

The fashion gene

Inheritance pacts

A retro clothes shop in Notting Hill has **Sarah Standing** thinking about the cast-offs that she will leave to her daughters



Vintage care: India and Sarah Standing in Mary Moore's retro fashion shop. 'A unique old piece of clothing can totally update one's wardrobe'

I was surveying the contents of my wardrobe the other day and playing the rather pointless "What if...?" game with myself. I play variations on this mind game quite often. What if all my clothes were put into a time capsule and re-emerged in 2025? Would my gladrags automatically be considered *über-cool* and vintage merely because they'd been in hibernation for 20 years?

Would India and Tilly sink to their knees with gratitude, thank me from the bottom of their hearts and rejoice in the fact they had the type of mother blessed with the wisdom and foresight not to throw anything away?

"In truth, I sincerely doubt it," said India, deploying her customary blunt honesty.

"But how can you give such a definitive answer?" I asked. "Where's your sense of nostalgia?"

"Not necessarily hanging up in your wardrobe," she replied.

"The thing about saving your old clothes," pondered Tilly, "is that they would always be your old clothes."

"But you pay for other people's old clothes each time you splash out on something in the vintage section at Topshop," I said. "Mine would be free – and aren't all the best things in life supposed to be free?"

"That only counts when it's applied to obscure stuff like happiness and love," muttered India. "Not your old kaftans, an overwhelming amount of Gap jeans, some truly dodgy shoes and an excess of floaty dresses. The handing over of hard cash in a shop indicates a conscious desire to own something. Wanting to revive what you're wearing now when we're in our 40s is too forward planning for me."

"But your taste in clothes might have changed and matured by then," I said. "Look at how much pleasure and wear you've had from your grandmother's black velvet YSL jacket edged in silver."

"Interestingly, though, you rejected owning it when she had her clear-out," said India. "I think most clothes need to skip a generation in order to make a proper comeback."

"I passed because it reminded me of something Abba might have worn," I explained. "However, had I been able to squeeze into her old Thea Porter dresses I would have been ecstatic. They are exactly what's on the catwalk today, only better. Fashion is a merry-go-round. Everything old eventually becomes new again."

Later that week, I discovered Mary

Moore's unique shop in Notting Hill, London. Mary has obviously spent decades playing the "What if...?" game, but has upped the ante and elevated it to new heights by sharing her extraordinary wardrobe and taste with the general public. Her mini-emporium sells a lifetime of sartorial memories, all in beautiful condition and all bearing a personal provenance.

"I could never throw anything of mine away," she said. "I don't remember anyone ever wearing 'vintage clothes' until the 1960s and then Janis Joplin came along, the music scene exploded and suddenly all the boundaries were pushed back. Mixing old with new became an 'alternative' way of dressing."

"I'm such a magpie I could never bear to get rid of anything. I fell in love with the exciting fabrics, the designs and the fashion that surrounded me. I guess it became my obsession."

India was already busy rifling through rails of delicate Audrey Hepburn cocktail dresses.

"Now we're talking," she said, holding up a fitted black dress that looked like this season's Prada. "I've got to put this on."

Meanwhile, I was mesmerised by Mary's collection of crazy 1950s skirts, sequinned and embroidered with wild designs.

"Heaven," sighed Mary. "Worn with a little cashmere cardigan or jumper, they take some beating, don't they?" She disappeared downstairs and emerged with more bundles of treasures.

"Everything needs to be tried," she commanded, putting some ravishing evening coats in my dressing-room and a couple of colourful frocks in India's.

"A unique vintage piece of clothing has the ability to totally update one's wardrobe," she explained. "It transcends the passage of time and gives a completely modern twist. After all, most fashion takes its inspiration from what's gone before."

Having discarded a show-stopping 1960s trouser suit and a Voyage-like pink velvet coat, I set my sights on a pair of Pucci-esque trousers and a crocheted pink coat.

"Seriously great," declared India.

"Crochet is spot-on this spring and that's the sort of coat you'd wear endlessly."

"What if I buy you the dress you're wearing?" I asked. "It fits like a glove and is so flattering."

"You know what, Mum? I'm warming to your 'What if...?' game," said India, studying herself in the mirror.

■ **SARAH** 1960s candy-pink wool crochet coat with spotted lining, £385, and 1970s faux-Pucci nylon mix palazzo pants, £70, both at Mary Moore. Pink sequinned wedges, £99, at Kurt Geiger (020 7546 1888).

■ **INDIA** 1970s smocked nylon pink and green floral mini-dress, £290, at Mary Moore. Sage satin Martini shoe at Gina (020 7409 7090).

■ **Mary Moore**, 5 Clarendon Cross, London W11 (020 7229 5678) *Open Tuesday-Saturday, 11am-6pm (private appointments by arrangement).*

CLOTHES I WILL DEFINITELY SAVE FOR MY CHILDREN

Etro dresses, Voyage, Vivienne Westwood, Zara coats, Ghost, any cashmere, fur coats, all handbags, anything with sentimental value, all hats, Agent Provocateur underwear, Levi's, ethnic kaftans, Butler & Wilson jewellery.

CLOTHES I WILL EVENTUALLY DONATE TO OXFAM

Scruffy, used T-shirts, non-cashmere sweaters, most shoes (excluding my Manolos), jeans and trousers, shirts, all nightwear and dressing-gowns.



LAST WORD

■ **SARAH** Mary is an inspiration and has renewed my determination to save key pieces of clothes for my daughters.

■ **INDIA** My theory on the beauty of hindsight still prevails, but I can see the value in owning past treasures much more clearly now. A decent dress from another decade is a fraction of the cost of something one would buy from a designer, yet you can easily get an up-to-date look going if you choose well.

Pictures by David Montgomery
Hair and make-up by Jane Foster@Minx using Chantercaille make-up.