

SIGRID OLSEN

• Creative Reinvention •



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Siesta Key. She has a full life conducting retreats to rejuvenate mind, body, and spirit and her printmaking. Her book *Sigrid Olsen My Life Redesigned: Embracing Change, Aging Gracefully and Finding Magic in the Simple Things* follows the journey to her present happy and hopeful life.



AT ONE TIME her name was all over the world on fashionable apparel and accessories that were sought by women in the 1980s, 1990s, and early 2000s and sold at upscale department stores and 54 boutiques that carried her name.

After some challenges in her professional and personal life, Sigrid Olsen has reinvented herself and is living a serene creative life on Siesta Key. She still worries about what is next around the corner, but has a full life conducting retreats to rejuvenate mind, body, and spirit and her printmaking. Her book *Sigrid Olsen My Life Redesigned: Embracing Change, Aging Gracefully and Finding Magic in the Simple Things* follows the journey to her present happy and hopeful life.

On a beautiful 70-degree evening overlooking Sarasota Bay, Sigrid talked about the apparel line that carried her name. Her clothes were all cotton resortwear such as t-shirts, blouses, shorts of beautiful colors that reflected all aspects of nature and attracted women (who are now baby boomers).

She says, "I was able to bridge the gap between fashionable, but not trendy. I designed for real women of all sizes, shapes, and ages. The business name was changed from Segrets Sun Prints to Sigrid Olsen in 1994. As a minority owner the decision to sell the company to Liz Claiborne in 1999 was not my decision. I struggled to keep my ego in check as I was flattered that a name like Liz was interested in the company. We were wine and dined and told nothing was going to change. In 2003 Liz opened 54 boutiques carrying my name and added a home furnishings line in 2005. (Also in 2005 I was diagnosed with breast cancer.) Since I was retained as creative director, we were designing clothes nine months prior to seeing them in stores. The recession came and word was that Liz wanted to sell and/or close some of its lines. For six months—while we were designing for the next season—the uncertainty of not knowing was awful. It was almost a relief when I received the call in 2008 that Liz was closing my brand as well as the 54 boutiques and laying off the employees in New York and Massachusetts with one week's notice. I was devastated. So I did what any burned-out executive would do, I went to the beach. In Tulum, Mexico, I reflected about the blank slate I was facing."

Sigrid wanted a business and knew Florida was her best opportunity. She attended a memorial service of a dear friend and business associate at Selby Gardens and found Sarasota was the best blend of connecting with nature and culture. They moved to Sarasota in 2010 when she began meditation, yoga, and painting again. She opened an art gallery in downtown Burns Court, but when her husband, who handled the business aspects of the business, died suddenly in 2013, she closed the gallery.

In Tulum she conceived the idea of conducting retreats for women. She knew a lot of women from her work and had made a lot of connections and relationships. And Liz gave her the mailing list of the women who she terms "bonded sisterhood." Sigrid now sponsors seven-night "Creative Wellbeing Retreats" for a small number of women in Tulum where the concept was born that blends yoga, meditation, and art.

Lodging is in small boutique hotels on the beach. Each day consists of a morning

stretch and/or yoga, beach walk, breakfast, guided meditation and journaling, an art workshop led by Sigrid, lunch, late afternoon yoga, and a healthy dinner prepared by a private chef. She is also offering one-day retreats in Sarasota during the first three months of 2019.

"Sigrid Olsen is an extremely gifted and selfless spirit. She is a beautiful (and rare) blend of creativity, vision and know-how, mixed with compassion, grace and humor. I am beyond grateful to have her in my life, as she is a constant inspiration," says Jamie Coffey, Founder/CEO, Be Hummingbird.

Sigrid is focused on creativity and self-awareness, of going inside and being thoughtful and intentional about how to live her life. She pauses at times to think about the things that make her happy and the things that are detrimental to progress. She talks about being in the "third third" of her life. And now she has a sense of purpose.

"I am in between in the fashion field. I have no big plans except prints for home and apparel. I own the Sigrid Olsen brand and trademark. I love the creative part and have reached a point in my life where I cherish day-to-day serenity, health, and wellbeing. I am a dyed-in-the-wool entrepreneur and the retreats allow me to be creative. My goal is to achieve balance between doing and allowing things to come to me. I have had challenges and I deal with what is handed to me," she explains.

Sigrid has a new project in conjunction with Eva Worden of Worden Farm, a certified organic family farm in Punta Gorda (and also a woman that WCW profiled), who asked her to design a kitchen towel. She recently brought the silk-screened organic cotton tea towel at the Sarasota Farmers' Market. Sigrid says the project combines her love for organics and printmaking with the opportunity to work with Eva, another positive woman. Sigrid also has a 2019 calendar and book for sale.

Sigrid was born and raised in Connecticut and graduated from Montserrat College of Art. When asked what she did after college, she says, "I got married and bought a loom. I started the tedious process of weaving, which doesn't work for an impatient person like me. I moved into printmaking with potatoes and founded my company in Rockport, Massachusetts, in 1984. As a printmaker I made prints of fish, flowers, and leaves and home-based workers sewed pillows."

Today she rises early, meditates, attends yoga, does retreat work on her computer, designs prints which she scans into the computer, and cooks dinner. Sigrid would like to expand her workshops for creative teams at corporations and conduct retreats for at-risk populations and/or teen girls. She credits her success to her left and right brain balance, her self-motivation, trusting her intuition, and quick decision-making.

Her former business partner, who was 20 years older than her, gave her advice that Sigrid has lived by: under promise and over deliver. As evening twilight arrived over Sarasota Bay, the conversation with a personable, bright, creative woman too soon came to a close. ☺

■ To learn more about Sigrid's Art & Yoga Retreats, visit: www.sigridolsen.com/tulum-retreats.

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