



LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

HEARING DATE: DECEMBER 1, 2021

Filing Date: November 4, 2021
Case No.: **2021-011279LBR**
Business Name: Dark Garden Unique Corsetry, Inc
Business Address: 321 Linden Street
Zoning: NCT (HAYES NCT) Zoning District
40-X Height and Bulk District
Block/Lot: 0817/005
Applicant: Autumn Adamme
321 Linden Street
Nominated By: Supervisor Dean Preston
Located In: District 5
Staff Contact: Elena Moore - 628-652-7322
Elena.Moore@sfgov.org

Recommendation: Adopt a Resolution to Recommend Approval

Business Description

Dark Garden Unique Corsetry designs and produces corsets, both ready-to-wear and custom, as well as custom-designed wedding attire. They produce medical corsets and face masks, and offer accessories, clothing, and hats made by local designers as well. Education is also a pivotal component of the business; owner Autumn Adamme has trained over 100 people in the art of corsetry. When Dark Garden Unique Corsetry was founded, corsetry was a dying craft; now, the business is at the epicenter of the industry.

The business was founded by Autumn Adamme and Karen Porter in 1989. They worked together from their residences in San Rafael and Corte Madera until 1991, when Autumn relocated to San Francisco and partnered with Monique Motil. In 1994, Dark Garden Unique Corsetry began operation from 448 Linden Street in Hayes Valley, but soon moved to 1472 Fulton Street. In 1996, Dark Garden Unique Corsetry moved back to Hayes Valley to its first ever retail location at 321 Linden Street, with production on-site in the back room, and in 1998, Autumn bought out Monique. In 2018, Autumn welcomed Revelation in Fit, bra fitting specialists, to join her in the storefront.

Dark Garden Unique Corsetry is an integral business in the Hayes Valley community. It was the first front-facing business on its block, which is now home to San Francisco's first Living Alley, which prioritizes livability and social use. Owner Autumn Adamme was also a founding member of the Hayes Valley Merchants Association and has recently been asked to join the Market & Octavia Community Advisory Committee. Throughout the years, Dark Garden Unique Corsetry has truly shaped the flavor of the Hayes Valley arts and culture community.

Beyond the Hayes Valley community, Dark Garden Unique Corsetry serves the LGBTQ+ community, as it provides a safe space for transgender clients to comfortably shop for undergarments, the leather community, the drag community, the burlesque community, the medical community, and the Burning Man community, among others. It also fosters an inclusive, body-positive culture that is accessible to everyone. Beyond its association with Autumn Adamme, the "Godmother of Modern Corsetry," the business is known for its association with famous clients including Tilda Swinton, Jennifer Lopez, Christina Aguilera, Dita Von Teese, Marilyn Manson, and Kelly Osbourne, and its work with famous fashion houses such as Moschino and Zac Posen.

The business's primary location at 321 Linden Street is a Category A (Historic Resource Present) structure on the south side of Linden Street between Gough and Octavia streets in the Western Addition neighborhood. It is within the NCT (Hayes NCT) Zoning District and a 40-X Height and Bulk District. 321 Linden Street was included in the Market Octavia survey area. Additionally, the Linden Street property is a contributor to the California Register-eligible Hayes Valley Commercial Historic District and the California Register-listed and National Register-eligible Hayes Valley Residential Historic District.

Staff Analysis

Review Criteria

1. When was business founded?

The business was founded in 1989.

2. Does the business qualify for listing on the Legacy Business Registry? If so, how?

Yes. Dark Garden Unique Corsetry qualifies for listing on the Legacy Business Registry because it meets all of the eligibility Criteria:

- a. Dark Garden Unique Corsetry has operated continuously in San Francisco for 32 years.
- b. Dark Garden Unique Corsetry has contributed to the history and identity of the Western Addition neighborhood and San Francisco.
- c. Dark Garden Unique Corsetry is committed to maintaining the physical features and traditions that define the organization.

3. Is the business associated with a culturally significant art, craft, cuisine, or tradition?

Yes. The business is associated with the art of corsetry and more generally, the fashion industry.

4. *Is the business or its building associated with significant events, persons, or architecture?*

Yes. The business is associated with owner Autumn Adamme, known internationally as the “Godmother of Modern Corsetry.” Adamme has both developed and taught techniques in the craft of corsetry. The business is also associated with surrealist painter Lee Harvey Rosewell who staged a triptych on the premises of Dark Garden Unique Corsetry. Additionally, Dark Garden has made corsets for several celebrities including Tilda Swinton, Jennifer Lopez, Christina Aguilera, Dita Von Teese, Marilyn Manson, and Kelly Osbourne, and has worked with famous fashion houses such as Moschino and Zac Posen.

The business is also associated with numerous events and exhibitions. Dark Garden Unique Corsetry’s work was included in *The Art of Burning Man* exhibit which traveled to the Smithsonian Museum, Chicago Museum of Art, and the Oakland Museum, among others.

The business is also associated with various groups in San Francisco, such as the LGBTQ+ community, leather community, drag community, burlesque community, Burning Man community, medical community, circus community, and various arts and culture communities.

The Linden Street property is a contributor to the California Register-eligible Hayes Valley Commercial Historic District and the California Register-listed and National Register-eligible Hayes Valley Residential Historic District. The primary building types in these districts are Gilded Age-era flats and dwellings, with commercial development and apartment buildings clustered along Market, Haight, and Hayes streets.

5. *Is the property associated with the business listed on a local, state, or federal historic resource registry?*

Yes. The Linden Street property is a contributor to the California Register-eligible Hayes Valley Commercial Historic District and the California Register-listed and National Register-eligible Hayes Valley Residential Historic District. It was surveyed as part of the Market Octavia Survey. 321 Linden Street is within an area that is currently being surveyed for cultural, social, and/or architectural significance related to the Neighborhood Commercial Corridors Historic Resources Survey. This process is ongoing as of the time of this Executive Summary.

