

Vintage Chic

Some fashion trends never go out of style. This philosophy is what inspired Glennis Murphy to open her gorgeous store *Over the Top Vintage*, as **Karina Lozada** writes.

Sole owner of *Over The Top Vintage* holds a colourful resumé as a mother, former theatrical dancer and horticulturalist. She sits down, eyes behind thick-framed glasses, arms draped in a printed silk kimono, to discuss the undeniable fashion trend of vintage clothing. While many magazines, fashion bloggers, films and television shows recognise the timeless beauty and sentiment of this fashion phenomenon, most fail to appreciate the hard work and dedication that collectors go through to find these unique pieces that can be seen gracing Hollywood red carpets today.

Over The Top Vintage (OTTV) is located inside the Sydney Antique Centre on South Dowling St, at the heart of Surry Hills. It hosts a variety of stalls and shops that sell antique home wares, clothing, accessories and other miscellaneous bygone pieces. OTTV is just one of many that make up this iconic Sydney shopping landmark, established by Charles E Hirsch and Lorraine Foster just after the onset of the recession in 1974.

Glennis Murphy opened her clothing boutique just two years ago. When asked what inspired her to go into business at the Antique Centre, Glennis responded, “my son had been overseas and he’d seen other people going to the big vintage fairs and selling clothes, as he’s interested in clothes too. I began to think this is the area I wanted to be involved in. So I started selling them [vintage collections] rather than just keeping them for my self.”

Whilst other frenzied vintage boutiques and collectors are constantly busy buying and selling classical pieces for the trend setters of today, Glennis admits that not every rare find will see its way to the shop floor if she deems it much too precious and meaningful to sell.



Glennis Murphy (pictured above) has always dressed to the beat of her own drum.

As a long time hunter and hoarder of vintage pieces, it is never just about business. “I do have this fantastic Christian Dior 1954 cocktail dress. I found it when I had my eldest daughter... I went into a Red Cross shop and here was this beautiful piece that just sort of stood out. I used to wear it for special occasions when I was younger. I can’t fit into it any more, but that’s one piece in my collection that I don’t think I’ll sell”, she laughs with an air of nostalgia.

Glennis likes to describe her personal style as “theatrical...zany or different”, much inspired by her dance background when she was younger and her love for collecting, be it plants for students or dresses from the 1950’s. She recalls being younger, “I didn’t want to look the same as everybody else. I guess a lot of people weren’t wearing vintage then, so sometimes I was thought of as a bit odd.”

With all the remaking and recycling of trends gone by in fashion today, vintage has become more prominent than ever before and has opened up avenues for young people today to appreciate clothing for its quality and durability rather than just its current value. Glennis is someone who not only hails this new wave of thinking, but also evidently, has built her livelihood on it. "I think it's great that people are valuing vintage clothes that have been made so beautifully. They were made to last, and to be handed down. Dresses were made to last a lot longer than are they today, dresses today are often a disposable kind of an item."

It is a known fact that fashion runs in cycles. Polka dots, fur, leather, fluorescent colours and whatever designs one might think could never make a comeback have proven their perpetual worth with a season in the spotlight every now and again. If nothing else, vintage clothing is a reminder to all that the best of our clothes were meant to be kept for generations ahead.

Glennis has many prime examples of clothing that can be resurrected, one of her most sentimental pieces being "a black cardigan that was my mother's". She tells us, "she [mother] bought it in Hong Kong in the 60's I think and she used to wear it in winter to balls over her ball gowns which she would make herself. Then I wore that cardigan later on when it was sort of fashionable, and then it went out of fashion again, and now my daughters both wear that same cardigan".

Obviously after so much time spent searching and learning about clothes, Glennis has accumulated a considerable amount of knowledge on certain fabrics and designs but most importantly for her, the stories behind each item of clothing. She considers herself a fashion "archaeologist", and treats her garments as artifacts to be researched and understood for their context. Some research she will do herself and other times, her own customers will have all the information about

her product. She recalls, "a woman who used to work in the fur department in David Jones was in one day and told me 'well you know that's a Klinsky and that's a Mink' and they were made in different ways, some made in strips and others in big pieces."

Like most industries that suffered from the Great Financial Crisis, a toll was also taken on the retail and clothing sector. OTTV is no exemption, experiencing lessened revenue like every other retailer, but Glennis remains positive as she sees the benefit in vintage clothing. "I think they're a part of our history and I think that they're just going to increase in value in time. As they become more rare, it's going to be harder to find pieces in good order. So you have just got to hold your breath and hope that things will pick up."

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Unlike today's labels competing for currency and relevance, vintage fashion all comes down to survival of the fittest. As Glennis says, "It's a hard times to be selling clothes but I think that vintage clothes will hold their value if they're looked after well and cared for."

As for the label that has relevance and survival cornered, naturally, Glennis undoubtedly believes the most prominent, timeless designer to last throughout the ages is Chanel, and places her bet on their pieces not to deteriorate in style or quality any time soon, if ever. Having one or two Chanel suits in amongst her racks has never failed her.

If you are looking for a whirlwind of fashion that is reminiscent of an era, a unique party dress or even just a visit to enjoy an afternoon of excavating for yourself, visit Glennis' shop:

Over The Top Vintage, located at 531 South Dowling Street, Surry Hills.