# Bonus) Sustainable Interior Design + Secondhand Home Shopping Tips with Nina Verduin [TRANSCRIPT]

# **ELIZABETH**

Hey there and welcome or welcome back to the Conscious Style Podcast. To celebrate 10,000 downloads and thank you all for subscribing and tuning in to the show, I have a very special bonus episode for you today!

As you may know by now, this season of the podcast is all about circular fashion. But home goods are another area that we can start thinking about circularity. In fact, home goods have a lot in common with fashion.

First off, a lot of home goods are made with textiles, meaning they too can be made from linen and cotton, recycled materials, or virgin synthetic oil-based fabrics like polyester. And interior design has always evolved over the years, but just like the fashion industry, it has been following faster and faster trend cycles. And this is due in part to furniture and home goods getting cheaper — both in price and quality. As I said, lots of parallels. But another similarity that home furnishings and decor have to fashion is that we can follow a lot of the same principles for conscious home as we can for conscious fashion.

And in today's bonus episode, I am chatting with a secondhand and sustainable home expert to teach us all about how we can decorate and design our homes more mindfully: Nina Verduin of homebody, a slow living Interior Design Studio. So Nina started homebody to show us how to intentionally style beautiful, cozy homes that encourage us to slow down, let go of stuff and make conscious decisions.

In today's episode, Nina is sharing why sustainable furniture and home decor matters, how we can get started with sustainable interior design, how to make the most of the furnishings and decor pieces that we have, the benefits of choosing secondhand home goods, plus her tips for secondhand home shopping, and her advice for making all of those existing pieces and secondhand pieces, and maybe an occasional new piece feel cohesive in your space.

As always, the transcript for this episode, as well as the links to follow today's guest Nina is in the show notes over on consciouslifeandstyle.com. And there is a video version of this episode as well that you can check out on YouTube on our channel Conscious Life & Style.

And if you liked this episode, hit subscribe or follow to get future content like this. And if you are liking the show so far, giving us a hopefully five star rating on Apple podcasts is super helpful and incredibly appreciated.

Okay, I won't make you wait any longer! Nina is going to start us off now with how she got into secondhand and sustainable interior design and why she created homebody.

#### NINA

So, Homebody is really different elements of my life, like different passions coming together. And that's why I'm really excited about it. On the one side, there's the side of me, who's an introvert, a highly sensitive person, and I just love being at home. So I'm a total homebody. And I like to make my home like a safe space so that I can really decompress at the end of the day and recharge and feel energized to do the things I'm most passionate about.

At the same time, I'm also really interested and passionate about sustainable living. I think this was really triggered, especially when I did my business and sustainability Masters. And I from there started implementing more changes in my own life in terms of making more sustainable decisions.

So when I bought this apartment, which was last year, I was looking at how to sustainably style it. And while I was looking for inspiration, you know, on Pinterest and YouTube, all of it was nice and you know, it looked pretty. But then the designer or creative would go off and order a bunch of new furniture and decor and that wasn't really exciting to me. So I went off and did my own thing using what I had and buying secondhand. And I started sharing that a little bit and eventually that grew into Homebody Yeah, and I just want to share that passion with the rest and show everyone how they can also sustainably style their homes.

#### **ELIZABETH**

Yeah, I can resonate with that with Pinterest. I see these beautiful designs, and then you click on it, it's like telling you to buy a bunch of these sort of fast furniture, fast home goods. And you don't know much about that product. And it's all new stuff of course.

So I think that it's definitely an important gap in the market that you're filling with helping people with furnishing their spaces, and using secondhand things, things that they have. So I'm really excited to talk to you about this, as I said, you're filling this like, I feel like this gaping hole in the market. You know, a lot of us are talking about sustainable fashion now. It's really growing in the public awareness. But sustainable home is not really discussed as much, talking about furniture, and other decor pieces. So can you tell us why sustainable furnishings and home decor matters?

# **NINA**

Yeah, of course, I definitely agree. There aren't... I haven't found that many other people doing what I do. And at the same time, in terms of sustainable fashion, I can find a lot more out there; there's more information. But it's also being talked about a lot more, I think. So of course, that's one of the reasons I started this.