6. *Is the business mentioned in a local historic context statement?*

No, not as of the date of this Executive Summary.

7. *Has the business been cited in published literature, newspapers, journals, etc.?*

Yes. Dark Garden Unique Corsetry has been featured in many forms of media, including TV, film, magazine articles, and even paintings. There have been a number of articles on Adamme and the store. Furthermore, the business has inspired multiple photographers, including Larry Utley, who published a book called *Fetish Fashion: Undressing the Corset*, for which Adamme wrote the forward.

Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business

Location(s) associated with the business:

Current Location:

- 321 Linden Street (1996 – Present)

Previous (No Longer Extant) Locations:

- 2229A Market Street (1991-1994)
- 448 Linden Street (1994-1995)
- 1472 Fulton Street (1995-1996)

Recommended by Applicant

- Commitment to the art of corsetry
- Production of ready-to-wear and custom corsets
- Sale of accessories, clothing, and hats made by many local designers
- Special brand of inclusivity
- Body-positive culture
- Co-existence of production space and boutique

Additional Recommended by Staff

- Historical feel of interior
- Family heirlooms, chandeliers, and antique furniture featured in interior
- Dark Garden façade signage

Basis for Recommendation

The Department recommends the Historic Preservation Commission adopt a resolution recommending the business listed above be adopted by the Small Business Commission to the Legacy Business Registry.

ATTACHMENTS

Draft Resolution

Legacy Business Registry Application:

- Application Review Sheet
- Section 1 – Business / Applicant Information
- Section 2 – Business Location(s)
- Section 3 – Disclosure Statement
- Section 4 – Written Historical Narrative
 - Criterion 1 – History and Description of Business
 - Criterion 2 – Contribution to Local History
 - Criterion 3 – Business Characteristics
- Contextual Photographs and Background Documentation



HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION DRAFT RESOLUTION NO.

HEARING DATE: NOVEMBER 1, 2021

Case No.: **2021-011279LBR**
Business Name: DARK GARDEN UNIQUE CORSETRY
Business Address: 321 Linden Street
Zoning: NCT (HAYES NCT) Zoning District
40-X Height and Bulk District
Block/Lot: 0817/005
Applicant: Autumn Adamme
321 Linden Street
Nominated By: Supervisor Dean Preston
Located In: District 5
Staff Contact: Elena Moore - 628-652-7322
Elena.Moore@sfgov.org

ADOPTING FINDINGS RECOMMENDING TO THE SMALL BUSINESS COMMISSION APPROVAL OF THE LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY NOMINATION FOR DARK GARDEN UNIQUE CORSETRY CURRENTLY LOCATED AT 321 LINDEN ST (PRIMARY ADDRESS), BLOCK/LOT 0817/005.

WHEREAS, in accordance with Administrative Code Section 2A.242, the Office of Small Business maintains a registry of Legacy Businesses in San Francisco (the "Registry") to recognize that longstanding, community-serving businesses can be valuable cultural assets of the City and to be a tool for providing educational and promotional assistance to Legacy Businesses to encourage their continued viability and success; and

WHEREAS, the subject business has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years; and

WHEREAS, the subject business has contributed to the City's history and identity; and

WHEREAS, the subject business is committed to maintaining the traditions that define the business; and

WHEREAS, at a duly noticed public hearing held on December 1, 2021, the Historic Preservation Commission reviewed documents, correspondence and heard oral testimony on the Legacy Business Registry nomination.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Historic Preservation Commission hereby recommends that Dark Garden Unique Corsetry qualifies for the Legacy Business Registry under Administrative Code Section 2A.242(b)(2) as it has operated for 30 or more years and has continued to contribute to the community.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Historic Preservation Commission hereby recommends safeguarding of the below listed physical features and traditions for Dark Garden Unique Corsetry.

Locations

Current Locations:

- 321 Linden Street (1996 – Present)

Previous (No Longer Extant) Locations:

- 229A Market Street (1991-1994)
- 448 Linden Street (1994-1995)
- 1472 Fulton Street (1995-1996)

Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business

- Commitment to the art of corsetry
- Production of ready-to-wear and custom corsets
- Sale of accessories, clothing, and hats made by many local designers
- Special brand of inclusivity
- Body-positive culture
- Co-existence of production space and boutique
- Historical feel of interior
- Family heirlooms, chandeliers, and antique furniture in interior
- Dark Garden façade signage

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Historic Preservation Commission's findings and recommendations are made solely for the purpose of evaluating the subject business's eligibility for the Legacy Business Registry, and the Historic Preservation Commission makes no finding that the subject property or any of its features constitutes a historical resource pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5(a).

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Historic Preservation Commission hereby directs its Commission Secretary to transmit this Resolution and other pertinent materials in the case file Dark Garden Unique Corsetry to the Office of Small Business on December 1, 2021.

Jonas P. Ionin
Commission Secretary

AYES:

NOES:

ABSENT:

RECUSE:

ADOPTED: December 1, 2021



Legacy Business Registry

Application Review Sheet

Application No.: LBR-2020-21-042
Business Name: Dark Garden Unique Corsetry, Inc.
Business Address: 321 Linden Street
District: District 5
Applicant: Autumn Adamme, Founder
Nomination Letter Date: April 7, 2021
Nominated By: Supervisor Dean Preston

CRITERION 1: Has the applicant has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years?

Yes No

2229A Market Street from 1991 to 1994 (3 years)
448 Linden Street from 1994 to 1995 (1 year)
1472 Fulton Street from 1995 to 1996 (1 year)
321 Linden Street from 1996 to Present (25 years)

CRITERION 2: Has the applicant contributed to the neighborhood's history and/or the identity of a particular neighborhood or community?

