

# Who Are You Wearing? With Kate McGuire

**Kiri** 00:37

Welcome to who are you wearing a podcast about clothes and style. With me, Kiri Prichard Mclean and whichever stylish soul I can convince to chat to me for an hour or so, this week is the founder and owner of converted closet, Kate McGuire. This is an episode that is a bit longer than normal, but you're gonna see why, we couldn't cut stuff out there was just too much gold. Kate has a passion for clothes and conversion in particular, that is pretty much unrivalled. And such an infectious joy that comes with it. So conversion, as I mentioned, is a passion that's taking an item and making something totally unique and new out of it. Sometimes it's damaged items, sometimes it's just stuff that isn't worn anymore. And Kate is so so passionate about clothes. And one of my favourite traits in her is that she wants everyone else to have this much joy and fun from and with their clothes. Although one of my favourite moments is where she through the medium of this podcast tells her sister off, listen out for that. Now I first met Kate a few years ago on another podcast, I think it was a pilot, and I was a guest on it, and I turned up with clothes I love but had no idea what to do with, I handed Kate a pile of my favourite tattiest saddest secret butterfly tops, all from the 70s and 80s. She thought for a minute, disappeared for two weeks and came back with the most amazing cape that's vintage. It's sustainable. And it always gets compliments. I'll whack a picture of it on the Instagram, because it's incredible that she saw it from that pile of very sad sequins. She was like, Okay, I know what to do. And she got the cape off eBay for like a couple of quid. And then she took a seamstress and they worked together on it. And she really ignited something in me that was like, Well, I'd say she ignited something in me. She is now to blame for the massive pile of damage sequins that sits in a corner of my room, waiting for me to have a good idea about what to do next. Also, she absolutely inspired the shop dead swap event that we held locally, here in North Wales where I live and record the podcast. And that's basically where people come along with their old glad rags, and we give them some tokens in return. And then they came back the next day with their tokens. And everyone just went home with new clothes. And it was a way of not introducing any more stuff into the world but kind of way of shopping and knowing that your items going to where they're gonna be really love. Not sure I've talked about it on here or not. If you want to know more about it, just give me a shout and I'll do an interview like explaining a bit more because I think you wanted to set them up, post them as well. Now there's lots of chat about struggling with body image, which I think is going to resonate with so many of us and heads up. There's also talk about disordered eating. This podcast was recorded in April 2021. And Kate was at home in New York. Love it, and I was in my cupboard in Wales. I hope this episode gets your brain racing and fizzing like it did with me. We even found out what I want to be buried in, Kate was the first person to ask me back. So please prepare to be inspired as I ask the founder of converted closet Kate McGuire, who are you wearing?

**Kate** 03:50

I think that my dad was a really big influence on me. He was, I noticed only now that I realised it, he was very creative, and he used to really enjoy the clothes that my mum wore, and actually, my mum looked to my dad to get her inspiration, he'd been like, oh, try that, you know, she was she was a little bit shy than him and he'd always encouraged her to go bold and I just enjoyed watching that play out

in front of me. I think really, I was trying to think when, when I started getting really obsessed with clothes, and I think it was like I had a Cindy doll.=, I don't even know if Cindy still exists, but it was a bit like Barbie, but Cindy was cooler. She had better hair than Barbie sorry, and I used to hoard Cindy clothes like there was nothing more exciting for me than dressing Cindy up in a new outfit, I had a doll and I remember my sister and I having a massive fight one Christmas because our aunt had given us both a baby grow for our doll and one of us had got yellow and one of us had got white and we both wanted the yellow one and we have this massive falling out over this, you know, and that, that's kind of, they are the most poignant memories I have of my childhood. So I think it was, it started with the dolls and just, it just grew from there. I don't, I don't, I can't remember the time when it transitioned onto my body. But clearly it did at some point because I liked, I like to think of myself as like I said, you know, I'm so dressing myself up now as if I am a Cindy, aren't I really?

**Kiri 05:23**

What a lovely, because that's yeah, when I look at you and the stuff that you do on Instagram, there is such a sense of fun, and your love of fashion, and especially repurposing and converting is so infectious and, but I guess there's a childlikeness there's an element of play to it, which is why I wanted to talk to you especially because so much around fashion is quite po faced and some of the fun gets sucked out of it. But you are someone who's still seems to, it's playing dress up, it's experimenting, it's, you know, when you first start making clothes, you cut up something and you make something for your Barbie. It's like as an obviously elevated version of that. So you're just...

**Kate 06:03**

Really? Yes. I'm not sure whether it's a good thing or a bad thing. But it's, you know, I remember, this is like gonna show how old I am but, we used to have this comic called Bunty. And on the back of Bunty, this is like, a long time ago, they'd have like Bunty, and then every week Bunty's new outfit and you'd have to cut out like with scissors, Bunty's outfit, and then fold the flaps back on. Every week, I'm cutting Bunty out, you know, it's just like, What was I thinking? And I think it's like, I'm most in alignment, when I'm recreating clothes. I don't, I really don't know what it is. I think it's, it's fumbled conversion, upcycling is the magic of seeing something as it is. But seeing beyond it, like every time I look at clothes, I look at what's behind them, or I look through them, like I see, what else could I do with that? If I'm walking down the street, and I'm looking in shop windows, I'm not seeing the clothes in there. I'm seeing what I would do with them, do I like them? Kind of like that, I would do that. It's that conversation all the time. And it's due to those strange little pieces of dialogue you have with yourself a lot that nobody is privy to, that, you know, maybe shape your thinking, because I practice it all the time, probably subconsciously, a lot of the time, but it's just incredible fun for me.

**Kiri 07:34**

It's amazing. Your brain is wired differently in that way is, it reminds me of, you know how interior designers can walk into a room and go, this should be there, This should be that colour and they've just got this vision. But I think you're like that with clothes and sometimes clothes that, you know, have got holes in and are, you know, are falling apart at a certain age and you know, and you're able to look at it and not see any of that as problems is quite incredible.

**Kate 07:59**

I still find it odd that people do find those things problems. Because for me they're part of the provenance, like they're part of the story, and a piece of clothing that has a story is way more interesting than a piece of clothing that has come out of some factory or out of some design house, brand new, fresh in plastic, on a hangar, and oh look, there are like a whole load of them, and anyone can have this thing and you can choose it. That's just like so, I'm so over that, doesn't interest me at all because, I guess it just doesn't, I don't like it because it doesn't really reflect who I am, I just don't want to wear something that, that doesn't really have a life or value in my eyes. I would rather have something that's been loved and cherished because everything secondhand was bought because someone loved it once and, and I love all those, I just bought the other day from the Manhattan vintage show. A, they call it show here instead of fair, go figure that, so it's this absolutely extraordinary burgundy velvet, God I don't know how to describe, but it's like a coat, but it's a very awkward length, and it's, it's got marks on it and the velvets been rubbed in the wrong way and, but it's got these magnificent shoulders that you just, you couldn't make up like I just couldn't design those, and that's the fun of conversion. I don't have to design them. They're already there. I can just build the outfit around it. So I looked at that piece and I just thought okay, there's a little mark there and a little mark there and I'm always, I want everything to be high end, like I want it, I don't want it to look shabby. I'm not into eco chic. I want it to look really high end. But it's, it's about incorporating the elements that aren't, you know, perfect and, and having them become part of the story and sort of celebrating them, if you're trying to hide them, it's game over, because when you put it on, you're going to feel like, you know, when you've got like a mark on something, and all you can focus on is the mark, no one else can see it with, if you, if you bring it out into the light, and you're like, Oh, you can see this has got a story and oh, where's it been? And yeah, there's a little mark, it's fine. It's just about being authentic. And if you're comfortable with that, then, you know, it really doesn't matter, and I think what's really interesting now is that values are changing so much post pandemic, that people are getting more comfortable with it. You know, we know these second hand, luxury resale platforms set to grow exponentially compared to the new fashion market over the next five years, and part of that is, I think, because people are getting a lot more comfortable with the idea of wearing a piece of clothing that somebody else wore before.

**Kiri 10:55**

So you growing up, you're, you're cutting your stuff out of Bunty and you're playing with your Cyndi's and you're, you're having fun with fashion in this way. What was your style like as a kid? Were you, were you experimenting, was it only on dressing up other, other things like given to you, or are you using it on yourself at that age as well, and going Yeah, I can put this together and do this?

**Kate 11:18**

I don't know whether this came from me or whether it came from my mom, I'm gonna blame my mom, obviously. But I had really short hair as a kid, and it was probably me because I didn't have the patience to be able to grow it out, and I wanted to always have it cut into a new style. So I wanted that kind of instant gratification. But the short hair. I felt like it hindered me slightly, I didn't really look the way I wanted to look, and so I kind of, I think that I went, clothes became really, really important because it wasn't really about the hair, it was about the clothes, and I never really looked the way I wanted to, I remember at school, I always looked at everybody else, what everyone else was wearing, I went, I went to a school and they had uniforms, but somehow, my uniform never felt quite polished enough, and good for my mum, because I used to wear secondhand bits and pieces, and I'm really

proud that she did that, but at the time I was a bit like oh, you know, it's feels a bit, my school skirts a bit shiny, everyone else's looks less, and then I remember we had assembly and we'd all sit in rows in assembly and you sort of sit behind a row of other girls and they'd have their hair beautifully plaited, you know, with ribbons, and, and then their nails, I used to compare my nails. And I always came off secondary, you know, I always thought that my hair looked really scruffy and my nails never grew and everyone else had tanned legs, that was the other thing, and I had white legs that never went brown, and I think there was quite a few years like that, where I just didn't really like the way I looked or, you know, I certainly didn't ever feel polished at school, and I really think that, that's connected to how I present myself now. I have, you know, really a quite annoying streak of perfectionism that I recognise almost can be problematic. I have to constantly tell myself the 80/20 rule, I literally say it to myself a lot every day, 80/20, 80/20, because I want it to be 100 And I just remind myself that being 20%, you know, is, is okay. But I really, if I'm going out anywhere now, I mean, honestly, through lockdown, I was dressing up, me and my stepdaughters were just like oh my god, what's she coming down in now? It's, it's how it makes me feel a certain way. It makes me feel put together, just mentally compass mentors, and that I'm being my best self, and if I, if I compromise on that, I don't really feel like I'm kind of in my day, and I don't know why that is, but maybe it's connected to the fact that I just always wanted to be one of those girls with the perfect plaits and the perfect bows. And I could never quite get there as a kid.

