

# DESIGNS FOR LIFE

Emma Joseph meets Ringwood fashion designer **CAROLINE LITA STREAT**, whose sustainable collections are inspired by the royal family, her British heritage and, the woman who started it all – her beloved nan

Caroline Lita Streat has had an interest in fashion for as long as she can remember.

And that passion is clearly something which runs in the family. Looking back, Caroline can vividly remember admiring the stunning collection of brooches that were worn by her beloved nan, which she credits for first sparking her love of clothing and design.

So as she officially launches her Caroline Lita brand, it seems only fitting that she pays tribute to her inspiration.

'A Nanny's Treasure is my new print,' explains Caroline, who lives in Ringwood and, by day, works in accounts at Thomas's London Day Schools. 'It's like a brooch print and I used all the jewellery that I inherited from her for the design.'

'I've named the jumpsuit after her – the Sarah Jane – so it's like using her jewellery to bring her back to life. I've had them sat in my drawers since 2006. I just came across them and thought: "What can I do these these?" I just thought I wanted to try and create something unique with them. The idea came to me to try and create the print and name the design after her.'

'I always was inspired by her because she always had loads of scarves in really unique print designs. I think that's part of where my love for fashion came from. Every item of clothing she wore, she was always wearing a brooch. I was about 12 when she passed away.'

Classic style and ideas are a constant influence for Caroline, whose previous designs have been created with the royal family in mind. Her next project is a print called *A Teddy Bears' Picnic*. 'It's going to be gold, my usual style,' she explains. 'I'm trying

Fashion designer  
Caroline Lita Streat



PHOTO: @SAMANTHA\_GHOSTALLERY

to keep it with British heritage. A picnic is quite a British thing – people like to have a picnic. I had some gold teddy bear brooches and I wanted to create something that was based on a picnic, but with teddy bears on it.

'The black-and-white print – that's the print that's got the royal element in it – even the print with my nan, it's like jewels so it gives that luxe, royal feel to it. That's the same with the *Teddy Bears' Picnic*, it's meant to be a royal, teddy bears' picnic, over the top – not just any picnic, it's my own take on it.'

All of Caroline's prints are inspired by British heritage and she describes her >

One of the Spring/Summer  
2024 designs by  
Ringwood fashion designer  
Caroline Lita Streat

PHOTO: CHRIS ROBERTS



Designer Caroline wants to create fashion with a minimal carbon footprint



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## ‘I bought lots of old men’s houndstooth blazers from charity shops and unpicked the seams and patchworked them back together’

collection as ‘royalty meets Versace, inspired by Princess Diana’.

‘If you look at photos of Princess Diana, her fashion remains omnipresent today, decades after her death. From a fashion icon to a humanitarian rights campaigner, advocate for AIDS patients and supporting people to speak out about their mental health, she was a unique individual and ahead of her time and even her style remains in today’s society as it was timeless.’

That timelessness is something Caroline, who studied at at Winchester School of Art, part of the University of Southampton, is extremely conscious of when it comes to her work, believing that every designer has a responsibility to find ways to leave a minimal carbon footprint.

‘I wanted to create a brand that is not fast fashion,’ she explains. ‘It might cost a bit more because it’s all made in England, but in 10 years’ time it will still be in your wardrobe. Because of all the talk, everyone now knows

that fashion is one of the biggest polluters.’ Caroline patches together recycled fabrics and foil prints over them to give them a new lease of life. When purchasing fabrics, she ensures they are eco or recycled, and all her collections are designed and made in England.

‘I bought lots of old men’s houndstooth blazers from charity shops and unpicked the seams and patchworked them back together to make some of the fabric for pieces in my collection,’ she says. ‘It’s so important to be doing what you can.’

It was Caroline’s sustainable approach to her graduate collection, *The Golden Era of The Working Girl* – inspired by the 1980s film starring Melanie Griffith portraying power dressing at its finest – which led to a collaboration with Sarah Barrett Luxury Organic salon in Winchester. The business has a focus on using eco-friendly products for hair, and contacted Caroline after seeing her work at the university’s exhibition. ➤



PHOTO: STEVE WOOD

Caroline styled the models in her creations at the 2023 Hair Pieces Awards which were held at Battersea Arts Centre





Caroline designs clothes that encapsulate an element of royalty, and make the wearer feel luxurious and empowered

‘I want people to not just feel like they’re wearing something – a lot of thought’s gone into it and it makes you feel special’

Following the event’s success, Caroline contacted The Prince’s Trust, from which she received a grant and help from a mentor, to set up her own brand.

The Prince’s Trust is not the only organisation that saw potential in Caroline’s work. Her final collection was one of just six from the university to be selected by the prestigious British Fashion Council, which showcased a preview of the designs.

She recently worked with luxury hair brand Oribe to style their models in her creations for the catwalk show at the Hair Pieces Awards 2023 at Battersea Arts Centre and had pieces on show at Siah Howard Haute Couture during London Fashion Week in September.

‘I’ve also had a celebrity wear one of my designs – actress and comedian Verona Rose,’ she says. ‘She wore it to the ITV Palooza Awards and she received lots of compliments from other celebrities about my suit, about the eye-catching print.’

As well as her *Teddy Bears’ Picnic* collection, Caroline is working on a maxi evening dress and a selection of trench coats in plain colours, with her signature eye-catching prints inside.

‘Where I’m doing so much print, that doesn’t work for everyone, so I’m trying to open up my market a bit by using plain outer fabric and then print on the inside,’ she says.

‘Some people wouldn’t feel confident enough to wear the print, so people will see the print inside my design.’

And she’s aiming high when it comes to stockists – with names like Harrods and Liberty on her wish list, as well as high-end shops found in the Middle East, America and Australia.

But then, luxury has always been the vibe when it comes to Caroline’s designs.

‘I want people to not just feel like they’re wearing something – a lot of thought’s gone into it and it makes you feel special,’ she says.

‘They’re timeless pieces – they’ve bought an investment and it’s something to be treasured for a lifetime.’

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PHOTO: CAROLINE LITA