Yes No

CRITERION 3: Is the applicant committed to maintaining the physical features or traditions that define the business, including craft, culinary, or art forms?

Yes No

NOTES: N/A

DELIVERY DATE TO HPC: November 3, 2021

Richard Kurylo
Program Manager, Legacy Business Program

Legacy Business Program
Office of Small Business
City Hall Room 140
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place
San Francisco, CA 94102
(415) 554-6680
legacybusiness@sfgov.org
www.legacybusiness.org





DEAN PRESTON

April 7, 2021

Office of Small Business
Attn: Legacy Business Registration Application
City Hall, Room 110
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place
San Francisco, CA 94102

Re: *Letter of Nomination for Dark Garden to the Legacy Business Registry*

Dear Director Regina Dick-Endrizzi:

I am writing to nominate Dark Garden, a longtime fixture of the Hayes Valley neighborhood commercial corridor, to the Legacy Business Registry.

Founded in 1989 by Autumn Adamme, Dark Garden is well-known as a pioneer in modern corsetry design, attracting an international following and creating the 'living alley' on Linden Street that has become a destination in and of itself. Their unique combination of garment production and customer-facing retail is key to their success and creative craft.

Since establishing their Hayes Valley location in 1995, Dark Garden has become a veritable staple, one of the longest-standing small businesses in the neighborhood. What Dark Garden offers is part of what makes Hayes Valley so incredible: a one-of-a-kind retail experience that relies on skilled craftspeople creating custom products. Dark Garden stands as an example of the value of non-chain retail in neighborhood commercial corridors, with a community-focused business that reflects the passion and unique vision of Ms. Adamme.

I'd like to add that Ms. Adamme is incredibly dedicated to the Hayes Valley neighborhood. In addition to her work as a small businessperson, she frequently volunteers with the Shared Spaces program on Hayes Street, making sure neighbors can safely enjoy the car-free street and merchants can take advantage of the program.

Letter of Nomination for Dark Garden to the Legacy Business Registry

April 7, 2021

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This is the kind of commitment to both entrepreneurial spirit and neighborhood stewardship that I believe we should celebrate, and that is why I am honored to nominate Dark Garden to the San Francisco Legacy Business Registry.

Sincerely,



Dean Preston
District 5 Supervisor

cc: Richard Kurylo, Legacy Business Program

Section One:

Business / Applicant Information.

Please provide the following information:

- The name, mailing address and other contact information of the business;
- The name of the person who owns the business. For businesses with multiple owners, identify the person(s) with the highest ownership stake in the business;
- The name, title and contact information of the applicant;
- The business's San Francisco Business Account Number and entity number with the Secretary of State, if applicable.

| | |
|--|--|
| NAME OF BUSINESS: | |
| Dark Garden Unique Corsetry, Inc. | |
| BUSINESS OWNER(S) (Identify the person(s) with the highest ownership stake in the business): | |
| Autumn Adamme | |
| CURRENT BUSINESS ADDRESS: | TELEPHONE NUMBER: |
| 321 Linden Street San Francisco, CA 94102 | (415) 431-7684 |
| | EMAIL ADDRESS: |
| | info@darkgarden.com |
| MAILING ADDRESS – STREET ADDRESS: | MAILING ADDRESS – CITY AND STATE: |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Same as Business Address | |
| | MAILING ADDRESS – ZIP CODE: |
| | |
| WEBSITE ADDRESS: | |
| www.darkgarden.com | |
| FACEBOOK PAGE: | |
| www.facebook.com/corset | |
| TWITTER NAME: | |
| @DarkGardenSF | |
| APPLICANT'S NAME: | APPLICANT'S TELEPHONE NUMBER: |
| Autumn Adamme | |
| APPLICANT'S TITLE: | APPLICANT'S EMAIL ADDRESS: |
| Founder | |
| SAN FRANCISCO BUSINESS ACCOUNT NUMBER: | |
| 0458281 | |
| SECRETARY OF STATE ENTITY NUMBER (If applicable): | |
| | |

Section Two:

Business Location(s).

List the business address of the original San Francisco location, the start date of business and the dates of operation at the original location. Check the box indicating whether the original location of the business in San Francisco is the founding location of the business. If the business moved from its original location and has had additional addresses in San Francisco, identify all other addresses and the dates of operation at each address. For businesses with more than one location, list the additional locations in section three of the narrative.

| ORIGINAL SAN FRANCISCO ADDRESS | ZIP CODE | START DATE OF BUSINESS |
|---|-------------------------------------|------------------------|
| 2229A Market Street | 94117 | July 15, 1991 |
| IS THIS LOCATION THE FOUNDING LOCATION OF THE BUSINESS? | DATES OF OPERATION AT THIS LOCATION | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No | July 15, 1991, to February 28, 1994 | |

| OTHER ADDRESSES (If applicable) | ZIP CODE | DATES OF OPERATION |
|---------------------------------|----------|----------------------------|
| 448 Linden Street | 94102 | Start: March 1, 1994 |
| | | End: March 31, 1995 |

| OTHER ADDRESSES (If applicable) | ZIP CODE | DATES OF OPERATION |
|---------------------------------|----------|----------------------------|
| 1472 Fulton Street | 94117 | Start: April 1, 1995 |
| | | End: April 30, 1996 |

| OTHER ADDRESSES (If applicable) | ZIP CODE | DATES OF OPERATION |
|---------------------------------|----------|-------------------------|
| 321 Linden Street | 94102 | Start: May 1, 1996 |
| | | End: Current |

| OTHER ADDRESSES (If applicable) | ZIP CODE | DATES OF OPERATION |
|---------------------------------|----------|--------------------|
| | | Start: |
| | | End: |

| OTHER ADDRESSES (If applicable) | ZIP CODE | DATES OF OPERATION |
|---------------------------------|----------|--------------------|
| | | Start: |
| | | End: |

| OTHER ADDRESSES (If applicable) | ZIP CODE | DATES OF OPERATION |
|---------------------------------|----------|--------------------|
| | | Start: |
| | | End: |

| OTHER ADDRESSES (If applicable) | ZIP CODE | DATES OF OPERATION |
|---------------------------------|----------|--------------------|
| | | Start: |
| | | End: |

Section Three:

Disclosure Statement.