**Kiri 14:22**

I think that's so interesting because I think one of the amazing things about clothes, and fashion, and style more than fashion, is that it's, it's the most expressive art form that we all partake in, because we all build ourselves in the image of what we want the world to see, and what you're doing is someone, you know you're building yourself in this with you. You're always so well turned out and there's this level of polish and perfection and you're going, you're hiding that little girl who didn't have the right nails and, and had the pale legs behind this very polished grown up who's got it all together.

**Kate 14:55**

That's exactly what's happening.

**Kiri 14:57**

Wow, I love it. So who used to, when you're growing up, you had a sister similar in age?

**Kate 15:04**

Yeah, she's four years younger, and we're actually quite different physically. She's much taller than me, and she's like a beanpole, and I used to dress her up. She was quite shy. I was the loud one and she was the quiet one, and she was basically my little doll. She was, she could wear clothes that I couldn't, because of her body shape and her height and I actually felt quite envious of her. But I loved dressing her up in clothes. In fact, I used to dress quite a lot of people up I have a, my, my best friend now, I grew up with her, grew up next door to her, and she tells this story of us being 11, and me going round and we had, we live next door to each other. We had a big hedge between our houses, and we pop through the hedge to go on our playdates, and she was going off on a French exchange, and she remembers vividly and I remember around it, I don't remember exactly, I probably just blanked it from my memory, but apparently I dressed her up in red, white and blue full on theming in a boiler suit and

matching accessories and sent her off on her French exchange with an entire suitcase full of red, white and blue, and she remembers it like, she says she felt so cool. which we're both slightly worried about, but that was, I must have been doing it. I must have always been doing it. Actually, I do remember doing, I remember my mum asking me to do her makeup when I was quite young. Which looking back is quite odd. But I was quite good, good at makeup. And I used to style my mum up, I do remember her taking direction from me a bit around accessories and things. But yeah, it's interesting that.

**Kiri 16:53**

It is because it seems like you, because also I think you have, you know what you do online and what you do with clothing and how you, your enthusiasm, and how you communicate that, there's a real generosity there in that you're, you're doing it because you're like, I want you to be excited, I want you to have this joy. And there's this thing of like, you're, you're trying to make other people feel the joy that you feel. It's not, it's not about you. It's about you facilitating and empowering other people. And it feels like it's been that way since you were a kid.

**Kate 17:26**

That's exactly it. And I've been making films, I really want to do more films and, and more shows really, because I want to educate through entertainment, I completely believe that, that's the way that we're going to really get the mindset shift that we need. People don't want bad news. They want good news. And there's so much good news to focus on, more good news we put out there, the more it's going to grow. So let's make it fun because I was converting way before I even knew about this issue and the fashion industry and the need for sustainability. I was doing it for like pure on fun, it's 100% the thing that gets me the most excited. Oh look, it happens to be a huge response and much needed response to the issue, and solution, one of the solutions. So I feel like I'm the middleman and I feel like I've got this insight like I know that you can get the best fashion that you could dream of that's going to reflect your personality, take you to your natural edge, fit you perfectly, make you feel supremely confident and like your best self, like the most exciting experience you can have with clothes and you can get it from something already in existence, and I can show you how to do it, kind of want to just join the dots, literally I am the go between person and I think, I think that's what I get most, I get most excited about other people, other people's experience and joy and the potential that I see they could have, yeah I really do see myself as that middle, the man in the middle. So who was your, when you're growing up as a kid or as a teenager? Who was your man in the middle? Was it your dad because he had such a good eye and who was dressing you? I know you're dressing your sister but was it, was it mum or dad or were you like, no I've got this covered, I'm dressing myself? It was me because my mum is like an absolute diehard M&S fan, and oh my god, if I ever, that's where we used to shop. We used to have arguments about M&S, 'I don't want to go to M&S!' I remember for my 13th birthday, she drove me up to London. We lived in Southampton, on the south coast and we do one of our Marble Arch shops. Marble Arch normally meant Marble Arch, Marks and Spencers, and then home, and on this particular day, which was my 13th birthday, there's a TopShop next to Marks and Spencers, or there was at the time, and that TopShop was next to ?, and my mum said, as a special treat that I could get my clothes, we used to come up and buy a load of clothes, and that was see me through for a long time. And I could go and get them from Topshop and ?, and I just remember, I was so overwhelmed. I didn't know where to start. I just, was just, you know, when you're like, you want something so much you're almost like, Oh, God, I can't have it. So yeah, I really wanted to do my own thing. And I negotiated with my

parents quite young to have an allowance rather than them go out and buy me clothes, which didn't work out brilliantly in my favour, because 10 quid a week doesn't get you very far. I found out quite quickly, which probably led me to my conversion journey because I realised that I just had to get creative with the clothes I had, because I just didn't have enough. So I started going into my dad's wardrobe and wearing his shirts and doing stuff with that, and I used to, my dad had really wicked wardrobe, and I remember they said to me, my mum told me this story quite recently, actually, we're going to a disco when I was about 13, and mum and dad were dropping me off, and she said they were looking around them, and it was like, obviously fashion at the time. All the girls were wearing black pencil skirts and white shirts with the collars popped, real 80s thing, and she said, I got out of the car and they watched me walk in and I was wearing black and white stripy tights with a black and white check gingham puffball, and my dad's oversized emerald green cardigan. I just looked, mum would like, you just looked completely different from everyone else and they laughed, they laughed together about it, and I was like really? I didn't even realise that I didn't look like everybody else. So I really, I always knew what I wanted to wear, and I did not want to wear the M&S clothes that my mom wanted me to wear? Did she ever whack you in anything you absolutely hated then? Can you remember wearing an item and being like, this is not me? I wouldn't, I just wouldn't have worn it. I wouldn't have worn it. I couldn't, I couldn't put myself into something that's not me. No. In fact, I've been a couple of occasions, you know, over the course of my career where I've been asked to be dressed by stylists, and literally have an allergic reaction at the thought of it. Like somebody else, styling me? Oh, I can't like, even now I can feel the cringes on my forehead, it's like No Way! I've got to wear what I want to wear.

**Kiri 22:45**

Is that because, Is that, Is that, Two things meeting there, is that your level of perfectionism and they wouldn't know how to get it right? Or is it, someone's taking the joy of you putting it together away?

**Kate 22:57**

Someone else's idea about who I am, like my clothes, equal who I am. So I get to choose who I am, not them. If they're gonna put me in a dress, It's their idea of who I am, and I'm just like, No, thanks. I just couldn't have that. Plus, don't you get days where you just you want to wear something, and it's the thing to wear on that day, but yesterday, you'd never have dreamt of wearing it like yesterday, you just were not in the mood. But today, I uh, yeah, that is what I, That's me today. What if a stylist came along, picked something out that was me last week? Do you know what I mean? It just feels so wrong on every level. So no, I couldn't do that. Do you? Do you get styled?

**Kiri 23:47**

I'm not averse to the idea. But I think it's, you know that thing? Have you ever had someone buy you a present? They're like, I saw this and I just had to get it for you, and you open it and you're like Christ, what do you think I am? But you can't say that obviously, and I worry it would be the same with style, because also I grew up watching things like Trinny and Susannah and Gok Wan who I absolutely love, but any woman who looked like me, they'd put in a rap dress and I literally can't think of anything worse than me in a wrap dress. So my deep fear is that they put me in a you know, let's put a belt on to accentuate your waist and, and let's give you a deep V because you got big boobs and I'm like no, put me in a leotard and a cape, that's what I want to wear. So yeah, no, I've never used stylists, I'm not, like

I said, I'm not averse to it, but I think they might, it feels like they might try and clip my wings a bit I guess, and probably make me look better but...

**Kate 24:40**

No way. That's the same thing right? What if it's their idea of you, and then they bought it on you? It just goes to show how personal clothes are like, are they an extra layer of our skin? You know? I think there's so much meaning in them.

**Kiri 24:56**

So as a kid, did you have an outfit, or a teenager, do you have an outfit or an item of clothing you put on and you were like, hello, this is me, I feel a million dollars in this?

