

# weaving



# culture

## THE STORY BEHIND LOCAL TEXTILE COLLECTIVE, PATRONA

BY *Ella Heydenfeldt*  
PHOTOGRAPHY *Renee Faia*

Moorea Morehart's path into the textile world began at a young age, immersed in the vibrant tapestry of Argentinian culture. When she was six, her family spent months living amidst the gaucho way of life on an off-grid *estancia* (ranch) in Argentina. Here, she came to understand the ranching culture of cattle, asado, and a prideful society of gauchos with a beautiful elegance and way of dressing that remains alive today.

Moorea went on to be a television producer in California, splitting time between the United States and Argentina. As the pandemic spread throughout the globe, Moorea found herself stranded in Argentina due to the cancellation of outgoing flights. This bump in the road set her on a journey that would change the trajectory of her life.

Deciding to use this time to explore her passion for textiles and to find the elusive cochineal red dye found in Salta, Moorea and her father embarked on a road trip into Northern Argentina. Remarking on her passion for this woven artform, Moorea states, "You can carry something back that reminds you of that place. You can see what people clothe with and how that represents their culture and history."

In search of the cardinal color, Moorea found instead a dying art form and, therefore, culture. Weavers struggled through the lockdown, as artisan trails became barren. Moorea and her father purchased all they could to support the craft. Moorea felt a sense of purpose blooming, a need to help.



Moorea and her father's road trip eventually drew to a close, having taken them through many regions, finding breathtaking biodiversity as lush jungle turned into arid flats and frosty peaks became sunny vineyards. In climactic conclusion, Moorea stood at the top of a peak, six condors flying overhead, and realized life is short, and this was her calling: starting a textile company with the goal of helping these artists. At the top of this mountain, *PATRONA Textiles* was born.

Just a few years later, this certified B Corporation represents the highest level of social, economic, and environmental accountability. Artisans make the textiles Moorea ships to the United States, doing everything authentically and ensuring excellence, as they are fairly compensated for their one-of-a-kind creations. Each artisan has a story, unique patterns, and designs, and they continue to teach their children the distinctive craft. *PATRONA Textiles* empowers artisans to preserve and celebrate their cultural heritage while forging a path toward a more equitable future.

From sheep wool to llama wool, each fiber is sourced sustainably, with the utmost care given to the well-being of animals and the regenerative practices of production. These textiles are made from plant dyes and will eventually return to the earth as they decompose when done.

In the sun-drenched landscapes of California, the spirit of *PATRONA Textiles* finds resonance amidst the echoes of Spanish architecture and equestrian traditions. As a ninth-generation Californian with deep roots in the ranching heritage of the region, Moorea's vision transcends geographical boundaries, weaving together the timeless allure of Argentine textiles with the enduring spirit of the Golden State.

With ancestral ties to the missions of old California and a familial legacy of stewardship over vast expanses

of land, Moorea's journey from Argentina to California comes full circle as *PATRONA Textiles* finds a home in the hearts and houses of discerning patrons. Moorea remarks that when filling your home, "you want to feel grounded, connected to something that comes directly from the Earth, something real and authentic." In a world dominated by consumerism and mass production, *PATRONA Textiles* offers a sanctuary, where every rug, every textile, serves as a bridge to nature and a testament to the enduring beauty of tradition.

Moorea shares, "This ancient way of life that's real and connected to something, that's alive and well in Argentina, comes from that understanding of large expanses of land, cattle, and Spanish history. My love of this life comes from my family, and I found it again here in Argentina."

When asked about the company's name, Moorea shares the significance of the term 'Patrona.' In the world of Argentine estancias, a 'Patron' is the male landowner/boss, while the 'Patrona' is the female counterpart who oversees the well-being of both the animals and the people who roam the land. It's a role deeply rooted in tradition and responsibility.

Reflecting on her journey, Moorea embodies this spirit of the Patrona. Through *PATRONA Textiles*, she not only champions the rich cultural heritage of Argentina, but also serves as a guiding force, ensuring the livelihoods of artisans and the preservation of their craft. Just as the traditional Patrona cared for her land and community, Moorea's dedication to sustainability and fair trade practices reflects her commitment to being a steward of both tradition and progress.

In Moorea Morehart, *PATRONA Textiles* has found not only a leader but a compassionate advocate for artisans, a custodian of culture, and a true boss in every sense of the word.\*





“PATRONA Textiles *empowers* artisans to *preserve and celebrate* their cultural heritage while *forging* a path toward a more equitable future.”