San Francisco Taxes, Business Registration, Licenses, Labor Laws and Public Information Release.

This section is verification that all San Francisco taxes, business registration and licenses are current and complete, and there are no current violations of San Francisco labor laws. This information will be verified. A business deemed not current with all San Francisco taxes, business registration and licenses, or has current violations of San Francisco labor laws, will not be eligible to apply for grants through the Legacy Business Program.

In addition, we are required to inform you that all information provided in the application will become subject to disclosure under the California Public Records Act.

Please read the following statements and check each to indicate that you agree with the statement. Then sign below in the space provided.

- I am authorized to submit this application on behalf of the business.
- I attest that the business is current on all of its San Francisco tax obligations.
- I attest that the business's business registration and any applicable regulatory license(s) are current.
- I attest that the Office of Labor Standards and Enforcement (OLSE) has not determined that the business is currently in violation of any of the City's labor laws, and that the business does not owe any outstanding penalties or payments ordered by the OLSE.
- I understand that documents submitted with this application may be made available to the public for inspection and copying pursuant to the California Public Records Act and San Francisco Sunshine Ordinance.
- I hereby acknowledge and authorize that all photographs and images submitted as part of the application may be used by the City without compensation.
- I understand that the Small Business Commission may revoke the placement of the business on the Registry if it finds that the business no longer qualifies, and that placement on the Registry does not entitle the business to a grant of City funds.

Autumn Adamme

Feb 9, 2021

Name (Print):

Date:

Signature:



DARK GARDEN UNIQUE CORSETRY, INC.
Section 4: Written Historical Narrative

CRITERION 1

a. Provide a short history of the business from the date the business opened in San Francisco to the present day, including the ownership history. For businesses with multiple locations, include the history of the original location in San Francisco (including whether it was the business's founding and or headquartered location) and the opening dates and locations of all other locations.

Dark Garden Unique Corsetry, Inc. ("Dark Garden") is currently located at 321 Linden Street in the Hayes Valley neighborhood.

The business was founded by Autumn Adamme and Karen Porter in July of 1989 in their Terra Linda garage at 76 Golden Hinde, San Rafael. Shortly thereafter, Autumn moved to 269 Morningside Drive in Corte Madera and worked from her living room until 1991.

In 1991, Dark Garden moved to 2229A Market Street in Autumn's shared apartment with Monique Motil in the Castro neighborhood. They started working together shortly afterwards.

In 1994, Dark Garden moved to 448 Linden Street in Hayes Valley, the back area of Asphalt Boutique and Design Studio. This space was shared with Painter's Place, which stored their framing materials.

The business rapidly outgrew the workroom and moved to 1472 Fulton Street at Broderick Street for 13 months.

On May 1, 1996, Dark Garden Unique Corsetry, Inc. moved to its first ever retail location at 321 Linden Street, with production on-site in the back room.

Autumn bought out her second business partner Monique Motil in 1998. In 2018, Autumn welcomed Revelation in Fit, bra fitting specialists, to join her in the storefront, which allowed for an additional couture workroom under the same roof, one floor above. Both businesses continue to operate.

b. Describe any circumstances that required the business to cease operations in San Francisco for more than six months?

Dark Garden has never ceased operation since its inception. During the depths of the COVID-19 Shelter in Place order, owner Autumn Adamme temporarily moved into the upstairs workroom to be close to the business and to be able to continue to produce medical corsets to make sure all clients were cared for. She also designed an internationally acclaimed face mask of which over 900 have sold since April 2020.

c. Is the business a family-owned business? If so, give the generational history of the business.

The business either is or is not a “family-owned” business, defined here as any business in which two or more family members are involved and the majority of ownership or control lies within a family.”

d. Describe the ownership history when the business ownership is not the original owner or a family-owned business.

The ownership history of Dark Garden Unique Corsetry is as follows:

| | |
|------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1989 to 1990: | Autumn Adamme and Karen Porter |
| 1991 to 1998: | Autumn Adamme and Monique Motil |
| 1998 to Present: | Autumn Adamme |

e. When the current ownership is not the original owner and has owned the business for less than 30 years, the applicant will need to provide documentation of the existence of the business prior to current ownership to verify it has been in operation for 30+ years. Please use the list of supplemental documents and/or materials as a guide to help demonstrate the existence of the business prior to current ownership.

Documentation of the existence of the business verifying it has been in operation for 30+ years is provided in this Legacy Business Registry application.

f. Note any other special features of the business location, such as, if the property associated with the business is listed on a local, state, or federal historic resources registry.

The historic resource status of the building at 321 Linden Street is classified by the Planning Department as Category A, Historic Resource Present, with regard to the California Environmental Quality Act. The building was evaluated in 2010 and appears to be a contributor to the Hayes Valley Residential Historic District and Hayes Valley Commercial Historic District.

CRITERION 2

a. Describe the business's contribution to the history and/or identity of the neighborhood, community or San Francisco.

Dark Garden was the first front-facing business on the 300 block of Linden Street, which is now home to San Francisco’s first Living Alley. A Living Alley is defined as a narrow, low-volume traffic street that is designed to focus on livability instead of parking and traffic. Typically, this means creating a street primarily for pedestrians and bicyclists as well as space for social uses.

Vehicles are typically still allowed access but with reduced speeds.¹ Dark Garden's presence on the street paved the way for Blue Bottle Coffee to open their first kiosk, and for Tazi Home Furnishings, Optical Underground, MM Clay, and Clare V to open on the block.