**Kate 25:06**

Yes Kiri, and no one will be surprised that it involved a jumpsuit. I mean, I don't know what that obsession is. Well, I've tried to dissect it because I'm a bit like that. I like to, I like to work out why, you know, what's, what's the reason for this? I had this Laura Ashley jumpsuit, it was like a play suit romper type thing, kind of empire line, high waisted, sleeveless, was bright green, and it had splotches of pink and yellow on it, and big Andy Pandy trousers, exactly like I make now funnily enough, and I'd wear it with these amazing matching green shoes that I got in a sale because no one else wanted them, and they had like a big green paitent rosette on the front, it just happened to be the same green, and I remember the dog chewed the rosette on my shoes, never been so upset. But I'd wear this ensemble and think I was the business, and I think the thing about jumpsuits is that they're, They're sporty, in my mind. They're, I'm not well, maybe I am a bit of a, I'm everything, to be honest, I'm a girly girl sometimes, sometimes I'm not. But I like, I like the playfulness, of trousers, on women, and I really like, I just like a jumpsuit, because for me, it's a cross between a skirt or a dress and a pair of trousers, and it just, it's sort of I like the idea of everything being all there, like you just gonna wear one thing, and it says so much in that just, just in that one piece of clothing. You know, it's not a dress, it's a jumpsuit. Jumpsuits are a lot rarer for starters, and then, oh, there's something quirky about that. Oh, and that takes it into an even more unique place, and then oh, look, she's layered it with that. That's even more unique, and then, ? and somehow she pulled it off. You know, and I guess that's, that's what probably, how far can I take this, before it becomes completely wrong? There is a line, right? I mean, you know, that line, you know, when you've crossed it, and you're like, Nope, we're going to take that bit off. That was too far. I like going to that edge. How, How far can I get before I feel out of my comfort zone? That is fun for me.

**Kiri 27:37**

Yeah there's such a sense of joy in talking to you about this. And I think it's so good. It's gonna be so brilliant for people to hear because, I know that clothing and fashion can be a really painful thing for people really, you know, especially if you are plus sized or you know, just your body doesn't, doesn't fit what the shops tell you a body should look like, and that I think that's even more of a problem these days. So yeah, and conversion, I guess is an antidote to that as well because you can, that whole thing of like, there were so many things that I told myself I couldn't wear and then when I started getting clothes made for me or altered, it just changed it, like you can wear anything, it just has to fit you right. I

wanted to ask you growing up as a teenager in particular, there was, everyone has trends as they're a teenager, What were the big trends? Were there any that you indulged in and loved?

**Kate 28:28**

I just want to actually just go back to that point that you were just making before I answer that, because one of the reasons I think one of the big factors that drove me to convert was the fact that I had big body image issues. I think, you know, which teenager doesn't, but I, I grew up in a family of stick insects, and I wasn't a stick insect. And I for whatever reason, you know, I just didn't like the way I looked really at all, and I, I got quite clever at giving myself confidence through what I was wearing, because I think I developed this sort of this, I don't know what it's like, mastery of optical illusion, whether, you know what, nobody else may have seen it that way but in my head, I could put clothes on and draw attention to the areas I liked and hide the ones I didn't really cleverly, you know, it doesn't matter whether anyone else thought it was level or not, I thought this is working. So when I looked in the mirror, I looked the best version of myself and I very carefully, I remember I had this, God look, I'm talking about Laura Ashley all the time, that was probably it was Southampton, that was one of the only shops in Southampton at the time. But there was this Laura Ashley blazer and they done a collaboration, I think it was with the World College of Fashion, World College of Art or something but some of the students, and it was very, very cleverly cut, it was a designer cut in Laura Ashley and it had a special silver button and it was amazing fabric. It was not like a Laura Ashley regular, and I saved up for this particular blazer, because the way it was cut was just genius, and I could wear it, it was like a size, I think it was probably a size 14, and when I wore it, I felt like it just, I just felt like it narrowed me or not narrowed me, but it made me feel like compact, I think I have got a small head, and I just wanted my body to feel streamlined, and I lived in that blazer, I reckon I wore it, I mean, probably two thirds of the year, for five years. When I remember throwing it away, I had to throw it away. There was nothing left. Basically wore it out completely. There was no fabric. But that, that is a really big part of my story. It's, it's changing things to optimise the way that you see yourself, and like, and it's really easy. I discovered a tiny tweak here. You know, just really the smallest things could have a really big impact in the way that I saw that thing on myself, and I keep going back to that because it's, who cares what anyone else, we can think, we can think what other people, we think other people think about us, but we'll never know. So ultimately, it's all about us. Do we like the way we look in that? That's what we're trying to, Yeah, okay, I yeah, I feel comfortable with this now. Bingo. I can go. Yeah, and I remember I actually used one, oh God, this wedding, I had to go to this wedding, and I didn't want to go, I was having a really bad time about my body image, and my mom took me shopping and we found this black velvet dress, and it had a very punchy tartan collar on it. I'm looking back, I think it was a summer wedding. I don't know what we're thinking anyways, it was like full black velvet long sleeves. Anyway, I was like, This is my dress, and I remember finding a hat and making an accessory to go on the hat. So the outfit was just, it was all about the collar and the hat, you know, all the, it was all going on at the top, and I left the house feeling okay, and I really didn't want to leave the house. It was really, I had some really hard times during that, that period of my life, and clothing just became everything. You know, it was whether I was going to, it was my armour with my comfort, was my mood changer. It was my meditation. It was just how I related to the world. You either gonna see me or you weren't. You know, it's just, it's incredible.

**Kiri 32:38**

And is that when you're a teenager as well?

**Kate** 32:41

Yeah I think late teens, late teens. So I was, did a lot of drama when I was younger, and I was really good at it, I did extra curricular drama, and then when I was 18, I remember standing on stage in one of the festivals or competitions that I did, and I'd normally just clean up at these things, and that particular time, at that age, I just felt so self conscious. I remember standing on the stage and instead of being engrossed in what I was reading, I was, I had sort of, had one eye on that and the other eye on the audience, and I was imagining what they must think of me and I wasn't coming off very well. I just thought this is over. I don't want to be doing this anymore. This, it wasn't fun anymore, and that yeah, that was like my late teenage and my 20s were really peppered with that as well. It was, yeah, it was, it was, I didn't have the best time in my 20s, funny, isn't it? I'm having a brilliant time now. I'm really making up for it. But it was a really difficult period of my life actually.

**Kiri** 33:43

So did clothes help that? Were they your, your way of like, I say building someone who found it easier to, to cope with what people you imagined was thinking about you., or you could control what you imagined people were thinking about you?

**Kate** 34:00

I think it's the latter. I think I could, I used clothes quite a lot at that time, I think to hide, and then if I was having a good day, I could, you know, ramp it up. But that was actually yeah, that was, that was my Laura Ashley blazer phase that really, that, that thing was my shell. I mean, when I'm talking about it, I can actually feel myself having emotional reactions. Thinking about the gifts that, that blazer gave me, you know how many times I felt okay, because I was wearing that blazer. I mean, thankfully, I've come a long way, and, you know, it's not about the way we look, you know, that's just a symptom of what was going on inside, but this time, I didn't know that, and so I was looking for, for things to help me and the clothes were my friends. They they really did get me through those times.

**Kiri** 34:52

It's so, so interesting and touching and I think so many people will relate to that as well, and what you're saying about, because we haven't had a big conversation like this before, and I look at you and the amazing things that you create and put together and what I see now, which is so beautiful as someone who's not hiding, like you are so, you're on a stage and the spotlights on you, and you've just got this gift with these clothes, and it's so nice that people can come through and get to a stage where the clothing isn't camouflage anymore. It's the, it's the carnival, it's the celebration of themselves, which is what I see when I see you.

**Kate** 35:29

You know what's interesting when you say that, because it's probably, that's one of the reasons, every time I get dressed, it's a celebration for me, and, you know, I, I had a, I realised that I was, actually had a food addiction, and I had to just sign off flour and sugar for many, many years, and to really to keep my mental health in check. That's just where it goes for me, and it's just pure joy. For me, I guess I feel like I can express myself in the way I want to, and I will never get tired of it. I will never, and actually

what I, what I see happening now is that I'm getting more and more adventurous, and I'm now creating couture collections. I feel that we're going to be opening our eyes up to a really exciting red carpet situation post COVID, and a lot of people are going to be wanting really interesting, sustainable stuff to wear, and I think that mine will be super sustainable, you know, wasn't even made from anything new from the planet, and really edgy, and I'm taking, I'm sort of just thinking everything through like, it's almost like, there are no limits, you know, so the pieces that I convert, always have interesting elements to them, I always look for those things an amazing fabric or hopefully a mixture of both, and then I just let the clothes talk to me, and the creativity doesn't, I don't have to get, I mean, my creative, creativity gets triggered by the person who designed the thing in the first place, and so it's like a co-creation of each garment, which invariably is more interesting, really than one person, you've got two angles, and I can see myself just the like, I didn't think I had a ceiling before, but now I'm just like, No, I did, and I'm sure there'll be a ceiling above this, but it's just how big and expressive can I get? and I look at people like Lady Gaga, who really just, to my mind, it just blew the top off it like I mean, who wears a meat dress? I mean, that's just like, at the time, it was just so like, inconceivable. Like, I just couldn't even get my head around what her message was, and now I can actually, it's just like how far? How far can you take it, that's all, that's what Gaga's about, right? It's, I'm going to be who I am going to be, no one is going to tell me not to be this person, and I'm going to do what I want, and I just love that freedom, and I'm actually making a dress right now that I have her in mind for, she's my muse for this dress. It's just how completely insane can we get? you know, and that's exciting. Because you know, in this new world, stylists are going to be looking for this kind of thing, and suddenly, you know, social media, we can have a platform we can reach these people and say, hey, I've got something over here and they're gonna be more open to it because they want to wear something sustainable and there's not that much of it around now. Really exciting.

