

## Stories in Print

Language of the Birds' artsy aesthetics and cut-above quality are some of the reasons this Hawai'i-inspired brand continues to soar.

Ālewa Heights print on serving tray, \$69



**S**HE GOT IT FROM HER MOMMA. “I was around big, bold patterns growing up,” says Language of the Birds designer and owner Tsia Carson. “My mom worked at Huk-A-Poo in the ’70s. The American brand was known for its disco-loud novelty shirts that everyone from Hawai’i to New York was wearing.”

In her mid-20s, Carson would hunt New York thrift shops for fashions dotted with vibrant hibiscuses and swaying palm trees—donations she imagined were from honeymooners who visited Hawai’i. She spent 25 years running a design firm with her husband. But now, with her own fashion design company, the punchy prints she obsesses over are her own. Language of the Birds’ bold patterns are the crux of every collection. Island-inspired graphics paired with energetic hues result in more modern aloha, less tacky tropical, pieces in streamlined shapes. Case in point: the Ālewa Heights and Kalama collections that feature notable O’ahu landmarks in reimagined ways.

“There’s a narrative behind every one of my prints. I do research and scrutinize the print [to ensure it] represents Hawai’i’s unique culture and history in an innovative fashion, whether it’s on a jumpsuit or table tray,” she says.

As alluring as the prints may be, we would be remiss if we didn’t celebrate the label’s unwavering commitment to fit and function—practices Carson inherited from her mother, who “created a line of luxury hats favored by the editors of *Vogue* and *W* magazines,” Carson recalls. “Her devotion to quality, excellence and sophistication earned her a reputation for being a remarkable designer.”

The apple didn’t fall far from the tree. Fans praise Carson’s thoughtful construction of her roomy jumpers, which can be adjusted for a loose or slim fit with waist straps, flattering all body types. The cut of her lightweight A-line dress strikes a balance of playful and practical. Her linen jacket has finished seams, interior fac-

ings—details that prolong the life of a garment—and six pockets “to put your hand sanitizers and masks in,” says Carson, addressing the times we live in today, which, for her, turned out to have a silver lining.

While sheltering in place, Carson contacted the Rhode Island School of Design Museum to correct the creation date on one of her mother’s hats. “I chatted with a curator and was surprised she knew my work as well. She owned a dress from my very first season. It was as if this small act I did in my mother’s memory completed an electrical circuit and everything was illuminated.”

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PHOTOS: COURTESY OF LANGUAGE OF THE BIRDS

Far left: Westbeth print jumpsuit, \$380; above: Palmyra print linen jacket, \$450.