Autumn Adamme is a founding member of the Hayes Valley Merchants Association and is on a steering committee dedicated to the reinvigoration of Hayes Valley as we return to life post-pandemic. She has recently been asked to join the Market & Octavia Community Advisory Committee.

Many people have referred to Dark Garden as a cornerstone of Hayes Valley, and of San Francisco itself. Their unique approach to fashion and dedication to diversity are truly a product of San Francisco culture.

b. Is the business (or has been) associated with significant events in the neighborhood, the city, or the business industry?

Autumn Adamme is known internationally as The Godmother of Modern Corsetry, having developed and taught techniques in a craft that was nearly extinct when she started the business. She has employed over 100 skilled and pre-skilled individuals over the years, training and guiding many of them into professions in fashion, theater, and opera.

Dark Garden survived the dot-com boom, dot-com bust, demolition of the Fell Street overpass, construction of Octavia Boulevard, the Great Recession, and the coronavirus pandemic, all of which were significant events in the Hayes Valley neighborhood and San Francisco.

Dark Garden participates in the annual Edwardian Ball, now held at the Regency Theater.

c. Has the business ever been referenced in an historical context? Such as in a business trade publication, media, or historical documents?

In more than 30 years in a unique business in a unique city, Dark Garden Unique Corsetry, Inc. has been featured in all forms of media, including TV, film, magazine articles, and paintings. The business has inspired multiple photographers, including Larry Utley, who published a book called *Fetish Fashion: Undressing The Corset*, for which Autumn wrote the forward. Surrealist painter Lee Harvey Roswell staged a triptych on the premises of Dark Garden, which included more than a dozen models of all sizes, persuasions, and demographics. Dark Garden's work was part of The Art of Burning Man exhibit, which traveled to the Smithsonian Museum, Chicago Museum of Art, the Oakland Museum and beyond. The business has participated in countless art school projects, supporting developing film, photography, fine art, and fashion students as they establish themselves. Dark Garden images have been used as cover art for several albums and books, including author Gail Carriger. Most recently they partnered with Moschino to

¹ <https://sfplanning.org/market-octavia-living-alleys>

create two ensembles for the Met Gala, one of which Vogue Magazine featured in their Met Gala video special.

d. Is the business associated with a significant or historical person?

The business is associated with a great many significant and historical people. Dark Garden has made corsets for film, TV, opera, and popular music celebrities, as well as several notable authors. The business has worked with leaders of the Center for Sex and Culture and with performers at Asia SF. Dark Garden has also worked with Fakir Musafar, a leading pioneer of the art of body modification. Internationally-renowned corsetier Mr. Pearl joined the team at Dark Garden for nearly a year. Dark Garden has become the go-to corset maker for both Moschino and Zac Posen, and has made corsets for several celebrities including Tilda Swinton, Jennifer Lopez, Christina Aguilera, Dita Von Teese, Marilyn Manson, and Kelly Osbourne.

e. How does the business demonstrate its commitment to the community?

Dark Garden has been a cornerstone of The Great Dickens Christmas Fair since their re-opening in 2000. Dark Garden donates gift certificates to dozens of nonprofits every year and participates in neighborhood clean-up days.

Autumn Adamme was a founding member of The Greater Bay Area Costumers Guild. She also participates with the board of directors of The Art Deco Society of California.

f. Provide a description of the community the business serves.

Dark Garden Unique Corsetry, Inc. serves multiple communities:

- Arts and culture communities due to the proximity of the San Francisco Opera, San Francisco Symphony, San Francisco Ballet, and SFJAZZ Center
- Working in tandem with doctors and physical therapists to support their orthopedic and post-surgery patients
- Circus
- Historical re-enactments
- LGBTQ+
- Leather
- Drag
- Burlesque
- Burning Man
- Various high school drama productions

g. Is the business associated with a culturally significant building/structure/site/object/interior?

The interior has been lovingly designed to give visitors a sense of visiting another time in history, partially furnished with family heirlooms. It has been used in many TV, film, video, and photo shoots. Dark Garden has hosted several performing artists of acoustic music and held a Sock Hop to benefit Northern California firefighters and their families.

h. How would the community be diminished if the business were to be sold, relocated, shut down, etc.?

If Dark Garden Unique Corsetry, Inc. were to close, members of several marginalized communities would be without the safety and security that the staff at Dark Garden provides – many transgender clients are not able to comfortably shop for undergarments in more conventional stores. Additionally, Dark Garden serves a vast community of people with physical issues that need the unique specialties that Dark Garden caters to.

Because Dark Garden serves members from marginalized communities such as transgender, gender fluid, people of size, those suffering from Ehlers Danlos Syndrome and after effects of COVID-19 in the form of Postural orthostatic tachycardia syndrome (POTS), these communities would be left without a safe space in which to have their needs met if Dark Garden were to close, whether medical, emotional, or simply aesthetic.

If Dark Garden were to lose its home in its present building, which has space for both production and retail, it is highly unlikely the business would survive. The reasonable rent and central location in the city contribute greatly to its success.

CRITERION 3

a. Describe the business and the essential features that define its character.

Dark Garden designs and produces corsets, both ready-to-wear and custom, as well as custom-designed wedding attire. Their boutique also offers accessories, clothing, and hats that are, for the most part, made by local designers.

Dark Garden has a special brand of inclusivity that is uniquely San Franciscan. Through carefully curated products and events, they strive to cultivate a body-positive culture that is accessible to people of all ages, cultures, genders, needs, and body types.