**Kiri 38:36**

It is, and you're right there at the front with your, your collection of Cindy dolls and folding over the paper bits on it, its Bunty but it's Lady Gaga. When you're a teenager and you're feeling like you're at war with your body, it feels like that's sort of what you're, you're talking about and wanting to hide. Did you have a rebellious teen phase then, or were you too busy hiding? Did it manifest in your style, if you had a rebellion?

**Kate 39:24**

Yeah, my sister had had a rebellion, and I didn't. I think exactly that. I think actually, I probably, my rebellion was, unfortunately direct. Well, it's not unfortunate because I just believe that, that I'm so grateful for everything that happened to me and all those states of my growth, because I'm so happy to be where I am now, and if I hadn't had those who knew, and there was so much invaluable learning that came as a result of it. So I don't regret any of that. I think that, and there's no one to blame, you know, it's just, it was the way it is, and I think I probably ate a lot of my frustration, and it was, it was internally directed, I put it back on myself. I didn't, yeah, I didn't feel like there was space around for me to kind of, you know that, they say, don't they, that people either turn it inwards or outwards and I was definitely a turning inwards person. So I now have quite a, you know, I have to, sometimes I have to physically pat myself on the shoulder like really I do, you know, to remind myself like well done, because I'm quite hard on myself that comes out in the profession.

**Kiri 40:37**

You are, you hold yourself to these extraordinary standards, like really extraordinary. So what we see when we see you now, this joy, and this carnival, this celebration, with all these ideas firing off, and clothing being a source of joy, not a camouflage, when did that start manifesting, your style that we see now, when did that first appear on the scene?

**Kate 41:02**

It started in my 30s, when I got on top of the food addiction, and I started to realise that I wasn't going to change size. And I was in a corporate job at the time in London, in a bank, and I remember being on the corporate finance floor, massive open plan, like huge, huge floor, I've never ever seen a floor like it since. It took quite a long time to walk from one end to the other, and it was quite male dominated as well, and I remember my, almost like, you wish to sort of see yourself objectively, I could, if I look back now, I can see how I was, these little quirky elements were coming out even in that situation. So it was corporate, we had to, we had to look corporate, you know, that bank doesn't take, you know, prisoners when it comes to the way you present yourself. But it was, before leopard print really came out actually, really, I remember getting hold of a pair of leopard print pumps with neon trimming, and I'd be wearing them with a black jigsaw suit, and, you know, sort of do quite a dramatic lip and scrape my hair back, and you know, God knows who I thought I was, I don't know, whatever I like the look of it, and no one, I remember the stairs, I'd walk, walk down the corporate finance floor and literally the men, they wouldn't be looking at me, they'd be looking at my shoes, like, who is this woman wearing these shoes? like what's that saying? You know, what? They've never seen anything like it, and that was fun to me. I really enjoy that kind of attention just a little bit. Nobody can tell me off because look, they're flat pumps, but oh, look, they're, what, leopard print, pony skin, neon, but you know, just on the right side of it. That was really fun. So it's just pushing through, and in my career, I've always taken fashion to the edge of what's acceptable within that corporate vibe. I guess where I really started to expand is when I started to do converted closet and I realised that actually, Oh, look, my career is conversion. Okay, you know, and it took a while to get free to the point where I just described, now I'm just like, Okay, God, where can I go with this? This is brilliant. I'm allowed to be as creative as I can. This is excellent. But yeah, up to that point, but it's, my 30s I think really.

**Kiri 43:29**

So when you're talking about your strong lip and your hair scraped back, do you, is hair and makeup, is that part of the outfit too?

**Kate 43:36**

100%. I was talking to my sister, we have a WhatsApp group, my sister and my BFF, we're all very close, and they sent through a dress the other day, and Fee was like, oh, no, I don't know about that, and I was like, really?, and I said Fee you could totally pull this off. It just needs a strong lip, and as I said it, I was, I didn't realise what I meant, but yeah, I mean, it completely changes the way you look in an outfit. When I go into a shop, or I see people trying stuff on, and they haven't got their makeup on, and they haven't done their hair, you know? And like, especially Fee, she's got full on clothing, we'll go into a shop and she'll put the thing on over her outfit that she's wearing and she's gonna expect to feel something about, like, how on earth can she possibly see what that's going to look like? But she thinks she can, course she never buys anything. She's always like, Oh, I can't find anything I like well, maybe

Fee, if you didn't, you know, I think there's a balance. So I really, I love makeup, it's really important to me because it's strong and I never wear my hair down. I have a pony and that's my signature. I don't want my hair to ever interfere with my outfit, it's about the clothes. But I still have to have a strong face to balance the strong clothing. So then it comes out in the makeup. So I feel it's like a bit of a science, and it may sound strange, but that's kind of, it's the same as well, it doesn't really vary, its strong eyes, I like a strong lip sometimes not depending on what I'm wearing. But the hair is always the same. It's just this, this routine situation on the top, and then I can go crazy on the bottom, and I feel confident because this bit's set. Yeah, God, I didn't even know I was doing that until I was talking about it now. Yeah. It is. It's like a mix between, it's a blank canvas, but it's one that's man enough to take the weight of the outfit, do you know what I mean? You can't just whack it on with nothing on because, you know, it all has to tie together, and again, it's that level of polish as well, isn't it? Everything has been thought through, you know, the brows, the outfit everything. Love it. The brows, oh my god, I don't think I can see my brows in the same way that everyone else can. I think they look totally normal. I don't think people think, I like a really big strong brow. I've got really pale eyebrows, and I have to tint them and yeah, I think it looks like, I think you know how we see ourselves so differently to everyone else? I think they look like they're just completely natural. But I've had a few dm's of people going, you have a very interesting brow. Do you tattoo them? Do you dye them? Do you shape them? How do you do them?, and I'm like, really? Do they look that different? My sister's like, Kate, you've got two big brown slugs on your face above your eyes. Yeah, they really stand out like, Oh, well, no mind. I can't get rid of them now.

**Kiri 46:49**

I think that, that is not what I see. But that is exactly what a sister's verdict would be.

**Kate 46:55**

Oh, yeah, no, she's brutal.

**Kiri 46:57**

This is an interesting one. I normally ask people what trend they've tried to pull off and it isn't happening. But interesting thing about you is I think what you do is, it's beyond, it's sort of timeless. It sits above trends. I don't see you being like, I'm not saying you're out of fashion, you're like above it. Does that feel fair?

**Kate 47:17**

There's a difference between trend and style, and trend to me intimates that you are following something, and I haven't really, I'm not interested in following anything. Why would I want to follow somebody else? It's a bit like brands, why would I want someone else's name on my clothes, I've still got things, I've got look, I'm sitting here right now with someone's name all over me. But I think it's quite, quite funny. I'm not wearing it, because I want people to see that, and I actually really liked the colours of what I'm wearing right now, and the pattern. But style transcends trend. And trends can be hard to pull off. Because we're all completely different. Everybody's body shape. I always think when you buy a piece of clothing, and you buy whatever size, you're buying a size 12, that size 12 was made from anybody who's five foot to six foot and any variation on a size 12, and you put it on your body, you're in a changing room, doesn't fit you. What do you blame? You blame the piece of clothing? Or do

you blame yourself? Yeah. What? It's backwards. So I think it's about, yeah, trend is fun. Because again, it's that fresh thing, right? It's that new invention of yourself, you want to, oh, I want to reinvent myself and this is fresh and new, and it's kind of cool. But it's finding the style within, within the trend to finding the elements of the trend that you like, and taking them and applying it to your style. So yeah, it's a bit you know, you can't fit a round peg into a square hole and trends are generally for you know, one shape or another. I just, I also think honestly that, that's going a bit, I think that this whole linear model of fashion is changing. I mean I always find it extraordinary that all the designers you noticed have the same trend every season you know? How does that happen? Do they like all get together on a big call and be like you know, we're all doing Y trousers and high waist right?, and then, because they do, they all put out Y trousers and high waist at the same time, everyone does their own version of it. Who decided that, and then why are they all doing it? Why can't one of them do low waist and skinny trousers? You know, I just, what is that about? I do find that very, very interesting. That's a whole other conversation. But I think I encourage people to go for what they feel really good in, how, when they look in the mirror, what do they like most? Look in your wardrobe and look at the dresses. Every time you put that dress on, you feel fantastic. What are the elements of it that you really, really like?, and then can you apply those elements to something else? Can you find a dress somewhere else? Can you go and have a look on eBay or Etsy and find a dress, buy it in a size bigger, and then convert it into the the elements of the dress you really like, and that's really easy. You can take that dress, and the dress you bought, down to your local dressmaker, who right now is desperate for your business, and get her to copy those elements like just put those sleeves on, maybe adjust that length, put that V neck and you come out with a dress that's made to measure, that you've had creative input into and you put time and energy, you will value that dress more than anything else in your wardrobe, and every time you wear it, someone'll go, oh my God, you look great in that dress, because you'll be feeling really good in it, and you go, Oh, this old thing? Oh, yeah, no, I just knocked this up with my local dressmaker, you know, just kind of had a bit of, you know, you're gonna feel really good about that, and that's the experience, and I think that we're moving into a new paradigm where that is going to become more and more common. I really do. Which is exciting.