And yeah, there's, I think that there are of course, lots of similarities in terms of why the industry has a negative impact on the environment and on people. You can think of unsustainable production practices, you know, you need to source new materials in order to make new furniture and new decor. And that isn't always sourced responsibly.

There are also many issues regarding unethical labor practices. If you think for example, looking at rugs, or curtains, these are also fabrics, and these are actually often included in figures about unsustainable labor practices with regards to yeah, kind of garments, materials, fabrics.

And also, if you look at recent years, I think the quality has really gotten worse over time, things last a few years, whereas, you know, they used to be made to last decades and be passed on from generation to generation. I think that's really also combined with the fact that so many people are following trends now. So wanting to decorate seasonally, but also easily getting bored of what we have and feeling like we need to get the next new thing. And so that results in wanting to throw things out. And so we're also creating a lot of waste that way.

# **ELIZABETH**

Yeah yeah. When I see vintage furniture from like, the 40s, and it's still in relatively good condition, you know, considering it's, what, eighty years old? And then I think about some of the furniture, it's on the market now it breaks after like, one or two moves, and it's like falling apart.

# **NINA**

Yeah, yes, definitely. Completely different world in that sense.

# **ELIZABETH**

Totally. So for someone who is decorating their space, maybe getting started with sustainable interior design, what are the basics that we should know?

#### **NINA**

Yeah, that's a great question. I think essentially, what it comes down to, in my eyes, is extending the lifetime of items as much as possible, whether that's in your own house, or someone else's house. And so there's kind of three steps or yeah, like this hierarchy that I often mention.

Which is, first of all, to use what you have, of course. You know, it's already there. That way, it doesn't need to go anywhere, and you can just extend the lifetime of that item that's already in your house. And even if you don't like an item as much, there are many creative ways to go about that. The second is that if you want to add something, to buy secondhand. You are giving an item a second life: extending its lifetime, and also you might be keeping it from ending up in landfill as well, so it doesn't go to waste.

And then third, I think there's also some considerations if you do want to buy new because of course, sometimes it just doesn't work out. You just might have a specific preference. And then I often look at mainly at small businesses. That's kind of my go to, to look at businesses with more ethical production practices. But also just, you know, your local business around the corner, or also businesses owned by traditionally marginalized populations is also something that I look for specifically. Because I do think, you know, when you're talking about sustainability, it's more than just the environmental side — you're looking at people as well.

And then as a kind of a bonus, I also often say, the starting point is just to kind of figure out what you like. So, not following trends and just looking at inspiration and buying whatever you see, but if you really know, I think like at your heart, what you like and really follow your own style. Then you'll end up with pieces that you'll love longer, and that's ultimately what you want.

#### **ELIZABETH**

Yeah, absolutely. And I feel like Pinterest is kind of helpful for that. I mean it also can be detrimental, but like, sometimes I save pins. And then I'll come back two months later and all be like, oh, I don't actually love that, but I do still love this. Like, it kind of allows you to save it and kind of come back to it later. But yeah then at the same time, I feel like Pinterest is also the reason for a lot of these fast-moving home trends in the first place. So..

# **NINA**

Yeah, definitely, I think it does, indeed have those two sides. And so I think it's a lot with us, like how we approach it. If you're able to, yeah, save inspiration and take a few months to see if you love it later. I think that's kind of that slow living approach and allows you to make more conscious purchasing decisions.

# **ELIZABETH**

Right, yeah. it comes down a lot to the mindset and approach for sure.

### **NINA**

Yeah definitely.

#### **ELIZABETH**

So what are some of the barriers that you've seen people experience with sustainable interior design? And do you think that these barriers are maybe actually just misconceptions sometimes or myths?

# **NINA**

Yeah that's a good question. I do think there are some misconceptions relating both to sustainable design as well as interior design. So if you're looking at sustainable design, I think often, the just sustainable lifestyle, it's often seen as something that's more expensive. You know, that you need to invest in something that's ethically produced, which often costs a bit more money.

But if you think about it differently, if you buy something that's high quality, it's going to last you longer and save you more money over time. So I think in that sense, it's really the perception again, that sustainability seems like something more expensive. But it can in fact, help you save money.