Dark Garden is a safe space for people to explore their sense of themselves, matching their outer expression to their inner beauty, sometimes for the first time. They are dedicated to creating unique environments for its clients to luxuriate in, ones that delights the senses, a true sanctuary for self-expression of every identity.

b. How does the business demonstrate a commitment to maintaining the historical traditions that define the business, and which of these traditions should not be changed in order to retain the businesses historical character? (e.g., business model, goods and services, craft, culinary, or art forms)

Corsetry itself was a dying art when Autumn started the business. She comes from a long line of seamstresses and tailors and translated this education into techniques that are now used by corset makers the world over. She has trained well over 100 people in these arts, many of whom have gone on to distinguish themselves as fashion designers, costume makers, designers, and stylists for circus, ballet, film, theater, and television.

The Dark Garden ethos of creating a welcoming atmosphere for all genders, abilities, ages, cultures, and body types has led to an old-world level of customer service.

San Francisco is the best home for Dark Garden, with its history of being a haven for rebels, free thinkers, and artists – a destination city for travelers from all parts of the world.

c. How has the business demonstrated a commitment to maintaining the special physical features that define the business? Describe any special exterior and interior physical characteristics of the space occupied by the business (e.g. signage, murals, architectural details, neon signs, etc.).

Dark Garden is one of very few retail manufacturers in San Francisco, keeping production under the same roof as the boutique. This building houses several small, independent businesses and therefore has had a hand in shaping the flavor of Hayes Valley, one of the oldest neighborhoods in San Francisco, well known for its connection to arts and culture.

d. When the current ownership is not the original owner and has owned the business for less than 30 years; the applicant will need to provide documentation that demonstrates the current owner has maintained the physical features or traditions that define the business, including craft, culinary, or art forms. Please use the list of supplemental documents and/or materials as a guide to help demonstrate the existence of the business prior to current ownership.

Not applicable.

Dark Garden

315



3
2
1



The perfect fit is where
measuring & wandering cease,
we monitor your size.



315 UNDER STREET @ COLUCH

NO PARKING
Sun - Thu
9:00AM - 6:00PM

3

2

1



The perfect fit is where
beauty & comfort converge,
no matter your size.

Dark
Garden

with
REVELATION
IN FIT

321 LINDEN STREET @ COUGH





















F F E T I S

S H



FASHION

UNDRESSING
THE CORSET

LARRY UTLEY

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
AUTUMN CAREY-ADAMME

BETTER KNOW A STORE OWNER

Custom Corsets Are a Cinch at This Hayes Valley Boutique

By Robyn Hagan Cain | Feb 13, 2014, 1:30pm PST

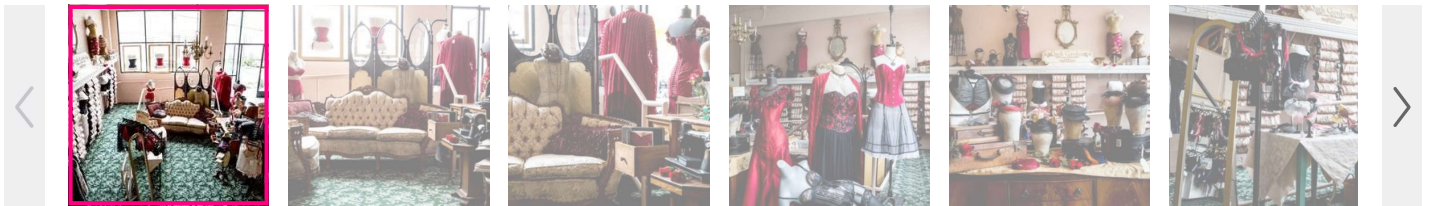


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■ GRID VIEW

Photos by [Aubrie Pick](#)

| 1 of 13



Autumn Adamme tends to elicit a fangirl response from her clients, which is actually how we were introduced. While ringing in 2014, a friend spotted Autumn in the crowd at a party and squealed, "You have to meet this woman! She designs the most amazing corsets."

Customers at [Dark Garden](#), Autumn's **Hayes Valley boutique** are similarly enthusiastic, chatting about their couture commissions and producing iPhone photos of their favorite pieces. The excitement has paid off: After more than 20 years in business, Autumn has established herself as one of America's premier corset makers, designing for celebrities like **Christina Aguilera, Pamela Anderson, Kelly Osbourne** and **Dita Von Teese**, all the while maintaining her San Francisco roots.

We caught up with Autumn at her gorgeous **Linden Street** shop amid the **pre-Valentine's Day rush** to find out how she became a designer, who she wants to dress, and what she does in her down time.

When did your fascination with corsetry begin? How did you become a corset designer?

"My interest comes from my background in historical costuming. Once I was done with school I realized that there wasn't much of a customer base for highly-detailed, historically-accurate costumes, and people were responding to the corsets that I was making for myself. I really like sculpting the body. I'm endlessly fascinated by what our bodies are capable of and also what we can do to alter them. **I also think that Lynda Carter's version of Wonder Woman had something to do with my fascination with tiny waists.** I recall wearing belts as tight as I could because I wanted to be like her."

Are there any particular designers that have influenced you?

"I love '80s [Christian] Lacroix, [Thierry] Mugler, [and Vivienne Westwood]. They're just so incredible. Of course [Jean Paul] Gaultier is always inspiring; so off-the-wall. But Mugler's insect-inspired stuff was just life-changing for me and I saw that at a pretty formative time. I think that's got something to do with my fondness for an extreme silhouette.

You opened Dark Garden in 1989. What made you decide to start a design business in San Francisco?

"I can't think of a single city anywhere that is more suited to my type of business—in addition to it being fabulously diverse it's a destination city, so people that have been curious about us come in when they visit San Francisco. It's certainly not an easy place to do business in, but this is where I grew up and I need to be surrounded by the variety of people that live here and that are drawn to visit this lovely little city."

You've designed corsets for some pretty famous people—Dita Von Teese and Christina Aguilera, just to name two. How often do you collaborate with celebrity clients?

