

My favourite photograph by Caryn Franklin

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Fashion writer Caryn, 60, recalls setting trends on *The Clothes Show* and sowing the seeds of sustainable clothing

Words by Kirsten Jones



“THIS picture was taken in about 1988 for a *Clothes Show* magazine shoot, the year before the launch

of *Clothes Show Live*. I’m wearing what I would choose for myself here. I underwent a transformation by three other stylists and suffice to say, I was very pleased to get back into my own clothes.

Power dressing was everything in the 1980s, but it was just beginning to soften as hip-hop had come along. I’m wearing a John Richmond thigh-length jacket, a pair of James Logerfo wide trousers and my special feminist medallion. The trainers were Nike.

I still have the necklace. I wish I still had those trousers. Everything else got worn into the ground and passed on. That brings me to my hair. It was fine, flyaway and always in my face. The more I could nail it on to my head, the better.

Back in the day, I didn’t wear that much make-up, not even for telly. There weren’t the hair products, foundations and contouring or eyebrow kits that there are now. All the clothes I wore were my own and as a

stylist I could ring the changes and make them look different. I wasn’t on the sort of salary that meant I could go on shopping sprees. I would update my wardrobe at my mates’ studio sample sales.

I still enjoy dressing up. I pin my clothes, sew bits up and let them back down. I change them to suit how I’m feeling. I was at my most

avant-garde in the 1980s. I would wear, on the Tube, a swimming costume with a turban towel on my head, big earrings, knee-high Dr Martens and the tiniest bleached skirt made from jeans.

The Clothes Show brought the British fashion industry into people’s homes. They only knew Italian names like Armani, Valentino or even Fiorucci. We didn’t have a London Fashion Week until 1983. We weren’t on the map in the way that Paris and Milan were.

It was in the *Clothes Show* magazine that I discussed my views on body image, diversity and identity politics. I have three sisters, a mother and loads of female friends. I felt like they were excluded from fashion conversations and portrayals that were dependent on tall, thin women. I loved the makeover features, working with a variety of body shapes and skin tones. I would go on to have a mixed race daughter. I wanted to bring

everyone’s love of dressing up to celebrate who they are into living rooms up and down the country. People still talk to me fondly about how inclusive it was.

Lots of people remember my interview with Leigh Bowery, who was a high-profile performance artist/designer. He was a very tall man who would wear brocade, balaclavas, capes and full-body tailoring, glitter leggings and high heels. We did an interview in the tearooms at Harrods and the shoppers got a very special impromptu modelling session.

Those are the things people remember, because it didn’t

conform to type. On the one hand it would be covering a grandmother knitting for charity, and on the other, it would be in Milan interviewing Armani about his collection.

The Clothes Show returned to TV for a short while in 2007. It was lovely to revisit it and experience the changes in television.

And I have written the foreword for the book *Fashion: The Definitive Visual Guide*. When I look at this book as a whole, it’s like we’ve come full circle. Clothing was made locally and made to last.

The person who bought it would take good care of it, change it and pass it on. We’ve got to that stage again after moving through a huge acceleration of trends, manufacture and turnover of products. I think



it's really important to go back to that space of valuing clothes. Loved clothing lasts longer." 🌟

Caryn Franklin is the foreword writer on Fashion: The Definitive Visual Guide (DK, £30), new edition out now. See Express Bookshop on page 77.

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INTERVIEW



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