

## A NIGHT OUT WITH CAITLIN PRICE

by Silvia Bombardini

Through the centuries, the versatility of girlhood both resilient and tender, with its the crafty playfulness, ambivalence, and genius has always remained the same. You wouldn't know it at first glance, but for her Fashion East debut, London designer Caitlin Price in fact looked back at the second half of the 19th century. "The more I looked into this period of dress the more it felt relevant," she explains. "My MA collection focused on the notion of girls transforming themselves for a night out: layered sporty silhouettes were juxtaposed with feminine frills that could be added or removed to suit the wearer. In the same way, under the elaborate surface decoration, these 1860s dresses had so many layers – sleeves that could be detached, bustles worn underneath, underskirts that would be switched to adapt the skirt for walking in." And indeed, from alcopop tracksuits and matching Nike Air Max, to high-rise thongs and silky bows, each outfit in her AW15 collection could almost be seen as a capsule wardrobe on its own, to be worn from dusk till dawn till dusk again – all aspects of femininity, ultramodern but also timeless, combined into one sleek, all-purpose look. The result is gendered with acumen, past the clichés and past the will to get rid of them, with insight and pride. "I love the confidence of British girls on a night out," Caitlin muses, and she knows what she's talking about. Born and bred in South London, and proudly so, that's where the twenty-something designer still finds her inspiration. You can run into her at Joyride, a regular local garage night run by her boyfriend Joe. "It's nostalgic," she admits, "but still relevant to us. It's the best night out." It's this sort of inherent confidence that allows Caitlin, after three years of professional menswear training in the studio of Christopher Shannon, to launch her namesake line with a lustrous collection of oversized sportswear for women that doesn't make them look like they just walked out of their brother's closet. While her approach remains instinctive, she credits her Womenswear MA at Central Saint Martins for the skill: "I was forced to focus very hard on finishing and fabrications. As I was often referencing sports- or menswear, I needed to find ways of turning these into desirable pieces that women would want to wear." And we do, so that clearly worked out well. At CSM, Caitlin was awarded the Armani Scholarship and studied under the legendary Professor Louise Wilson. "Looking back, she had an enormous impact on me, but at the time I spent most of the course trying to avoid her," she recalls. "Louise respected and encouraged my research process, and rather than lead me in a particular direction Louise made me get on with finding the answers by myself." These days, although Caitlin had never really planned on having her own label, and distinctly remembers telling Shannon, now one of her closest friends, how much she didn't want one, her team is working enthusiastically towards SS16. "I just want to carry on developing my work and improving it and pushing it and keep people interested," she adds, and we bet she will.

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