"Thanks to Dita's rising star and her own brand of lingerie being such a good fit with our corsets it happens more and more all the time—though of course I'm also hungry for even more. **I dream of getting my corsets around Christina Hendricks!** I believe this is just about the only downside to be located in San Francisco as opposed to Los Angeles or New York—we're not close to the industry, so people have to know about us already, or discover us through Dita or another celebrity. **We made Lana Wachowski and her wife's wedding dresses**, but the photos weren't publicized, so it only comes up if I name drop."

In addition to traditional corsets, Dark Garden has a contemporary style called the Dollymop. What distinguishes the Dollymop from the traditional corset style?

"Dollymops are the creation of my associate designer **Kalico Delafey**, who has a very different design aesthetic than I do — she's less historically-inspired than I, she thinks more texturally and in a different palette than I do, which is refreshing to have around. I love silks and shiny fabrics, she works really well with earth tones and wools. What we have in common is our love of sculpture. She is an incredibly talented milliner as well, creating with vintage felts, trims and feathers, so each hat is completely unique and they're all very sculptural."

Dark Garden offers both pre-made and custom corsets. Talk us through the custom corset design process.

"We offer three levels of fit and production: Off-the-rack means you can walk in with a desire for a corset, and walk out with that desire fulfilled. These run between **\$265 and \$675**. Made-to-order means you try a corset on and choose different fabric and possibly different details, and we can do minor pattern modifications for improved fit. Their price range is **\$265 to \$875** and takes between **four and six weeks**, depending on our work load. Custom means that we meet with a client, discuss design and fabric details, **take about 15 measurements**, draft a pattern, do a mock-up fitting, sometimes two, then make the corset, sometimes doing another fitting. The **average price for custom is \$1000** and the turn around time is approximately three months.

You also do bridal and couture design. Describe the Dark Garden bride.

"The Dark Garden bride doesn't usually get married in June, though more of them than one might think get married in ivory, (followed closely by red or silver). Some years we get a lot of light green wedding dresses, and shades of purple and blue are always popular. She's rarely looking for something terribly traditional, though I often spend a lot of the design process finding the balance between what the bride wants and what she feels her family can handle. What I enjoy most about these opportunities is making a gorgeous dress that the bride will love, feel stunning in, (and that she very well may be able to wear again), that truly suits her personality and lifestyle. They don't say 'It's your day' for nothing, and the traditional 'bride costume' doesn't often resonate with the people who come to us."

A lot of people use the terms bustier and corset interchangeably. Is there a distinction between the two?

"The clearest way I can describe the difference is that bustiers usually stop just at the waist (terribly uncomfortable) and include elastic. Corsets need to extend past the waist over the hips to smooth the abdomen and support the lower back. Corsets also lace up and the reason for this is they are worn tighter than a person can pull in and hook up with just the strength of their hands. **The gradual lacing of the corset means that it can reduce the waist over four inches**, but this takes a little time."

Corsets were traditionally a type of underwear, but your designs beg to be seen. How do you style a corset as part of an outfit?

"I wear corsets as the upper half of an ensemble, pairing them with skirts of many silhouettes, as well as fuller legged trousers. One of my employees wears her corset every day, and she looks great in skinny jeans as well as straight skirts. I like a short jacket with a corset as I'm not always ready for the attention just a corset always garners me, but when I'm prepared, I jump right in. People can't keep their eyes of someone in a corset. I also love a really beautiful corset under an outfit, a secret for myself and my beau."

San Francisco has a number of up-and-coming designers. Do you have any favorites who we should watch?

I am terribly guilty of living in a very small world. I know a tiny bit about accessory designers, my favorites being [House of Nines Designs hats](#) and **Kalico Delafey millinery**, but I have no idea about clothing designers; it's embarrassing, but my nose is pretty close to the pattern drafting table most of the time."

Corset and couture design sounds glamorous. Is the rest of your life equally glamorous? What do you do in the city when you're not designing?

"Ha! I often say a visit to a neighborhood outside Hayes Valley seems like a vacation because I so rarely leave it. I only live a mile from work and like to walk whenever I can. I have a very dedicated yoga practice since I discovered [Laughing Lotus Studio](#), and I also enjoy indoor rock climbing and am lucky enough to have a pretty great significant other who dances tango with me."

Between the Edwardian Ball and Valentine's Day, the beginning of the year is pretty crazy for you. What are you going to do when you find a moment to relax?

"I'm currently keeping myself busy preparing for a two-week visit to Venice, Italy for Carnavale — it's like relaxing...but there will be costumes at the end of it. Time in Venice will be spent with friends at fancy dress parties, which for me is heaven! My hands and eyes are nearly always busy, so I get my reading done by listening to books. Without this, I don't know how I'd find time, and I dearly love to read."

Now for the lightning round!

Beach or mountains?

"A view of the beach from the cliffs."

Dogs or cats?

"Cats."

Twitter or Instagram?

"Pinterest."

Gold or silver?

"White gold."

Favorite decade?

"The 30s, in a few centuries, followed closely by the 1940s."

· Dark Garden [Official Site]

· Exclusive: Dita Von Teese Wants to Get In Your Lingerie Drawer [Racked]

SEX

Sexploitations: The Rise of Corsets for Men

Sexploitations: The Rise of Corsets for Men

by [Peter-Astrid Kane](#) • 07/19/2017 6:31 pm - Updated 07/20/2017 10:08 am



The writer's posture became rather erect. (Peter Lawrence Kane)

Gender fluidity in high fashion is nothing new, although it's been particularly prominent in recent collections. But as the avant-garde filters down into the culture — and street-level culture creeps up — the old binaries have eroded in ways not seen in Western culture for decades or centuries. This year, during Pride month, I saw more male-bodied people wearing corsets than ever before. Be it at explicitly fetish-oriented events or as part of a trashy-fabulous genderfuck ensemble at clubs, cinched waists — sometimes with chest hair poking out the top — are no longer a rarity.

for corsetry, Edwardian wear, and other forms of “uncommon beauty,” I went for a fitting with Marianne, who laced me up in two “**tailored cinchers**,” the shop’s line for people assigned male at birth.

