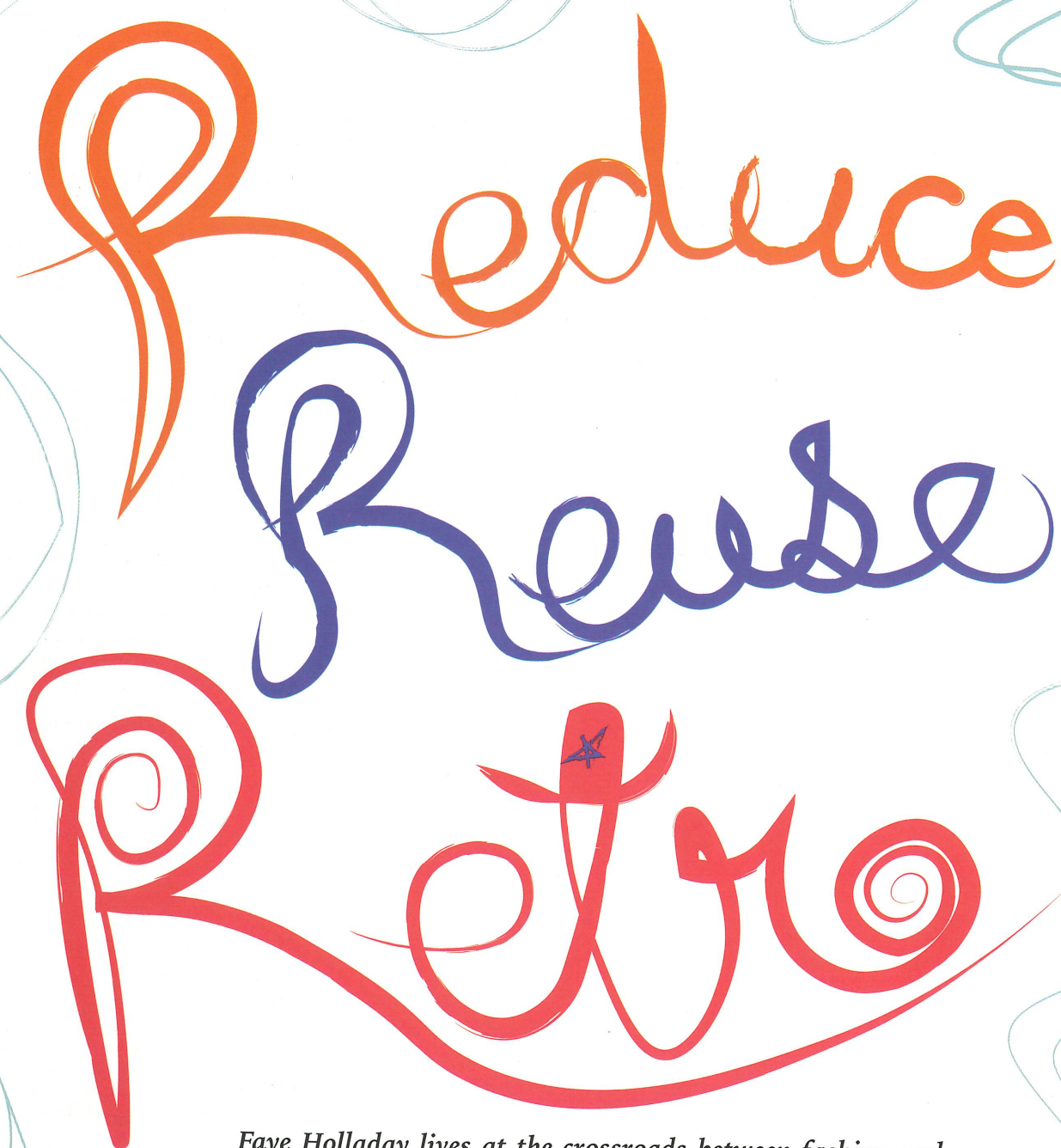




Reduce Reuse Recycle

Faye Holladay lives at the crossroads between fashion and expression, vintage and modern and life and business. Her brand, Costume Cowboy, "Is this idea that you can wake up in the morning and be whatever you want for the day," and gives old pieces a new life.

story and photography by Sam Vise

Contrary to popular belief, Faye Holladay is not a cowboy. Nor does she sell costumes. The 27-year-old self-starter is a collector of all things vintage and retro, and with the popularity of upcycling on the rise, she was able to turn her hobby into a career.

"There is no separation between my life and my business," said Holladay about her shop, Costume Cowboy.