**Kiri 51:25**

I hope so. Well, when you convert stuff, you must have some very old, I've seen some of the pieces that you've got, and they're, they have some real age to them. What's the oldest thing, well, there's sort of two questions, What's the oldest thing that you think you have, and what's the thing that you have had for the longest?

**Kate 51:44**

Okay, the thing I think I've had, well, now I think, the thing I think is the oldest is actually with my dressmaker in London right now, and it's a dress that I think it was in the mid. So it's something like 1860, I think, and I bought it from Etsy, actually, it arrived and it was pretty disintegrated, s=and I have the picture of the lady who wore it. Unbelievable in, you know, Sepia tint, she's standing there in this dress, I have this dress in my hand, and if I don't do something with it, it will go to landfill. I mean, it's literally I'm saving it, it should be in landfill really just because there's nothing really anybody can do with it. Some parts of the fabric are in great condition, not that many, but some parts are, and so I'm restoring it, I want to restore it into a dress that I can actually wear. So I'm having to get a bit creative and borrow fabric from other things and reline it and reconstruct it because also the waists are like

nonsensical. I mean, I don't know. I just don't know any, I don't know how those waists happened. Literally talking about like, a wrist, a hand. So I have to have the whole thing made bigger to be able to make it wearable, but I just, I had this idea. I bought it in London, and I knew I was moving to New York. I do, do this, I fantasise about where I'm going to wear something. So I look at this dress on Etsy and have this like, fantasy come into my head. And it's like, yeah, I'll be like in New York, going for some, like lunch somewhere really glamorous, and I'll walk in, in this dress, you know, just the sort of, and it never happens. I thought, I do think, I think these fantasies never happen. But I'm completely convinced they will, that's what drives me to create it in the first place. So yeah, this is my, my sort of token, token vintage dress that I will wear at some point. But how cool will that be? What kind of story but you, I don't want, I don't want it to be costume. There's a fine line. I'm not doing fancy dress here, and that's the point, and you've got to be careful as well, because a lot of people that I've realised who are into vintage, a lot of the vintage community on Instagram are very identified with vintage clothes, and some people don't like me converting them, don't like them being touched. Really, they really don't like it as I found, and my argument is, I'll never convert anything that hasn't got something really wrong with it. I converted this Ozzie Clark jumpsuit on Instagram, it's blue. It was a dress. It's now a jumpsuit. And I got lambasted for converting this thing by the Ossie Clark crowd who, I am an Ossie, I'm part of the Ossie Clark crowd. But what, what they didn't realise, and I did reference it in, in the post, was that when I bought it from the vintage fair, It had two big brown stains under the arms. So when you sweat, who knew, it actually burns the fabric and causes it to have a chemical change, the hue changes. So it's nothing you can wash out because the colour of the fabrics actually change colour. These two brown arms are going to prohibit anybody from wearing this dress in my opinion, I'm sorry, no matter how big an Ossie Clark fan, you are, really? Oh, I'm just going to go put my arm up, lovely, look. So I took this piece, and I thought I, I always think if a dress could speak, or the clothing could speak, or I could dialogue with the original designer, what would they think?, and I thought, What would Ossie say, I'm going to, going to keep it according to Ossie's style, I'm going to make the jumpsuit pants as if I think he would have done, so I'm going to take the gathering that's on the sleeves. And I'm going to just translate it into the trousers and we were really meticulous. We covered buttons in exactly the way that the buttons on the sleeves already were, and so it was really a kind of homage to Ossie, I really think if he was going to create a jumpsuit now, this is the kind of thing he would have done, and I really believe I saved that piece, and I've given it fantastic new life, whether I wear it or someone else wears it. I was really happy with it, and I think that a lot of the vintage crowd are trying to preserve all these Ozzie, Ozzie Clark pieces, and I really, really respect it. But there are pieces out there that no matter how beautiful they are, they are unwearable, and the museum's, according to my friend who used to work at the V&A, all museums, not big ones, tiny museums are stuffed to the brim with perfect examples of clothing, they can't, there's no room for new clothes. So there's this, this gap, where did these clothes go? That are old and a bit damaged? Not quite right, nobody's gonna wear them. They're too old fashioned, or, you know, they're literally unwearable. But they're not good enough for the museum, and yet, they're spectacular examples of things that could be converted into amazing new pieces. I'm really interested in those and I want to give those new life, because if I get those new life, I'm preventing one thing from being bought, and I'm preventing that thing from going into landfill. I've got a double sustainable win, and I've produced something completely unique. So I will go and do that, and there are billions of these pieces around, you know, like billions. So I will keep doing it. But you do have to be, you have to respect people, you have to respect that they are quite wedded to these pieces, and I'm not going to convert something who doesn't need conversion. I just wouldn't do it.

**Kiri 57:57**

I hadn't even thought about some people who see themselves as I guess curators and protectors of stuff, not understanding what you were doing would see it as a total sacrilege. But sacrilege to me is a piece of beautiful clothing sat in a wardrobe that's never going to be worn, and yet would just take you know, a bit of imagine, well I say a bit, your eye basically, and you know giving work to a dressmaker, and then suddenly, it's going to be loved again, and isn't that what all designers want their clothes to be loved and worn?

**Kate 58:27**

Quite Right. That's right. I think.

**Kiri 58:35**

What you do is so interesting, and from all different times and eras and styles and you know, patterns, prints, trends, everything. I shouldn't say trends or other styles. Is there a time in history that stands out for you in just in terms of the clothes at least?

**Kate 58:52**

Wow. You know, it's Yeah, I mean, I think early Dior and early Balenciaga I find mesmerising because they're so deeply modern, and so timeless, and classic, but they're not classic in the boring sense of the word. It's not because they haven't got tonnes of style. I just don't, to me, they're kind of, that's just genius. That's just fashion design genius that transcends everything. It just makes a woman look beautiful, but neat, and it's not, not weak, it's strong. I really, I just like, the simplicity of the cut, and also, the boldness, like some of that early Balenciaga stuff. It's just, it's the sort of stuff that nowadays would be considered ultra edgy. I can't even imagine how it must have been seen then it was just, you know, and I sometimes I think I'd like to step back into that era and actually watched it all happen. But honestly, I don't have a particular penchant for any time, because every time has produced incredibly different fabrics. I love that.

**Kiri 1:00:11**

Is there an item of clothing that you can put on and you just instantly feel brilliant in?

**Kate 1:00:17**

Yeah, and I think it's generally a dress. Honestly, I love, I do like dresses, I like dresses and jumpsuits. But I have got, I've got this dress in my wardrobe that I bought from a vintage dealer in London, and it's got a big sort of bullseye pattern on the bottom. It's very plain, very thick, knitted fabric, but it's just, it's super cool, and I, all I had to do was lift the skirt up from the waist, and to just make it shorter, it's quite a tricky thing to do, actually, because of the bullseye on it actually had a motif. But we managed to do it, and I got it home, and that was the only thing we changed about it, and I looked at it in the mirror, and I was so disappointed. I was like, Oh No, I had her make it too short. This is not the kind of dress that we can lengthen, and I, it was weird because I just don't know what I was thinking. I was like, I'm so pissed off at myself. This was such an amazing piece. I love my 8020 rule, right, I'm like 20 in, 20 in Kate, cool it down. I thought you know, there's gonna be a way out of this because there's always a way, always, always. So I looked at it and I thought who made it? The sleeve, started playing around with the

sleeves, and I realised that if I made the sleeve three quarter length, it totally changed the dress. So oh, that's like a really big game changer. Because the sleeve was quite long. For some reason the length of the sleeve was impacting the length of the dress, shorter sleeve, suddenly the length looks longer, the whole thing works, and the other thing I thought, oh, it's got this round neck, it just feels a bit boring. The top doesn't feel like it's connecting to the bottom. Why is that? So I thought well, if I'm going to chop up the sleeves, I'm going to have some fabric leftover from the bottom of the sleeve, I can make a skinny scarf. Perfect. I can wear that around my neck. So took it back to my beloved dressmaker, Mikayla, she was like, Oh God, not this thing back again. I was like, oh yeah its me again! I said look we need to change this, do this and this and see what happens. So we did it. So I went back in, put it on and was a bit nervous, because you know, you just didn't want to mess something like that up, and I put it on, the sleeve works, and then I took the skinny scarf, put that round, tie that round my neck in a bow, I like, I cannot even describe how different it looked with that tiny tweak, and what had happened was that the black top was now extended up the neck so the balance of the dress had just been wrong before and it needed a taller top to balance the skirt. Anyways, this, this thing and, and I wore that dress to a really big lunch with Caroline Rush the head of the British Fashion Council, lots of people there from fashion, and I had so many people coming up to me just, love what you're wearing. Love what you're wearin', love what you're wearing, and I just thought, Wow, I did this as a really great dress, and I think that's, that I do love that dress. Because it's so, so simple. It's so modern, it's old, and it just, I kind of really feel that I breathed new life into it, and I'm proud of that.

**Kiri** 1:03:42

That's magical. That's such a beautiful story as well, because it's the idea of, I would have thought if you convert something and it doesn't work, then it's a failure. But the fact that you're still Rubik's Cubing and be like No, no, this is, we will get there with it, is um, I guess that's, that's exciting for me because I've thought, I'm gonna try and do this with it, and then if it doesn't work, I should just give up on it. But like, No, keep, keep trying. Yeah, you might be able to get there with something.