“Corsets were originally designed for men, and you have multiple historic referents that converged and split off to become the corset as we know it today,” she said. “But functionally, it was something that men wore under their dress uniforms and for horseback riding, and it really emphasized that shoulder V.”

Apart from any aesthetic considerations — and my hourglass waist looked nothing if not striking, if only because it’s usually a spare tire — there are the advantages of better posture (which you experience immediately upon the tightening of the third or fourth lace). It also made my shoulders look very broad.

“You look like you should be posing for your portrait with a sword and a horse,” Marianne said, noting that corsetry helps train the muscles to do what they should, hopefully mitigating some of the damage from years of slouching as your eyes flicker from screen to screen.



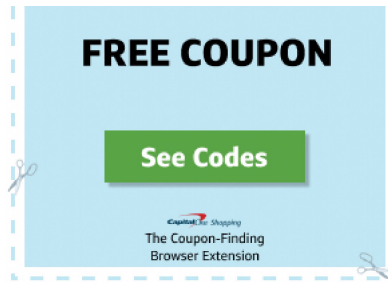
Dark Garden has a sizeable trans and non-binary customer base, but the “strong majority” of the clients are women. With men, Marianne says the ones who “carry a lot of toxic masculinity and are easily threatened just don’t make it into the shop,” so she can usually convince about half of the men who come in with their girlfriends to try one on.

“It’s this amazing, transformative experience,” she says. “It really grounds you in your body. We think we’re living this life of the mind, just floating around like brains in space, and a corset really pulls you back into your sense of self, and gives you this confidence.

It’s not just because you might be more conventionally attractive, either.

“Suddenly, your posture is better, and that does all these things in your brain,” Marianne says, “Everything is happier in your body when your posture is good, so even aside from the lovely effect of this lovely nipped-in waist, you can get all these other benefits. We have a lot of medical clients who are men. They might have scoliosis or diastasis recti, or maybe they just work a construction job and they really like having that support on their back.

“Definitely, the fetish clients are a little more adventurous in what style they go for or what kind of waist reduction they want,” she adds. “It’s interesting in that, for someone with an assigned-male-at-birth body, if you don’t have a uterus up in there, you can compress more. The natural shape might not be as hourglass-y, but we tend to put them in a smaller back than we would for an AFAB body that comes in.”



That would be “AFAB” as in “assigned female at birth.” Irrespective of gender, there are misconceptions about what corsets can or can’t do for all the various types of human bodies out there.

“People also come in with a lot of assumptions, like, ‘Oh, I’m really small, there’s nothing to put in a corset, there’s nothing to squish,’ or ‘I’m really big so there’s not going to be a corset that fits me,’ ” Marianne says, observing that Dark Garden owner **Autumn Adamme** has 28 years of experience — and she herself has nine — so between styles and tailoring, there’s something for virtually everybody up the size run.

Although I could only inhale about three-quarters of the way, I felt like I could wear the cincher for the rest of the day — but then again, I was on my bike. Marianne respectfully disagreed with that assessment, too.

“Actually, in Victorian times, there was a slightly different cut that was worn for horseback-riding and it was pointed,” she said. “So if we get someone who comes in and rides a bike a lot, we’re going to go more for that riding corset. It’s still got the length to give you support in your stomach and diaphragm — but it’s going to be cut on the hips a little bit lower, so you have a little bit more mobility.”

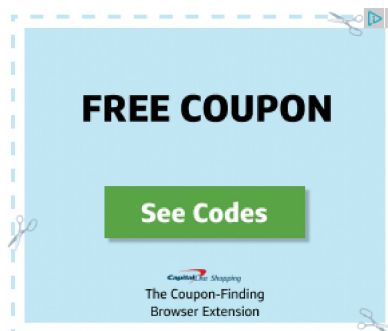
In other words, any objection that contemporary urban males might have about going about their day upright and with good posture had already been answered more than a hundred years ago.



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Tags: [AFAB](#), [Autumn Adamme](#), [body shame](#), [corsetry](#), [corsets](#), [Dark Garden](#), [Dickens Fair](#), [Edwardian culture](#), [fetish culture](#), [horsemen](#), [Horses](#), [LGBT](#), [male corsetry](#), [toxic masculinity](#), [V shoulders](#), [Victorian culture](#)

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TRENDING

[The Best Supplements for Muscle Growth In 2021](#)

February 26, 2021

Attention: Richard Kurylo
Small Business Assistance Center
City Hall, Room 140
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place
San Francisco, CA 94102

Dear Richard,

I am delighted to stand for the inclusion of Dark Garden Corsetry into your legacy business registry. More than qualified, this long standing company has been a pillar of the SF community in countless ways.

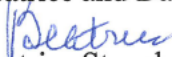
Three tangible ways that have had lasting and profound impact on us personally, are:

- 1- Dark Garden Corsetry serves the greater LGBTQ+ population with respect; alongside extraordinary products and service
- 2- Society of Janus – as Coordinator, Advisor, and now Treasurer of this 45 year old non-profit, I can proudly say Dark Garden Corsetry, over decades, has continued to sponsor, support, and offer classes for no fee, to our membership base
- 3- The BDSM Leather and kinky community at large, has also long applauded Dark Garden Corsetry and its CEO, Autumn Adamme in appreciation of their sponsorships, silent auction donations, classes, and inclusion at award ceremonies: attended by many SF Board of Supervisor leaders

Dark Garden and its leadership, holds all SF communities in high regard. They lead with respect; they follow with coveted products and services of the highest quality; and they are treasured beyond measure.

We humbly support them being approved and added to the Legacy Business Program Registry.

Thank you for all you do,
Beatrice and David


Beatrice Stonebanks
David Schwartz