At the young age of 16, Holladay dropped out of high school to begin working in the fashion industry. She started off working on costumes for films, but the extensive hours and constricting schedule was not in the cards for her. She ditched film and began cultivating her collection of vintage goods. What started out as selling thrift finds at small pop-up shops with friends evolved into a brand based on sustainability and community.

"Costume Cowboy is this idea that you can wake up in the morning and be whatever you want for the day," Holladay said. Fashion is a way to express yourself, and Costume Cowboy encourages people to dress for themselves and their own expressions.

The bulk of her collection is from the 60's and 70's, times when women were coming out of the shadows and beginning to outwardly express themselves. Styles were switching from modest and classy to fun and playful. Colors were vibrant, patterns were wild and women were expressing their fun side through fashion. Holladay embraces this feminine history and centers her collection around finds from those transformative decades. "For me, it's knowing that a woman is making herself feel powerful through something that I helped bring to life. To me, that means more than money. I want people to feel good and happy when they wear my stuff," she said.

Costume Cowboy focuses on the expression that comes with fashion—especially bold, psychedelic pieces that stand out. "I like colorful things. I like bright, bold things that make people feel something when they see it. My favorite things to find are things that are so bright that you can't not feel something when you see it."

Despite being born and raised in Atlanta, Holladay has always been tied to Florence through her family. She lived in Florence when she was 18, and again at 21, but the bigger city housed a larger community of thrifters and more business opportunities. She was living in Atlanta and doing small pop-ups at bars when the Covid-19 pandemic hit. The pandemic slowed down Costume Cowboy, and the collector moved back to Florence to take care of her grandmother.

"At first I wasn't going to stay here, but I love Florence. There's something very special about it and the people here. I see the potential—I know it's here. And I'm going to do everything I can to be a part of it," Holladay said. She hoped to find the same sense of a thrifting community that she experienced with Atlanta in Florence.

The community of thrift shoppers and upcyclers is growing rapidly across the country and in Florence itself, and Holladay is taking advantage of this. She often meets with other collectors to trade treasures or to help them with their respective shops. "It's [the] community that

matters most—I can't do this without it. There are so many people, and we all have our own niche," Holladay said. She is friends with many other Florence thrift fiends, and she often sets up pop-up shops alongside them. Many vintage resellers in the area work together by modeling for each other, taking photos or giving tips on the best thrift spots around. Holladay is grateful for this network and feels it is her duty to pay back this community that helped her plant and grow her brand. She tries to work with people that are new to the vintage world and offer them help and experience.

"My business is based around giving a second chance to lost things," Holladay said.

While working on costumes for films, Holladay saw how wasteful the fashion industry is. She started Costume Cowboy to promote more sustainable fashions and give old, thrown-out things a second chance at life. "[With] selling vintage, at least I know that I'm doing something good for the environment," Holladay said.

She gathers most of her pieces from old buildings, thrift stores that are going out of business or from old homes that are being cleaned out. She collects these misfit items and brings them to her studio for mending. Thrifted items have souls and stories, and Holladay highlights their stories by giving these pieces another chance to be seen. While most people would be turned off by digging through someone's trash, Holladay would consider it a treat. "No mask, no gloves—let's get disgusting. You find something and the quality is just so much better than it is now. I've always been into finding stuff, and I realized that I could start buying finds in other sizes or things that I wouldn't necessarily wear but someone else might," Holladay said.

She knew people that wanted to shop second hand but could never find things that fit them or were the right style. Taking advantage of her eye for valuable finds and patience to sort through things for hours, Holladay began collecting in 2017 so that she could help people find second hand clothing. As Costume Cowboy continues, Holladay hopes to open a size inclusive line of vintage clothing and further expand her thrifting territories.

The name Costume Cowboy itself has a special meaning to Holladay and is something that she's often asked about. "My shop originally started as Get Ziggy, which was my nickname, and then transformed to Average Vintage. But, I had found this purple velvet cowboy hat and listed it as a Costume Cowboy hat and I was like 'wait a minute.' It's more a play on the idea that you can wake up and be whoever you want," said Holladay on the meaning behind her brand's name.

"You can be, do, and dress however you want," Holladay said.

Her brand and love for fashion have only grown larger since she began collecting. "It's been cool to see my growth in the form of a passion and not just as a human. We all grow and go through shit. To see Costume Cowboy transform has been kind of amazing," Holladay said. "Watching this community be built and reminiscing on when it started and how big it is now—I don't wanna miss it. I don't want to blink, or I'll miss it."



Faye Holiday and her cat.

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