And when it comes to interior design, I think it's often seen as something really high-end and only for specific people. At least, that's also the perspective that I had a few years ago. But I think in the end, it comes down to everyone deserving to have a home where they really feel at

home where they can feel comfortable. Because it's the one place where you can be your most true self. And so yeah, I don't think interior design should be seen as just something that's so high-end.

So I think there's yeah, those two elements are something that I come across a lot. And I feel some resistance when I talk about people with it.

#### **ELIZABETH**

Yeah, I can totally see that. And I also had this perception that interior design is something that you only do if you have a ton of money. Because it's often associated with buying a bunch of new stuff as well.

# **NINA**

Yeah, exactly. Yeah, it seems like something that you need to invest massively in. But there's really a lot of small ways, affordable ways to do it. And yeah, I think I've also experienced that a lot, because I myself am also on a tight budget sometimes, but you can get really creative and it can be really fun too that way.

# **ELIZABETH**

Yeah, absolutely. And that's something that you focus on, you know, making the most also of what you already have. So, yeah, for someone who does want to refresh their space, maybe give it a different vibe or style based on their point in their life, or, you know, just change in tastes. Maybe they moved into a different space, whatever it is. What advice do you have for them to make the most of the existing pieces?

# **NINA**

Yeah, I think the first is just to organize and declutter. That's something I've been thinking about a lot recently. You know, you can have the most beautiful home, but if it's really, really messy, it's not going to feel good. It's not going to feel welcoming and cozy. So I think that's really the starting point. To make sure that you have the things in your house that make you feel happy, and that really help you create the life that you want to live. And so maybe it's more about getting things out of your house rather than adding new pieces in that sense.

Similarly, without having to buy new things, I think moving items around can be really useful. So you know, just really shifting your layout and even considering swapping items from different rooms maybe. You know, just changing a chair or another space or changing rooms is something I also think about sometimes. So I think that that can already give you that refreshment that makes it feel like a newer space.

And you know, if those aren't working, then maybe you start looking at the pieces that you have in your house. So you could give things a new color. I mean, if it's something made of wood, painting it is really easy. Or maybe sanding it down and then giving it a new stain. Also thinking about maybe changing legs of a table or something like that. So changing parts of an item rather than replacing the whole piece.

And the last one, I think, is maybe updating the elements around an item. So, you know, if you have maybe a couch or sofa that you're getting bored of, perhaps you can just paint the wall behind it, and it'll seem like a completely different couch. Or you can add, you know, a new throw pillow. And it's just, I think even having small changes can make it feel really refreshing to start with already.

#### **ELIZABETH**

Yeah. And when you sort of restyle that piece: you know, maybe changing elements of it, painting it. Do you get inspiration from Pinterest for that? Or, you know, how do you think of what to do? Because that's always my struggle. When I think about that, I'm like, I know that this has potential. I don't like it now. But I don't know what to do to make it better.

# **NINA**

Yeah. I do think gathering inspiration is really useful for that. You know, I wrote a blog post a long time ago, but that was around finding inspiration to sell items you already have. And in fact, I was inspired by someone who did that with fashion. That you could look up the item, the specific item that you have on Pinterest, and then see how others have styled that same item. Yeah.

And that can definitely give you inspiration, either in terms of you know, changing the color or just changing some knobs or legs. But also in terms of how they've maybe positioned it in a space or which other decor pieces they've styled around it. So yeah, like you said, I think Pinterest can be really useful for that.

# **ELIZABETH**

Yeah. That's interesting that you compared it to fashion, because now that you say that with Pinterest, it reminds me of what a previous guest, Alyssa Beltempo, said in an episode — I believe 16 or 17 — about sort of doing a reverse lookup when you have a piece that you don't know how to style, type that into Pinterest, with like the word "outfit", and you'll get a lot of inspiration. So yeah...

# **NINA**

Yeah, exactly. I think you can apply the exact same thing.

# **ELIZABETH**

For sure. So the next sort of level in your hierarchy was looking secondhand. So I'd love to talk more about that a little bit. What are the benefits of secondhand home pieces?

# **NINA**

Yeah, there's so many! I get so excited about it. No, I think first of all, as we already talked about, it's sustainable. It's keeping an item from going to landfill, you're giving it another life. So

that is yeah, firstly, it makes me feel really good when I'm buying secondhand. It really can give you a boost, I think and also inspire you to live more sustainably in the rest of your life as well, I think.

