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fun prints

By [Paula Rath](#)
Advertiser Staff Writer

Vicky Durand's designs are one part Makaha surfer chick, one part tropical chic and one part Southern California sophisticate. That's because the designer is a combination of all three.

Vicky Heldreich Durand is a 1957 international surfing champion known for her prowess at Makaha, where she lives and designs today.

Durand was born in California. Her mother is Betty Heldreich Winstedt, a pioneering female big-wave surfer and artist who is now 92 and lives near Durand.

Durand fell in love with Hawai'i at the age of 12 when she visited her uncle, who was then superintendent of Kalaupapa. She talked her mother into visiting Moloka'i the following summer, and the two of them fell in love with the Islands. It was only a matter of months before the entire family packed up and moved to O'ahu.

The designer grew up in an artistic family. Her parents were jewelry designers who owned a shop called Roni of Hawaii in the Alexander Young Hotel building.

Living on Royal Hawaiian Avenue in Waikiki, Durand spent hours wandering through high-end shops such as Carol & Mary, Liberty House and Elsie Dass. "I wanted all those clothes, but I couldn't afford them, so I learned to sew from a neighbor and started to make my own."

She and her mother surfed together, and her passion for the sport grew from there. "My surfing life was very intense," Durand says, especially during a seven-year period that encompassed her Punahou school days.

She took a two-month surfing trip to Peru in 1960 and fell in love with the Inca culture and textiles.

This passion led to a master's degree in clothing, textiles and cultural anthropology at Oregon State University. She also studied fashion at the Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising in Los Angeles and at California State University-Long Beach.

After college she got married and had two daughters. "We lived on the beach in Santa Barbara, and when my daughters were 2 and 3 years old, they wouldn't keep their bathing suits on, so I started making them bikinis," she said.

This quickly segued into a line of little girl's bikinis and dresses that were sold at boutiques throughout Southern California.

Durand moved back to Hawai'i in 1969 and began making a line of clothing from 100-pound rice bags. She began selling at craft fairs, but then tried running an ad in the New Yorker magazine. That catapulted her rice-bag clothing business into a national phenomenon and she moved to Laguna Beach, Calif., manufacturing and distributing the line all across the nation.



Designer Vicky Durand hangs her hand-painted and silk-screened scarves outside her Makaha studio. She is wearing a skirt of her own design.

Vicky Durand photos

Vicky Durand Trunk Show

When: Noon-6 p.m. today, 10 a.m.-6 p.m. tomorrow

Also: noon to 6 p.m. July 1, 10 a.m.- 6 p.m. July 2

Where: Kailua BeachWalk, 602 Kailua Road

Information: 263-1083

After her daughters grew up, Durand again returned to Hawai'i and her favorite beach, Makaha.

After teaching and counseling at Wai'anae High School, she retired early and started hand-painting and silk-screening sarongs to supplement her retirement income. Durand also began experimenting with the two-color Tahitian prints she has loved since the '60s, as well as trying her art on silks and linens.

Durand takes a practical approach to fashion. Her clothes are easy to wear and uncomplicated to mix and match with a favorite T-shirt or jeans. For example, she makes her Tahitian print skirts in two lengths — one above the knee and one just below the knee — so they will work for a range of ages and shapes.

Durand hand-dyes her sarongs and scarves using real palm or monstera leaves or stencils of flora, marine life and petroglyphs. Her colors are vibrant tropicals: pineapple, mango, fuchsia, coral, turquoise and royal blue.





Modeling mother-and-daughter skirts are Maile and her mother Rennie Richardson, the designer's daughter and granddaughter.

The best printing time, she said, is the early morning when the wind is down and the ocean is calm. She hangs the linens, silks and cottons (she uses only natural fibers) on a line outside her beachside studio to dye in the rays of the Makaha sun.

Although she doesn't surf much these days, Durand takes a swim in the ocean whenever she needs to clear her mind.

Like many designers starting up a new line, Durand is struggling with creation/production issues. "I have too many ideas. The creative process can just take over. But then there's the practical side of me that says, 'No, Vicky, keep it simple,' " she exclaimed, throwing her hands into the air.

She can imagine and sketch a plethora of new designs, but translating them into practical, wearable and marketable garments is a huge undertaking for a solo designer who has difficulty finding seamstresses.

Durand also complicates her design life by paying attention to trends and trying to incorporate them into her silhouettes. She has just introduced tiered silk skirts and caftans, among the hot trends this summer.

KITV News reporter Denby Fawcett wears Durand's skirts on the air, as well as to hula class with a red Donna Karan tank top or on a picnic with her favorite Gap T-shirt. "Her Hawaiian wear is an appealing liminal mix between sexy and prudish. I love her surfer girl skirt in black and red. I wear it to work with a white Brooks Brothers long-sleeved shirt with a shell and lauhala Micronesian choker necklace, or sometimes with a chopped French jacket from Agnes B. with an 18-karat gold Vietnamese wedding necklace," Fawcett said. "When I wore the surfer girl skirt to the Merrie Monarch this year, flight attendants asked me where I got it, and when I arrived in Hilo, people stopped me on the streets and in the tsunami museum to ask about the skirt."

Durand's skirts are sold at Ohelo Road and Kailua BeachWalk; her sarongs and scarves are at the Honolulu Academy of Arts gift shop, Queen Emma Summer Palace gift shop, Kailua BeachWalk, Hana Hou in Hilo, the Fairmont Orchid Hotel in Kohala, and on Maui at Malibu Shirts, Hana Maui Traders and Fairmont Kea Lani Island Sensations Store. The entire line will be available at her trunk show or can be ordered at www.HawaiianWearableArt.com.

Her skirts, pants and silk sarongs are around \$60, silk scarves are \$32, while keiki skirts and pants are about \$22.

Reach Paula Rath at 525-5464 or prath@honoluluadvertiser.com.



Model Alea Schechter is wearing a hand-dyed sarong from Vicky Durand's Hawaiian Wearable Art.

Tami Dawson • Photo Resource Hawaii

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