

# GENTRY *Design*

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# Organic Inspiration

Textile designer LAURA LIENHARD combines a fine art background with an eye for natural forms to create fabrics of exquisite beauty. *Gentry Design* reports.

**L**aura Lienhard's fabrics are in demand. Top designers, including Barbara Scavullo, Will Wick, Orlando Diaz-Azcuy, David Moulton, and Pamela Babey, to name just a few, have been drawn to her work. For a New England girl, born and bred in Hanover, New Hampshire, all of this West Coast attention comes as a delightful surprise.

"My father's a biochemist at Dartmouth and my mother's a classical pianist," she relates. "From an early age, I knew that art was for me. I was that kid always hanging out in art class after school." Her passion for art took Lienhard to the prestigious Rhode Island School of Design (RISD). "First, I thought I'd work with metal," she recalls. But freshman year at RISD introduced her to a broad spectrum of artistic possibilities, and Lienhard found herself intrigued by textiles. "I think I missed color. Working with metals is colorless."

She honed her craft learning to weave tapestries and struck out as a fine artist on her own

**Lienhard's Selvedge and Lattice fabrics are soft and sumptuous. She is pictured here with some of her pieces at the DeSousa Hughes Showroom.**

for seven years. RISD's MSA program in industrial textile design drew her back for more training. In 1999, Lienhard formed her own company in Vermont and started a journey creating beautiful fabrics. She would showcase them to artisan friends and designers. Her business was small but thriving.

Then a friend in Los Angeles suggested Lienhard meet with some folks on the West Coast. Her first stop was Thomas Lavin in Beverly Hills. On the spot, Lavin knew that Lienhard had something special and something marketable. "We're in Thomas' Showroom at the Pacific Design Center to this day," notes Lienhard.

California designers took to Lienhard's fabrics almost instantly. Her palettes and organic design schemes are perfect for everything from a Malibu beach house to a Nob Hill pied-a-terre. With so many clients in California, Lienhard happily gave up East Coast winters and moved to Mill Valley. "I have a studio with a view of the water," she smiles. "That view is constantly inspiring." Indeed, her latest collection is titled "Coastal," and features fabrics with names like Beachcomber, Tidal, and Nest.

A perfectionist with an eye for detail, Lienhard goes to great pains to ensure that her fabrics meet her exacting standards, and it shows. ■

PORTRAIT: JACK HUTCHESON