And then secondly, it's affordable, too. We already talked about, you know, maybe being on a tight budget, and buying secondhand can really help. Of course, not everything is going to be a lot cheaper at first, especially if you're looking at vintage pieces, for example. But if you can take a bit more time to search for what you're looking for, I think you can definitely find it for a lower price. At least if you're also considering the quality of course. Because perhaps you can find, you know, a \$15 chair in a big shop. But how long is that going to last, compared to like, a nice vintage piece that has already lasted decades and will last you decades more.

# **ELIZABETH**

Such a good point, yeah.

# **NINA**

Yeah. And then my favorite part is that you can find really unique pieces. I love that my home is filled with pieces that I'm not gonna find a friend who has the same items in their homes. And that just makes my home feel more unique. And I think also makes me feel more attached to the items I have. You know, they all have their own little story, and I'm sure I'm gonna keep them much longer because of that as well.

And the last thing is quality, which again, we talked about. If you're finding more vintage pieces, those used to be made in a really sturdy way; they were made to last. So if you can get your hands on those, you know you're investing in a piece that's gonna last for a long time. So yeah, yeah, everything's great about it in my opinion.

# **ELIZABETH**

Yeah lots of benefits for sure. So how can somebody get started with finding secondhand items for their space? Whether they're a new homeowner, new leaser, or maybe they're redecorating and they haven't tried out the secondhand market before? Like, what are some beginner tips?

# **NINA**

Yeah, that's a good question. I think like, with anything, it's good to start small. So maybe just look for some smaller decor pieces to get you started. And yeah, I'm thinking of maybe vases or plant pots, maybe stools. I feel like especially something like vases, you find so many of them. So you'll also have a lot of options to pick from to begin with. And, you know, having small wins at the beginning is really encouraging to keep going.

And then if you're looking for a specific item, maybe going for an online marketplace is a better direction than going for a thrift thrift store. Because you can look for more specific elements, of course, if you can find it nearby. And instead if yeah, either if you're doing that, but also, if you're planning to go to some thrift stores, I think, definitely make sure to take the time for it. And try to make it fun, if that makes sense.

So, especially looking online, it takes a bit more time. So make sure you go in with that mindset. And for thrifting, it's nice to pick maybe two or three shops that are close to each other. So you can go to each one and take your time. Maybe take a friend. And yeah, for me, it's really a fun activity that you can do. Like I do with my mom, I do it with some friends. So I think if you do it in that way, it can be a lot more fun and encouraging to keep going.

And yeah, like I already said, I think being patient still is a good starting point as well. Don't feel like you have to get something on your first shot, you know? Just keep going and keep trying totally.

# **ELIZABETH**

Yeah totally. I would love to go furniture, home decor thrift shopping with you. I feel like that would be so fun.

#### **NINA**

Yeah, that would be so fun.

# **ELIZABETH**

Yeah, if only we live in the same country!

So for listeners, I do have a guide on my site for online secondhand and sustainable furniture sites to check out. But Nina, do you have any suggestions for European listeners? Because my options are mostly based in the US.

# **NINA**

I think it differs a lot per country. In the Netherlands we have Marktplatz. In France, I know you have the Bon quoix [?], but I'm sure it's quite familiar. And then I do think that most countries use Facebook Marketplace. That seems to be kind of across countries, but I don't know how the quality is in different areas.

# **ELIZABETH**

Yeah, definitely. So something I've heard from people is that they're very hesitant to shop secondhand for upholstered furniture like couches or for things like mattresses. And personally, I'm okay with couches. I just got a secondhand couch from OfferUp, an app that is in the US, not sure about other countries. But yeah the mattress is kind of tough for me to get comfortable with. So what would you say to that? Are these legit concerns? Or are these hesitations maybe more based on misconceptions?

# **NINA**

Yeah, that's, again, a good question. I also have a secondhand couch. I feel really happy and comfortable with that one. But I, yeah, I wasn't that much into secondhand when I bought my mattress, so that one is new.

And I mean, I do think you know, the negatives always stick out more than the positives. So it's something that I don't know. Yeah, we're so easily intimidated by and I think if you hear like one horror story, then you're like, Okay, I'm done. So I can imagine that. Yeah, in that sense, it's kind of a legitimate fear.

