We began to cook up the idea for a collection about women and their machines over fried fish at Courtney’s restaurant in Southern Maryland, before a reading at St. Mary’s College of Maryland. Norma started talking about the old Maytag washer her mother used, and then Joyce mentioned her mother’s Singer sewing machine, and Jennifer, her long and complicated relationship with curling irons. The stories we told and the hard questions we asked around that table suggested that our conversation would not end once the fish was eaten and our check arrived. And, indeed, this suspicion was confirmed when Jennifer subsequently had a powerful conversation with Elizabeth about the impersonal intimacy of iPhones. This subject of women and their machines was (and is) provocative and complex, resonant and intriguing—and thus, this collection was born.

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