed it. And I was like, I can't do it. I want to do it so bad, but I can't do it.

**Desmond Peeples (32:11):**

How long did it take you to do this story embroidered on...?

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (32:15):**

Oh God, who knows? I was like, gosh, what year would that have been? I mean, I graduated in '01, so that had to have been like 1999. I don't know. I remember researching all the symbols and it was like Capricorn and Taurus unite, and I don't remember the rest, but I have it in a binder. And I keep binders, I keep anything I've made for anybody is still in a binder. They have their own little section and all the little details that went into their garment.

**Desmond Peeples (32:53):**

How many clients have you attended the weddings of after working with them?

## **Tara Lynn Scheidet (33:03):**

Oh... I've been invited to more weddings than I've attended, and I've probably attended about a dozen weddings. Sometimes it's just far. I don't like to fly. I even had a customer that wanted to pay to fly me to Colorado for her wedding, and I might have done it, but I just... I didn't even have the time. I just was too booked to go. And she friended the local bed and breakfast she was staying in and she flew her out. So she got to go and she took pictures for me and I was really bummed. I missed it. And I love that dress. I love that dress. So she's come to me a couple times because we took over... that was a really unique, I mean they were all unique dresses, but they sent me over 100 photos that her late father had taken. He passed away a year before her wedding and he was a wildlife photographer, a naturalist, hobbyist.

So I extracted... there was a little fox in a gravel parking lot and we extracted the fox out in Photoshop. Sometimes I hire people to help me get projects like this done, so there's this local girl I knew who's extremely talented with Illustrator and Photoshop, and we worked together. Hundreds of hours of extracting the wildlife from all of these photos and then saving them as separate files, and then as I made... she'd come for the fittings and once the dress pattern was approved, I scanned the bodice pieces into the computer. I scanned... We drew Megan, my assistant, drew the skirt in Illustrator for me. And then I started in Photoshop, layering all the images. There was a rainbow and there were birds flying on the bodice and there was little beetles crawling here and there, and a whole landscape of wildlife in the skirt.

And then in between COVID, she came back out and we cut her dress up and turned it into a short

dress, and we're going to take the skirt and turn it into a tutu, so she can still wear it. And it had this awesome headpiece with a junco bird and I stuffed him, so I printed extra animals and then I made them three dimensional and stuck them on her headpiece, and so she had Aspen leaves falling off the sides and a little junco sitting up there and some Columbine flowers with a butterfly perched in them and yeah.

**Desmond Peeples (35:44):**

Wow.

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (35:44):**

It was really cool.

**Desmond Peeples (35:47):**

Yeah. I mean, this is truly otherworldly, fantasy experience stuff.

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (35:52):**

Yeah.

**Desmond Peeples (35:52):**

Absolutely.

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (35:52):**

I love... moms come to some of the fittings and some of consultations and I just love, like this one, [Sueño's 00:36:01] telling me, I'm meeting her for the first time, she's like, "I really want a wedding dress with dragonflies and morning glorious and a trout." And her mom just looks at me like, "Please help."

**Desmond Peeples (36:16):**

Hey, trout are beautiful.

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (36:19):**

I know, I know, but at first I was like, of course.

**Desmond Peeples (36:22):**

Right.

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (36:23):**

But then...

**Desmond Peeples (36:24):**

I can see it already.

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (36:25):**

Well, and then I'm sitting there by myself creatively, like, "Wow, how am I going to make these trout?" And at first I did an applique and I sent it to Sueño and she was like, "No, that's not what I'm looking for." And I was like, okay. So I turned that into a pillow and I gave it to my mother in law. And then I realized I need to paint them. I need to hand paint these trout, and I hired

[Megan Popes 00:36:54] again, that same talented young person and she came in, and we sat across from each other, because I wanted two trout and they were on the underside of her skirt. So this was a Fiorella dress. It's a big full circle skirt, but it has two layers in the front and they part in the front, so when you spin and twirl, it opens up and the inside of the skirt is always a contrast color.

So we had this beautiful Sapphire blue hemp silk, and the fish were going to be swimming in there. And we made them leaping. I mean, I drew them out so they'd be leaping and they were catching dragon flies.

**Desmond Peeples (37:35):**

Nice.

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (37:38):**

And we hand painted them across from each other, so they were almost identical on silk organza, and then cut them out and I hand sewed them onto the inside and her dad cried when he saw her dress.

**Desmond Peeples (37:49):**

Oh, I bet.

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (37:50):**

Yeah, because they would fish together. She grew up fishing with him and she was from New Hampshire. So that's what it's all... It's like, yeah, make dad cry. That's what it's all about.

**Desmond Peeples (38:00):**

That's exactly what it's all about. Yes. Well, do you give lessons? Do you...