#### **ELIZABETH**

Yeah like bed bugs being in the mattress or something.

#### NINA

Yeah, exactly. I'm sure that that's the main reason, right? But at the same time, I was thinking about, you know, if we compare it to travel, we sleep in the same hotel bed as a bunch of other people and then we're usually we usually don't think about it, you know.

# **ELIZABETH**

That's a good point!

# **NINA**

And that's partially, of course, because they clean it. And I think that's also a consideration, you know. Pretty much everything can be cleaned. Maybe if you can't do it, then maybe you can get it professionally cleaned. I did look that up once and I mean, you can find a cleaner for everything. So if you're interested, I'm sure you can find that one out.

But also when, yeah, I have bought pillows and pillowcases before. And you know, if you just wash in your washing machine at a high temperature, you know that everything's gone. So, yeah, I don't think we need to be as worried as many of us are. But I understand you know, at the end of the day, you have to feel comfortable in your home. And if your mattress is not making you uncomfortable, then it probably wasn't a good decision.

# **ELIZABETH**

Yeah, right. And there's probably a difference between, you know, getting one that's on the side of the street, that you maybe have no idea where it's coming from, versus if you can find it through a store or you meet up with somebody and you kind of have that interaction. Because when yeah it's left on the curb or the alleyway, that person might have left it on the curb because it had bedbugs and you don't really know...

# **NINA**

Yeah no, you never know. Yeah, I think that's definitely it. You know, make sure that you If you're feeling uncomfortable, you can ask a person. And you know, also asking questions like if yeah, let's say... I'm a nonsmoker, so I always check if it came from a house where from someone

who smokes, things like that. So you can similarly also ask, you know, how long has it been used? Because often people are also selling things that they've used for maybe a month. So then, you know, you'll really probably feel a lot more comfortable.

# **ELIZABETH**

Yeah and you can ask all these questions or get the answers through these online sources. Like I know, on OfferUp, people will all often say from a smoke-free or pet free home. So if that's something that you're looking for. You know maybe you're allergic to cats, and you want to make sure that people will tell you if there was a cat on that couch. And if you meet up with them, you can like, check the item yourself. And, you know, you can always say, well, actually, this doesn't match the description you told me and you can always back out once you see the piece. So I feel like in my experience, that has sort of reduced my hesitations with secondhand stuff. Because like, you know, you can find out this information...

# **NINA**

Yeah, definitely. Yeah, and I think also what you say like, especially if you're able to meet the person in person, you can also get a sense for their personality, I think, yeah, we can quickly, instinctively do that, and kind of feel out if what they're saying is true, and just ask your extra questions, see the item in person. Yeah, that's also my mindset. Just make sure you're asking what you need to know. And based on that make your decision.

#### **ELIZABETH**

Yeah, totally. Like all the people I've met up with have been really nice. And they've been like, you know, check out the item first, just to confirm that you're really interested in that. There's this little mark here. Are you okay with that? You know, all that kind of stuff, because they want to get good ratings on the apps too. Like they want to be rated as a good seller.

# **NINA**

Yeah, exactly.

#### **ELIZABETH**

Yeah. So secondhand shopping can definitely still feel overwhelming. And for home stuff, maybe even more so because you have like dozens of pieces in this space that you want to sort of want to make feel cohesive with each other. So what are your tips for finding cohesive secondhand furniture and decor pieces?

#### **NINA**

Yeah. Well, first of all, I also get completely lost sometimes, for sure. But I think the main thing is to start with the plan. So I like having a mood board, some specific colors that I already have in mind. And, you know, if you want to get more specific, even having a mood board per item that you're looking for, so you know that it kind of fits in a specific style that's gonna match the room.

And then yeah, if you have kind of examples, then you can pay attention to things like the color of the item, or the shape: is it really boxy or more like rounded shapes. And also things like, you

know, the wood tones, I think that's also a really one that I pay attention to, I like having dark wood tones. So that helps to be more selective when you're searching and kind of filter out other options.

