

IT'S PERSONAL

Alice B-B discovers a new way of shopping

As a teenager living in London, 'shopping' was generally the focal point of the weekend's activities. A time was made with friends (pre-mobile – it had to be stuck to) and a high street was picked or sometimes a market. Slap was applied, a look was concocted, the meet was on... then the shopping would begin.

For me, it was about the thrill of finding pieces of clothing that would give me an identity; that in an instant would describe me to someone new (ie. a boy) without ever having to say a word. But there were options when picking these communicative clothes; either pieces that were about going with the pack, the corralling clothes that marked us out as a group (baseball jackets, stone washed jeans, t-shirts from BOY) or whether to follow my heart and choose pieces that defined me as an individual, (a red catsuit, suede platform boots, a leopard print top) and... might attract a boy.

So we'd get to it, pounding the streets, scouring the shops. And we weren't bothered if the shops were busy (all the better for maybe meeting a boy), or if the lighting was bad in the changing room (young, lithe bodies don't need good lighting), or the air con had broken down, (we must've been immune to BO). Simply, we were on a mission to get the gear and nothing was going to stop us, until the shops shut. Then it was off to a café or pub to examine and discuss

the day's spoils, (and maybe meet a boy).

How things have changed. 20 years on and clothes are more about getting dressed than self-expressing, and shopping is not high up on my 'fun list'. The thought of searching through hot, busy, shops, or even worse, trawling the sales, is like taking the express lift to Hades. And anyway, I've got the boy.

However, I've just discovered a new way to shop. New Zealand born fashion designer Emilia Wickstead launched her atelier in 2008 and a year later opened her showroom on Pont Street in Belgravia. The space is so chic, high ceilings, black varnished wood floors, white linen sofas, that it doesn't really feel like a shop, more like someone's drawing room.

Alongside a ready-to-wear collection, Emilia has a line of made-to-measure pieces. The lower ground floor of the

atelier is where fittings happen, by appointment only. After choosing pieces you like, it's about picking fabrics from heavy tomes filled with swatches. Changes can be made to suit your body and style and after several fittings the piece fits perfectly and is delivered within two weeks. And Wickstead keeps close tabs on who's ordered what, so friends don't run into each other at a party, wearing GASP... the same dress. This level of service is not a new concept but Emilia has made this kind of elegance both



LUXURY & NECESSITY

BACKGAMMON BOARDS by alexandradesign.com

MADE-TO-MEASURE at emilia wickstead.com

PERSONALISED JIGSAW PUZZLES at puzzleplex.com

ONE-OFF JEWELLERY at lymefinejewellery.com

BESPOKE BAGS at anyahindmarch.com

affordable and available.

Even though my general look tends to be a uniform of jeans and biker boots, I'm still making daily choices about the things I buy. There's no doubt that we clad and surround ourselves with clothes and objects and even foods that are a reflection of ourselves. However, the recession is still fresh enough that parting with pretty pennies needs to feel indulgent, with a unique product at the end. No one wants to feel like the mug paying over the odds for something generic. ■

ALL IN THE DETAIL

- 1 Go the extra mile – it's more time consuming but worth it.
- 2 Have initials stamped on a diary.
- 3 Ask for a love message to be written inside a belt.
- 4 Have a sofa made to perfectly fit your sitting room.
- 5 Take time personalising and you'll turn a 'thing' into something precious.