

A Letter from the Editor:

Dear Reader,

Welcome to the March issue of *Hanna's Happenings*. This month I'm sharing a deep dive into a project I recently completed: upcycling old denim into one-of-a-kind wearable art.

I really wasn't planning to do any sewing this month. In fact, I had an entirely different issue on deck according to my editorial calendar (which is not so much a calendar, but a scribble-y sticky note in my journal). But some projects don't wait for the right moment. This one started as a lot of my best work does: a pile of scraps, a half-formed idea, and a week to myself.

Although time alone is not necessary for my creative process, I find that I do my best creative work in bursts. Very messy, chaotic bursts. Crafting in solitude can lift the pressure of observation, and allows me to focus on the project without answering to my mess. In this case, it was 72 hours of complete chaos as I overtook my living room with my cutting mat, sewing machine, ironing board, and obligatory trash TV to sustain me. The loose threads, scraps, and pins covering my floor by the end were not exactly conducive to sharing space.

All of that mess was made from materials that had already been somewhere. As I dug into this project, I learned that my personal artistic value of creative reuse is less countercultural than I initially thought. For most of human history, textiles were too valuable to waste, and treating them as disposable is the aberration. Making something new from worn textiles is just a return to the norm. That idea runs through the whole issue in ways I didn't plan, and I'm already thinking about where it takes me next.

Thank you for following along. I hope you find this project as satisfying to read as it was to make.

Please feel free to forward, reply, or share your upcycling project.

With love,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Hanna Clements". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with some loops and flourishes.



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Denim Upcycling | Hanna's Happenings

LeMoyne Star Wide Leg Jeans

Upcycled denim is having a moment. Recently I've seen so many interesting and creative conversions, many of which involve inserting a panel to expand the leg of skinny jeans. I'd been considering trying my hand at the trend but was waiting for the right idea to make it my own.



The Vision

I had accumulated a group of screenshots of cool and inspiring denim upcycles, but it wasn't until I came across an eight-pointed star quilt motif that I finally had a vision for my project. I knew the quilt block would make for the perfect design element in a bold geometric leg panel. Later, I learned the motif is called the LeMoyne Star.

I keep a dedicated journal for fiber art projects, and found that sketching out the idea was what moved it from inspiration to something I could actually execute. Doodling my idea helped me decide on the right way to balance the bold star

graphic with wearability: I imagined working entirely in denim fabrics across a range of shades rather than introducing contrasting colors and textures.

The final piece of developing my vision required math. I used measurements from a pair of wide leg jeans I really like, a free [online tutorial](#), and every bit of my trigonometry knowledge to pattern an 8" block that would give the wide-leg fit I was going for.

Upcycled Materials

This was one of those rare projects where I actually already had everything I needed: basic notions, cutting tools, and the same sewing machine I've had since I first learned to sew.

I had three pairs of skinny jeans that were worn out, too small, or just not my style anymore. None of them were right to be the base garment, so I pulled an old pair of boot cut jeans from my wardrobe instead. I liked the fit at the waist but never wore them



because they were too long. The skinny jeans became my fabric source, with pockets and other pieces saved for future projects.

The Process

One of the things I enjoyed most about this project was the balance between rote work and active decision-making. Cutting and sewing the individual pieces is repetitive by nature, but as I worked through the six quilt blocks I was constantly making small choices alongside



the handwork: whether to keep a single background shade throughout or vary it, how to handle the taper at the top of the panel where it meets the existing jean leg, and nailing down the exact dimensions so everything would come together correctly. Caffeine and trash TV pulled me through the more tedious stretches, which is pretty standard practice for me.

The Finished Product

I was obsessive during the process and I'm obsessed with the finished product. I wore my new jeans three days in a row after finishing! The fit and length are exactly what I wanted, and they've already become my favorite way to take a basic outfit somewhere more interesting.

The finishing throughout is a little rough around the edges, and there's a noticeable improvement in neatness from the first quilt block to the last. The learning curve is visible in the garment itself, and I kind of like it that way.



The Bigger Picture

The LeMoyné Star has a long history of being made from what's already at hand. The motif likely emerged in the early 18th century, and its use in American quilts made from recycled textiles is documented as far back as 1840. The pattern has been cut, pieced, and recomposed from worn fabric for as long as it has existed.

Learning that history reminded me of the cyclic nature of material use in Coast Salish weaving, a textile tradition of the Coast Salish peoples whose territory I call home. From what I've learned of this tradition,



many weavings are not simply made and kept. They are woven, ceremonially taken apart, the wool distributed through community, and then rewoven into new objects. The material continues through hands, through time, through purpose.

My project is a much humbler version of the same impulse: a few pairs of jeans that had reached the end of one life, cut apart and put back together into something worth wearing again.

My Sewing Origin Story

Most of my early training in textiles happened at 4-H meetings or at my mom's kitchen table. She's a seamstress and quilter herself, so when I got stuck aligning the star points on this project, I called her. We started out talking about pattern matching, but ended up reminiscing.

We couldn't recall my very first sewing project, but around 2006 I began learning clothing construction. I went on to make several dresses and this blue halter top for the county fair. I entered the handmade-fashion style show every year and, at the risk of bragging, won most of them.

I got busy with life and stopped making my own clothes during high school and college. Luckily after twenty years I still have the muscle memory. Returning to sewing my wardrobe feels like picking up a thread I'd set down without meaning to.



Photo by Jacque Clements

Bonus Mini-Project: Denim Patchwork Pouch

After I completed my jeans I still had a pile of leftover denim scraps and a free Friday afternoon. I wanted to use them on a fast, low-stakes project. Taking inspiration from *Contemporary Patchwork: Techniques in Colour, Surface Design & Sewing*, which I recently started reading, I decided to make a small patchwork pouch to match my new starblock jeans.

I used skills I'd just practiced making the LeMoyne blocks, and refreshed one I haven't touched in decades: installing a zipper. It was a good reminder that a small project can teach just as much as a big one.

Once again I opted for secondhand materials: an old pillowcase for the lining and a pack of zippers I'd picked up at the thrift store. I only wish the pack had included some longer ones, because now I want to create all sorts and sizes of bags, totes, and pouches. A laptop sleeve is already at the top of my "to-make" list.