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (38:10):**

I do. I used to do sewing lessons. I loved doing sewing lessons for 8, 9 and 10 year olds. Before COVID, I was actively you doing sewing lessons. I had an adult class and I had a youth class. And I've even tried doing them in other spaces, because sometimes it gets so busy I get flustered if I have to take stuff off my cutting table for class. I would love to get... I have... You saw all the sewing machines in my studio. Well, in my old cabin over there out in the field, I have 22 other sewing machines.

**Desmond Peeples (38:53):**

Oh gosh. Just waiting for Tara Lynn's School of... yeah.

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (38:53):**

Yeah, like if I had a space. Yes. Yes. Yeah, and I love teaching patterning. When... Anybody that takes my class, the first thing I do is you learn how

to measure yourself and you make a basic skirt pattern. And so you're learning about the ruler, you're learning about the tools, you're learning about pattern making, you're learning about seam allowance, which for some people is super overwhelming. And then...

**Desmond Peeples (39:13):**

I completely forgot what that means. Yeah.

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (39:17):**

So you learn about your seam allowance and then you cut that pattern out and you're like, "I don't understand. How is this going to fit me?" Because you're taking something flat and you have to think here's your side seam and here's your center front, and this is going to wrap around your body and then you design a skirt. And then I teach you how to modify the and we do slash and spread and create seams and all these things, and you make

your own pattern. You cut it out of fabric. You learn about straight grain, cross grain, bias grain, and you learn about fabric and pressing and then you cut it out, and then you start to learn how to sew it together. And I used to teach a fashion design class at LI, Linen Institute, but at one point they had to cut 22 teachers and my program went out and that was fun. I was there for three years, and I had three students get into fashion schools. So that was pretty cool.

**Desmond Peeples (40:10):**

That's cool. Yeah.

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (40:11):**

Yeah, and we did a fashion show every year. I loved it.

**Desmond Peeples (40:16):**

Are there designers or artists that have really inspired you in what... yeah, who do you feel like is going... Who do you feel like you're coming after?

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (40:32):**

There are... Gosh, a whole bunch of names just ran through my head when you said that. I mean, I think when I was younger, I was inspired by Alabama Chanin, Project Alabama, Natalie Chanin, that's her name. And actually, she... they interviewed her on VPR a couple years ago. I read about her when I was in high school, and she was taking recycled cotton fabrics and they hand stitch everything. I remember trying on one of her dresses at Bergdorf Goodman when I was in college and just being so excited that I got to touch her work, after reading about her in high school when she was starting. It's all hand pick stitched appliques, reverse appliques. And she

inspired my Earth Bitch collection a lot when I first started making T shirts. And the girl who used to work for me that ended up living in Brooklyn actually went down and worked for Natalie Chanin for about a year. So we both were really excited about her work.

And it was cool seeing her company grow and then hearing her on VPR years later and what she did, and she sells like DIY kits. So she sells this high end collection to boutiques and on her website, but she also sells DIY kits, so you could buy a kit and you can make your own garments.

**Desmond Peeples (42:03):**

Oh, very cool.

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (42:03):**

Yeah. And it tells you how to make it and I think she has videos. And so that's one and I, as a high

school student, just loved Jean Paul Gaultier, but I think a lot of that was his collection at the time was very ethnic inspired in the mid 90s, inspired by Asian and Middle Eastern jewelry and prints and patterns and I really loved that. And of course, he designed the cone bra from Madonna and I'm obsessed with Madonna.

And I spent a lot of time in the library at FIT in the aisle about wearable art, and that was really... I don't even know the names of all of the artists. There's [inaudible 00:42:58]. I don't even know if I'm pronouncing that right. I have her book. She, in the '70s was making these incredible machine embroidered wildlife scenes with birds and frogs and dragonflies. And there's a picture of her in the book, she's at her sewing machine. I mean, the scale of her work was tremendous. She's at her sewing machine and the bird she's sewing is the size of her body. It's really detailed, machine

embroidered artist, and there's a lot of people nowadays, too, you can find on Pinterest and stuff. And I'm just always watching what people are doing when I'm trying to come up with a new technique for something and I'm not sure like, oh, how do I want to execute this? And I might go back to some of those books on wearable art that I bought, and maybe I'll crochet this frog, maybe I'll use this sheer fabric and hand embroider it, a dragonfly, or maybe...

And like I said, some of them are nameless.

Dierdre Scherer was an artist in Vermont that did machine embroidered portraits and she was a huge to me. So in the beginning I was just unbelievable, the shadow and the way she would capture a person's face with thread.

### **Desmond Peeples (44:26):**

Yeah, I'd love to see that.

**Tara Lynn Scheidet (44:27):**

Yeah. It's like painting with... I have all these books upstairs. I can show you. She's in one of them.

**Desmond Peeples (44:35):**

That's our show folks. To learn more about Tara Lynn and to see photos of Alicia's lovely wedding dress, check out the show notes at [vermontartscouncil.org/podcast](http://vermontartscouncil.org/podcast). Vermont Made is a production of the Vermont Arts Council, the primary provider of fun advocacy and info for the arts in Vermont, which is the unceded territory of the Abenaki people. Thank you for listening.