But of course, the hard part is finding the balance between following your plan and then you know, being flexible, because you can only you have the options that are there. So yeah, I think it's good to also try and be creative. think about if you can change some elements maybe, if you think it might fit your home. You know, like we talked about changing the color, or maybe replacing the fabric, something along those lines.

But then yeah, from a more practical perspective, carrying photos of the room helps a lot. And then also taking photos of each item that you add and making sure that you have those on hand as well. And so when you're, you know, literally standing next to an item, you can really, yeah, hold up your phone, and just see if it if you think it might help. Because if you think it might fit, sorry. Because yeah, doing it off the top of your head, probably isn't the best idea. We are not always as good at remembering as we think we are. So just having those images can be a really great guide.

And then in terms of the order in which you shop, I think it can also help to start with larger items first. Because those might be a bit more difficult to find, or might be more difficult to find the specific item or look that you're going for. Like I know rugs can be quite challenging to find. So starting with items like that is useful because then you've already you're not narrowing down too early. And then when it comes to the court, there's a lot more options out there so then it's easier to align with the larger pieces you already have.

# **ELIZABETH**

Yeah. And working with you on designing our living room space in our apartment was so useful to get all these tips that you shared and the additional ones kind of specific to the style that we were going for in our individual space. So it was just really useful. So can you tell us about the styling services and digital products that you offer if people are looking for more advice from you?

# **NINA**

Yeah, of course. So the main thing is kind of interior advice or creating a room plan. And this includes creating a mood board, color advice. So not just a color palette, but also which pieces I would recommend in which colors, how to combine them. I also include a floor plan, which I think helps a lot. And then also some sketches, so you can better visualize the design.

And I'm currently also testing out kind of supporting in the shopping process as well. So kind of being on-call if you want to check whether an item might fit in the design or not. And throughout the process, of course, we start with listening to your wishes and understanding what your needs are for the space, what kind of atmosphere you want. I try and translate that into something visual, but along the way, making sure that it's going in the direction that you have in mind. So that's like the big part.

And then I have a couple of things coming soon. So I'm going to be launching an ebook on secondhand shopping. So it will include some of the tips that we talked about. But really lots and lots more. It already became a lot bigger than I thought it would be. But yeah, it has really lots of tips from my experience and everything from you know what you should make sure to ask someone when you're shopping and also specific items that I prefer to look for, et cetera.

And then I have an eCourse on room design planning. So there are currently eight people following that right now, where they're going through the process of creating their own design plan with some theoretical modules, but especially with a designing template. So I'll be relaunching that in a month or so. And then of course, if someone just wants to follow along, I have a newsletter, a blog, and of course, you can find me on Instagram, and I really try to share lots more tips and advice in there and also follow up follow along the makeovers that I'm currently doing in my space. So there's lots coming. I'm really excited about those too.

# **ELIZABETH**

Yeah, yeah, I was gonna say so many exciting things happening. So your Instagram handle is @thisishomebody\_ with an underscore, is that correct?

#### NINA

Yes. That's correct, yeah.

# **ELIZABETH**

Okay, yeah. And I will link everything in the show notes, in the episode description so that people can check that all out. But yeah, I highly recommend Nina's services. We worked with her on our living room. And yeah, it was just really, really helpful.

#### **NINA**

Thanks! It was really fun.

#### **ELIZABETH**

Yeah. So one final question that I have for you that I asked to every guest, but this is a bit of a modified version. Because I typically ask, what does a better future for fashion look like to you? But I'm going to ask you, what does a better future for interior design and home goods look like to you?

#### **NINA**

Great questions. Yeah, so when I think about a better future for interior design, I think about circularity. So I imagine that we all hold on to pieces longer and find creative ways to repurpose what we have. This also means we consume less, and the industry in turn will produce less. And what does get produced, can be produced ethically, you know, with ethical labor conditions, sustainably sourced materials, and that everything also is built while keeping in mind the lifetime of the product all the way until it is ready to be thrown out. But hopefully with recycled materials!

# **ELIZABETH**

And that's a wrap for this episode, be sure to take a look at the episode description in your podcast app for the links referenced in this episode, as well as the various links to learn more about today's guest. For the full transcript of this episode, you can head on over to consciouslifeandstyle.com and navigate to the podcast section of the site. The link to the full show notes should also be linked in whatever podcast app that you are listening on.

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