**Kate** 1:04:09

Always or call me up. Send me a picture. What can I do with this? It's important to ask friends, you know, what, just, just talk to people like what can I do with, what can I do with this or if you've got any clothes that you really, really are over, I always say don't give them to charity. Ask your friends and family first. People really love that it's, I think it's going to happen a lot more than it has done historically. There's still a little bit of a, you know, I'm gonna give my old clothes, she wouldn't want my old clothes. Actually, she might really want your old clothes, and then you're gonna know that you've made her happy. They've gone to a good home she's wearing you know, and then she might give you something. It's just a it's a different mindset, but I think it's one that's coming in. So talk to your friends.

**Kiri** 1:04:51

That's really beautiful, because also, something I struggle with in terms of clothes and buying things is, I get a real thrill from acquisition. From getting the thing, and having the new thing, and then it does wane. But if you're going to get the new thing and enjoy it, and then you think, right well in a few years if I haven't worn you, I'm gonna look at you and go, what can I turn you into that I would wear? Especially if it's for you know, a superficial reason like, oh well that, that, you know, epaulettes fallen off or whatever, then you can keep getting the thrill of acquisition and without the environmental impact as

well which is a really exciting thought. What is your relationship with shopping? I know you're on Etsy, I know you go to lots of vintage fairs or shows, but do you enjoy the process of it? Do you prefer it online? Do you want to be there in person to touch things?

**Kate** 1:05:43

I've got quite well trained now in looking, knowing what I'm looking for online. So if, if I'm looking at something velvet and I know that it's a 1960s piece, it's bound to be really good velvet, vintage fabrics are invariably much, much higher quality than the fabric we use now, even designer fabric. Oh, it's just next level, and so the older I go, the more content I am that I'm getting a really high quality piece and I have made a couple of bloomers. I bought this peach silk, I look back now and I was so excited about it. I was dialoguing with the guy on Etsy. I wonder if he actually knows, I said, is this silk? and he wrote back saying, it feels very silky. Not sure he's going to really know what the components of this fabric are, but let's go for it, because it looked very silky, and when it arrived, it was very silky. It was very, very shiny, silky, and it was it was virtually plastic. But interestingly, it had body, it had weight, and although it was fully synthetic, it felt really good quality. So I just thought well, I'm not, I'm going to do something with it. So I turned the jacket round, put it on backwards, flipped up the collar, so it then became high neck, and then as I put the collar on backwards, I realised that the collar on the back of my neck, which was now propped open was really cool, and then if I fastened that together, it almost looked like a bird going down my back. Wouldn't have thought of that, and then it just all worked really well. It looked like a little bolo row top, and the skirt, I turned into some culottes, and actually my assistant said that was her favourite piece, and then we're ? Oh this is my favourite piece. What? The peachy silk synthetic thing that I turned backwards? My dream outfit. I just thought you know, who knew, there's no way that anyone would have worn that before, and so I'm happy with the fabric. So yeah, the thing is, the older you go, the better, and I'm better at shopping online because I know what I'm looking for, and I really enjoy shopping online as well, because you can get to a lot more clothes fast. You know, sift, sift, sift, and sometimes you find these really great shops, and they're like gems, and then sometimes they don't really know how much things are worth, and you're like, oh my god, she has no idea. This is Malcolm star, and it's what, what! and you're like, oh, yeah, so I'll have that. You know, when you're like, don't change your mind. Don't change your mind, and, you know, I bid on stuff on eBay, and sometimes I get a bit upset. I bought this amazing dress, which I have posted on Insta, it's white with big black spots on it, and it's made of silk organza, and it's an experience buying from these people who sell. I bid on it. I think I put like 25 quid on it because their starting bid was five or something, and I thought, no, 25 I'll probably get outbid. But I'll just start there, and it arrived in the post. So you know, I don't know, I must have paid for it. So it arrives in the post, and it came with this little note. Dear Kate, I'm thrilled this dress has a lovely new home. It was actually from this couture house in Paris. Everything is hand sewn. You've got a very, very special piece on your hands here, and I'm like, Oh, my God, it's exquisite. So I put it on. And I was like running around the house showing everyone, look what I just got on eBay! It was 25 quid, and everyone's like, wow, that's cool, kinda used to me now, but it's amazing. This dress is amazing, and that was so much fun. You know, finding that kind of thing and I think online is good for that stuff when you can look around, but ultimately vintage fairs. Oh god, It's my, that is my dream scenario, someone says to me, which they had actually on my birthday a couple of years ago. What would you like to do? The Clerkenwell vintage fair happened to be on, and I was like, Okay, you really want to know, I'd love to be with you guys. I love you dearly. You're my family. I'd rather be at the Clerkenwell vintage fair, is it, okay, if we go there? and they're like, fine.

Okay, they dropped me off. I'm, I don't even know where those four hours went. I really, the time is never enough. Go around, and I'm having conversations with the traders and I'm looking at things and I'm getting inspired by things, and I'm, oh, it's just absolute bliss for me, a vintage fair. So that would be, that's my dream shop. I don't really like shopping in shops.

**Kiri** 1:10:43

What's your relationship with charity shops then?

**Kate** 1:10:45

Well charity shops, I sort of see a bit of vintage fairs, really. But they're a bit harder work. So I bought some really great pieces in charity shops, but they tend to be a bit sporadic, I actually find I don't have enough time, I don't have enough time to go through all the charity shops that I'd like to, whereas a vintage fair, has more of the types of things that I'm looking for in a more condensed, like, it's just less work, and then I can look online, so charity shops are, amazing. They require, they require, I think, a bit of, a bit more creativity. You know, like, I always think of charity shops, with having lots of men's suits in them, and when I look at a man's suit, I see it as like, pinstripe gilet, like an oversized boyfriend gilet and then turning the trousers into a pair of little, you know, stiletto pants, and just kind of wearing a pair of really high patent pumps, that's what I see when I see a men's suit. But I think yeah, charity shops you have, I love them and hats and gloves and accessories, and you know, you can't go wrong. I mean, every charity shops, what do you think about charity shops?

**Kiri** 1:12:05

Love them. When, because I had a bit, I haven't mentioned, an interview was on today and it got moved to tomorrow, and I had a few hours. So I was like, right, go to the charity shop. I live for them. It's a, it's a probability game though. You got to hit 10 charity shops and you'll find one gem, but you have to just enjoy the experience and never be looking for something in particular, but I have big chunks of vintage stuff, and that's all from charity shops. It's not really from vintage shops. In fact, I sort of, it takes the fun out of it. The joy of finding, like my favourite thing, which I will always brag about is when I was 15. I found a gorgeous 60s, in my size, that I still have, Burberry trench coat for four pounds, and like gorgeous cut like perfect fit and like that really cemented it. I was like, Yeah, you can have what you want, and I also shop for everyone else when I go into charity shops. So did it the other day, there was like a really great Topshop dress, tags on, and I don't normally buy sort of like high street stuff, but it's really cool. Green Tiger print with an amazing cut on it, and it was a size 12, so it would go nowhere near me. But my friend Jess looks great in green. So I was like, I bought this dress, and I was like, I don't think it's your, I've never seen you in an animal print. But I think you would look amazing in it, and she tried it on and she was like, I absolutely love this, and I never would have picked it out. So I love shopping for other people as well, that I'm like, I've seen a thing, I think it would look great in. So yeah, it's a joy for me. Absolute joy for me. I love it.

**Kate** 1:13:28

I relate to that. I do that for Fee, who I mentioned earlier, I go around and if I see something, she sometimes give me a budget, she did give me a budget for the Manhattan vintage fair, and it was so much fun. It's actually so fun looking for other people, isn't it? Yeah. So I actually had this great experience with this wonderful lesbian couple who were getting married and they wanted me to help

them find outfits. So I took them to the Clerkenwell vintage fair, was a previous one, and they both had really clear ideas in their minds of what they wanted, which can be challenging, but also helpful. So one of them had this idea of themselves in a tea dress, and the other one wanted a really smart kind of blouse with a little bit of, sort of like, she had this like very clear, she wanted blue with a bit of green. Not always the easiest thing because you know, you're going to get whatever you're going to get when you go to those things, and so we had tears in the dressing room over the tea dresses, and it was, it was such an experience. I had such a great time with them. We ended up finding exactly what they wanted. I've actually got the photographs of them and their outfits and the tea dress never happened because we realised, she realised that she just wasn't a tea dress person after all, and I sort of forced her to try on other things, and when she was in something that she wouldn't normally have put in, put on, the people in the changing room sort of crowding around saying, Oh what are you wearing? Its amazing, I could see her just glowing and it was, was so much fun and so rewarding, actually really nice for me to not be looking for myself, you know, I was there, nothing to do with me, I was just on a mission to find things for her, and, and I loved it and we converted trousers to fit and yeah, it was lovely. I love that experience.

**Kiri 1:15:23**

That's such a beautiful gift to be able to share with people as well, that you can, yeah, give make them feel amazing, especially when they get married. I think you're most people have asked sort of like, you think your style will change again, or evolve, but because what you wear is so timeless, I can see you wearing everything you wear now, you know, forever and ever, Does that? Is that how it feels?

**Kate 1:15:50**

Yeah, you know, I think, I want to move my things on. So I've developed actually, we're out raising funds at the moment, we want to launch, what will be, the first global peer to peer marketplace exclusively for upcycle clothes. So we bring everyone together, it's a very disparate market, you know, it's just all over the place very fragmented, and just to be able to have one place where everybody can find, you know, these, those amazing gems that we're talking about would be really exciting. So I'm working on that. So a lot of the clothes that I've got now, I would like to put on there, at some point or just maybe even just have a shop. I enjoy the the process so much. But honestly, once I've worn it, I'd like someone else to enjoy it, and I think I've got to a point now where it's more about the making of it, than the actual, you know, the making of it, the wearing it, and then just giving it a home, I want to find homes for people who really love the things. Because it's, yeah, I mean, I'm gonna, my style, I'll always make things I like, and they'll always be radically different. If you look at the pieces that I make, no designer would ever create such a wildly eclectic collection of pieces. Like it's impossible, and it's because I'm not thinking them up, and they don't have to have a theme. Each piece as I said, it, it dictates itself, and so it may not, it may not be, some element of it, I'll wrap into my style, but then it will change my style, and that's, that's the fun of it. So they're always going to be different. There is obviously the jumpsuit thing, which will continue forever and ever, you'll never pull me out of a jumpsuit. But yeah, I am always, like we've talked about, I'm always reinventing myself, and there'll always be new things coming through in someone else's style, and I love just piggybacking on that and then just making it my own and yeah, that's what fashion is right? We're just always reinventing.

**Kiri 1:18:11**

So you create from stuff that's already created, have you made stuff from scratch before?

**Kate** 1:18:16

I have, I've made a collection of quilt dresses. When I first moved to the States, I became obsessed with American quilts, vintage quilts, as I realised that they're incredibly modern. There's the patterns, they're old, and some of them have got marks on them, but they didn't get the marks out and you can cut the marks out, you cut around the marks, you know, never, I always find I can make something out of pretty much anything, and the quilts obviously were quilts. So I had to design a dress, and so I just, it's almost quite Amish in style. Just very, very simple, very easy to wear, and the great thing about the shape of them is that you many people could wear it. It's a very forgiving style, and actually it could fit lots of different sizes. But one thing I started making a lot of are these things called convertibles, which are the little things that you can, all the accessories you can make out of the scraps of the garment. So you know I'm a big fan of the Halo band. I have a guy who makes those for me now in a sustainable way. Just send him the fabric and he does those. But also with those quilt dresses. I've made detachable collars, detachable cuffs that you can wear underneath so the dress can look really different. Detachable bibs, most of them have a detachable bib and then I started making bucket hats and little bags for the phone. So you can just have one looped around your wrist and swing your phone off, and, you know that's really good fun. So, and that's something that comes from nothing. So that's where I've had to design these ovals to design some tracksuits out of those quilts, some quite cool tracksuits, so I just took a design of a trouser that I really liked and modified it, and then just had those made and a bomber jacket. So you've got this matching bomber jacket and trousers in a quilt shape. But what I ended up doing with the trousers, typically, I made them so that you could actually wear them three different lengths. So the bottom of the trouser is tapered, and it stepped, and it's got three steps, and each segment buttons in to the segment above it. So you've got like a bottom segment going into a bigger segment going into the leg. So you could wear it three quarter length, or mid three quarter length or full length, and so you, I want to get people wearing them, and so then you're buying while you're wearing an outfit and you've got, you know the dress, then you've got the dress, so you've got the dress on its own, then you've got the dress with the bib, then you've got the dress without the bib with the cuffs, then you've got the dress with a bib and the cuffs. Then you've got the dress with the bucket hat and all the excess, you know, and then you've got like 10 outfits right there from one dress and a few little convertibles made from scraps. So you've got lots and lots of different looks and ways of wearing it, and that's when it becomes interesting to me, because we all want to make things our own, and convertibles are a really easy way of doing that.

**Kiri** 1:21:20

It's like the fashion equivalent of nose to tail dining. Is there an item of clothing that you can absolutely always see yourself wearing?

**Kate** 1:21:35

I can always see myself wearing one of my quilt dresses. Because they're so simple, so easy. They're showstopping. They have provenance, they have, you know, heritage, the amount of work that goes into those quilts is mind blowing. So much respect, but it's, so it's just like easy. I do like ease, and I like to be able to dress it up or dress it down. So something like that. I can see myself wearing you know, aged 100. You like, very easily wear that, you could pull that off Kiri, aged 100 with a convertible and

rock it. Trust me. That's the kind of thing, that is timeless. So yeah, maybe one of those. That would be it. Plus I could go to sleep in it because I'm under my quilt.

**Kiri** 1:22:31

Halfway there. Yeah. Final question. Very sad day. You know, you're no longer with us. It's your funeral. What would you like to be buried in outfit wise?

**Kate** 1:22:43

Oh my god. It would be this crazy maxi dress I've got, I think its Hawaiian. That is basically a massive, sorry, pleated, pleated dress. So imagine an enormous semicircle of quilted fabric, right. So you, when you stretch it out, it's not quilted. So you're holding it up. And then in the middle, at the top, there's a hole where you're going to put your head and there's a drawstring, right, you put your head over it, and the whole thing, and we're talking about neon green, orange, yellow, white, brown, like really, like colours that you wouldn't necessarily put together and they're quite shocking, but somehow they work, and a bit of purple in there, and then you just let it fall over you and it just sort of compresses into perfect cleats, and then you do up your drawstring and you tie a little bow around your neck. That is what I want to be buried in that thing. Love that idea. What about you? What would you?

**Kiri** 1:24:00

Well, I think it would be something that I love. So it was probably the first thing I properly had made for me, and it's sort of what I wore when I did live at the apollo. it's a sequin leotard. That's got the Welsh dragon on it, and I wore it with like a white cape. It's got the red dragon and it's green sequins, and I just had my big hair and my sequins and I just felt like me and I felt so confident and it's just so, it's made to fit me, it's made, I literally drew it on an envelope and gave it to the amazing girl who makes my costumes, and I just felt incredible in it, and I just think yeah, that'd be quite cool to be buried in I think.

**Kate** 1:24:43

Wow, I love that. You designed that yourself.

**Kiri** 1:24:46

Yeah well it's, I've got really good relationship with a girl. I literally put it on Instagram. I was like, does anyone know any Welsh designers? And yeah, she's a seamstress, and I sort of had these ideas and I'll be like, Oh, I really want you know, so I had this idea about this dragon thing and I wanted a Welsh designer to make it. So I drew it and send it to her. And she's like, great. And then I sent her my measurements, and then I'll go and get fitted and it's just come up perfectly and then had this other idea about having, I got it here somewhere. Oh, yeah, this, she sent me a fabric that she had. So she's like, Oh, we've got this amazing fabric that's like gold, but baby pink sequins. It's beautiful. So I was like, she was like, Have you got any ideas? and I was like, well, I would love a leotard with long bell sleeves, and then like a lightning bolt neckline. So she, she did it all.

**Kate** 1:25:36

Oh, my goodness. What would if someone, would you put in your repertoire that you are a clothing designer? No, no, right? No. But you are, and I really believe everybody has a hidden designer in them.

Because we all know what we love. You are, you could have put that on your list of credits. Because this is this sort of fallacy that people think that design is out of their reach, like designers. It's, everybody's designing every day, you're thinking about, you woke up in the morning, you're creative, because you're thinking about what you put on, you choose it, like accountants are creative with numbers. Everybody's creative. I just think everybody's got a hidden designer in them, and what's really fun about watching you do that is that, you know what you like, like, you know that lightning bolt. That's genius. I have never seen a lightning bolt netline before. So, yeah, you know what you're leading edge, you're leading edge design, and when you put that piece on, you're gonna really rock it because you're gonna feel amazing. You've thought about the sleeve, you know what sleeves you like, you know what made you feel good in the past from one of the outfits you've worn. So you're going to stick to that, and then you're thinking about what kind of fabric like what's going to reflect who you are today. You put that whole thing together, and it's a really unique special piece. So like, see that side of yourself and get confident with it and do more of it. Because that's obviously a way to go for you. Do you know what I mean? You're designing the pieces that make you feel the best.

**Kiri 1:27:13**

Well I feel, I love this pep talk, it has been well worth it, I'm so, I've taken so much of your time. But I've enjoyed speaking to you so much. You're so interesting and so, what's beautiful about you is you are fluent in fashion, but it never feels like it's at the exclusion of anyone and so much of fashion I feel like the world can whether deliberately or not feel like an exclusionary place of, have you got the right names? Have you got the right bank balance, all that kind of stuff, and you bring this joy and levity to it, and accessibility that I just think is brilliant and wonderful, and I yeah will continue to just pour over your Instagram because it's just a great place to be.

**Kate 1:27:53**

Oh, well I find you a massive inspiration and I'm, never stop wearing your sequins. They are, and you know you can get sustainable sequins now.

**Kiri 1:28:02**

I've heard Yes, yes. That's gonna be the next step. Yeah, Very good for the planet.

**Kate 1:28:07**

But you know what you do wear, you wear your pieces, you wear and you wear and you wear them. So next time you will be wearing that Welsh outfit down to Sainsbury's. All right, just a matter, I want 30 wears out of that thing, right? 30 wears. You will I know. Alright then. Thanks for talking, it's so much fun.

**Kiri 1:28:30**

Kate McGuire there, when she talks about clothing being an armour and a comfort, she totally nailed why I want to do this podcast when she says that clothes control how you interact with the world. That is it, that is the juicy, fascinating stuff for me, and I think it says a lot about Kate's character, that she's chosen a profession where she brings joy to others through clothes. Also, is anyone else dying to see her Gaga inspired dress and the dress from 1860? We want to see that as well. Please go and follow her on Instagram. She's so wonderful, and there's loads of great converted closet videos and clips to

watch too. I think for when this comes out. If you're listening on the Monday, on Tuesday, she's going to do an Instagram Live where she converts something live at 7pm UK time and I think 2pm New York time What's that? East? I don't know what that is, and I'm too lazy to Google. New York time it should be, so yeah, go and check her out. There's just loads to devour there. She's so generous with her time and her enthusiasm, and also the world that Kate describes just creativity, sustainability, originality, cyclical fashion. It makes me just so, so excited so prepared to see me in some badly sewen clothes very soon. I'm so pleased that you guys are enjoying this series as much as I had recording it and we still got so many amazing chats to come to, really emotional ones, daft ones, important ones, and some of them all in the same episode. Now we've had a message from Laura on Insta that's full of compliments, so I'm going to read it out. Hello, I just wanted to say I adore the show as someone who spent their whole life up until very recently hiding in their clothes, hiding behind their hair, hiding their sexuality and hiding from themselves. Your show is helping to reassure me that I can step out of the shadow of my own self oppression. I've always had a real love for quirky statement clothing, and I've never really fitted into the norm with my wardrobe. I've always just bought everything two or three sizes too big and shied away from any kind of short hemline. As someone who actually works in fashion. I'm trying to cement my style. I do weigh the notion that your clothes only serve the purpose to make you appear thinner. Fucking Amen, mate. Your podcast is helping me to embrace what I have and my clothes because I actually like them. Not because they make me look a bit thinner. Oh my God. God, I wish someone had read this to me when I was 14. I also can't wait for the episode with Rachel. Yes, Rachel fairbairn's coming up. I found this podcast through ? and Rachel is an icon. Don't we know it, also, I live in Australia and we recommend it to all of my friends. That's so lovely. If you would like to send us a message, you can message us on Instagram. Our Insta is @whoareyouwearingpod and there's loads of pictures of whoever the episode is about that week up on there, and we keep everything up. So you can troll through and be a little creep like me, when I can't decide what to wear. I just look through it and try and get inspired by people. You can also email us at whoareyouwearingpod@gmail.com This week's Small Business got mentioned a fair old bit. It's the amazing SJ Miller, who makes incredible accessories, homeware and custom work as well as made some amazing stuff for me. Now normally, I would sort of sing their praises, but I happened to be meeting up with Steph. So I just thought I'd sit down and have a chinwag with her instead so she could talk about her own business. So here's Steph. You're pretty much like a one woman operation. It's like you in a table in a spare room. Right?

**Steph** 1:31:59

That's Yeah, completely. Yeah, I have. So it's just me. I've had a friend helping a little bit recently. Katie, who does her own stuff as well. But that's the first time I've even had anyone else kind of come in. It's just me at home with a sewing machine and a table, and working whatever hours you can.

**Kiri** 1:32:16

Yeah, because it's also around other work as well. So it's that juggling, which I think so many small businesses feel, they're like trying to be present on Instagram and push your stuff and keep the sales going. But then also having a life and a job.

**Steph** 1:32:29

Yeah, that's, and I think that's the thing. Most small business people know this as well or anyone I think who does anything creative. It's the personal side is what goes, like that's what's hard. I think finding balance is really hard and something I do struggle with, because I'll just work constantly when it's needed. Sometimes I am like, like I said to my mom the other day, I was like I've done this to myself, I wanted to do this no-ones forced me. But I think that you have to, that's the key I think is, that's how bad you want to do it, is you just, it's almost like a compulsion to do it.

**Kiri 1:32:58**

I always feel so guilty as well like, thank you for ruining your social life for me. Because you are so brilliant, you made my, you made loads of stuff now. Yeah, so my amazing welsh dragon leotard, my, I also mentioned it on this, the baby pink and gold with the big bell arms, and then I've got that jumpsuit as well with a cape attached. Yeah. So and then you made me outfits for my last tour. That didn't, didn't happen. Some of it's been on telly, and worn one of the others once, and then the third idea I had is now being used for this tour. So yeah, and you're making me a suit? Because I was like, could you make a suit and you're like, give it a bash, and here we are. Yeah, and here we are fitting it. But it's so interesting, because you're like personal style is really like moddy and 60s. Yeah, and like, sort of, like, futuristic pared down those kind of clean lines. Yeah, and then everything I asked for is like, can I have a cape? Can it have epilettes? Can it have frills?

**Steph 1:34:03**

I think that's the funniest part of doing custom because it is, people come to you with ideas like I would never have even thought of putting a dragon on a leotard sequins and whatever else we did, but that's how your skills grow as well. Like it's amazing. Just to kind of think, you get something, it's someone's vision and you work it out and that's, it really expand your skills, and it's just so cool to do something that you wouldn't have thought about doing before, it pushes you, and then it's always nice to see the results as well, and it's something you won't have come up with yourself. But it's always cool to see it come to life so.

**Kiri 1:34:37**

I feel less guilty. Yeah, and I love your stuff that you make as well and are like under your own label, the key rings that you've done recently are so beautiful, and the tote bags, and the cushions and things is always really clear, and I think there's loads of like pop culture influences. Yes, yes. So it's like the, like flashy trashy, like Blondie, New Wave colours and like Bowie.

**Steph 1:35:04**

Yeah there's a little Bowie in there as well. Yeah. So I think it is, it's kind of like a lot of 60s icons, and then always, there's always animal print in so much of it cause I just think that's just one of the best things in life. You're right. Yeah. That is it as well, and I think, I like to think there's a little bit of a meat sometimes between like maximalism and minimalism because it's kind of, I'm interested in both. So that's why even if it's a mad pattern its always a clean line. It's always like clean silhouettes, and then yes, some stuff is really pared back as well. So I think that's quite interesting to play around with is that kind of in between, which sometimes makes it harder to pin down. Yeah. I love it, and I like how hard you're working as well considering you are just like, a lass doing it all in her bedroom about trying to make it sustainable and zero waste and things like that. Yeah, cuz I also love small batch stuff,

because I'm one of those like pigs who's like, I don't want one everyone else has. Yeah, I have, that's it like, yeah, sometimes materials I know aren't super green, but definitely zero waste if I can reuse, like the key rings is quite, that's zero waste, that's like I've got these off cuts of faux leather. What can I do with them? Even the pockets on my totes, that's like a scrap of cotton off of something else, I use that for the binding for those so it's yeah, and small batch make or made to order as well. So it's not reams of stuff being done, that can't get used or sold. So. I love it. Yeah. Yeah, that is nice, though. Yeah. So yeah, more limited, and yeah, quite a lot of things I do as well with the zero waste that will be like a limited edition because it's like well, once this fabrics gone. That's it. I actually used a bit, one of my bags has a little bit of the baby pink and gold. Oh, no way. It's like a bow weave on. But they're like, I think I've got like two runs of those left because I'm like, well, once that fabrics gone. That's, it's gone forever. That's it, it's gone.

**Kiri 1:37:05**

I love that an SJ Miller original, limited edition, lim dish. Can I ask you? Can I ask a question? Like, have you, why SJ Miller? because I was you know your steph from Instagram.

**Steph 1:37:19**

Yeah, I actually I'm not. Well, actually what it was was when I was younger, I wanted to be a writer.

**Kiri 1:37:25**

I was gonna say.

**Steph 1:37:26**

I was like, That would be my writer name.

**Kiri 1:37:28**

Because it makes it sound like it's a man and then you get more work?

**Steph 1:37:32**

Also because I'm a complete cliché, I really loved Catcher in the Rye. So it's like JD Salinger. Love it. I was that pretentious and teenage, and then, yeah, I don't know. It just kind of, when it came to doing anything on my own, I guess that was kind of there, and then it's just carried on.

**Kiri 1:37:49**

And yeah, well, I just wanted to talk about you because you're so great, and also you've like, I talk about it on the podcast, but like having stuff, especially as a bigger girl as well, having stuff that fits you is like, so like, it's made me so much happier with my body than like going in and trying to find something on the high street. Yeah, and it's weird because it's like, your stuff is like tighter, but it fits so much better. What a lovely way to end it, and yes, she is a fiend for fitting, hence me sitting on the floor of her brother's house in Chester now. Thanks so much for chatting. I appreciate it. And check out SJ Miller on Instagram. And there's a website as well right?

**Steph 1:38:14**

Yeah, I think that's, that's why I'm an absolute fiend for fittings as well. Because it is it's, if you're trying to squeeze into something that doesn't fit or you know, you're wearing something that's not the right style for you. That's gonna make you feel bad about yourself and you shouldn't, it's get something that fits properly, is your body looking the best, you know, looking as good as it can and that's why it is these fittings are so important, because it's just getting that bang on and it's yeah, if that makes people feel more confident. That's the dream. Yeah, that's just SJmiller.com.

**Kiri** 1:39:04

So that was the wonderful Steph, S. J. Miller on Instagram. Just a really great egg so hard working, an amazing eye and just doing stuff properly, and just any woman running a business from a spare bedroom makes my heart absolutely sing. So that's amazing Steph. Next week, I have another fantastic guest for you. A, just incredibly charming, incredibly well dressed, incredibly gracious and brilliant, stand up comedian and presenter. It's Tom Allen. Oh, it's gonna be such a lovely chat. I know you guys will excited about listening to that one. So I'll see you then. Who are you wearing is produced by Joe Southerd, The artwork is by Mary Phillips and the music is by Annie glass. This has been a Little Wander production.