

# Seamle

ISSUE X





# Contributors

## Editor

*Jenna Jones*

## Graphic Design

*Jasmine Burgess*

## Photography

*Leanne Dixon*

## Hair & Makeup

*Hannah Ovenden*

## Styling

*Jessica Wykes*

## Model

*Marianna Toka*

## Illustrations

*Jean Denison*

*Aase Hopstock*

*Iris van Gelder*

*Madeline Masarik*

*Emily Sanders*

## Features

*Stephanie Barker-Fry*

*Sophie Berry*

*Ruth Cooper-Dickson*

*Jenna Jones*

*Sophie Maguire*

*Maggie Semple*

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# Letter From The *Editor*

“In every moment there is potential for something new. In every moment there is room for emergence. That’s the miracle of evolution.” - *Andrew Cohen*

Stand still for too long and you begin to forget. You forget who you are, you forget where you've been, and most importantly you forget where you're going; slowly becoming stagnant as your mind reiterates the familiar. There is change in the air at Semple as we prepare to enter the next stage of our development and in order to grow we must evolve, taking the nostalgic chapters from our past and using them to write our future.

Issue ten of Semple magazine is a celebration of all that has passed, and a foretaste of what's to come. Charting the highlights and successes of issues past (pg6) and paying overdue homage to the people behind the scenes that have helped us every step of the way (pg22,44). Taking a closer look at how women have, and continue to be, the storytellers of our time (pg18) and indulging in historical style through our pictorial landscape (pg28).

Bill Hicks once claimed that we are the facilitators of our own creative evolution; so lets make it something worth remembering...

Jenna

# Through The *Pages*

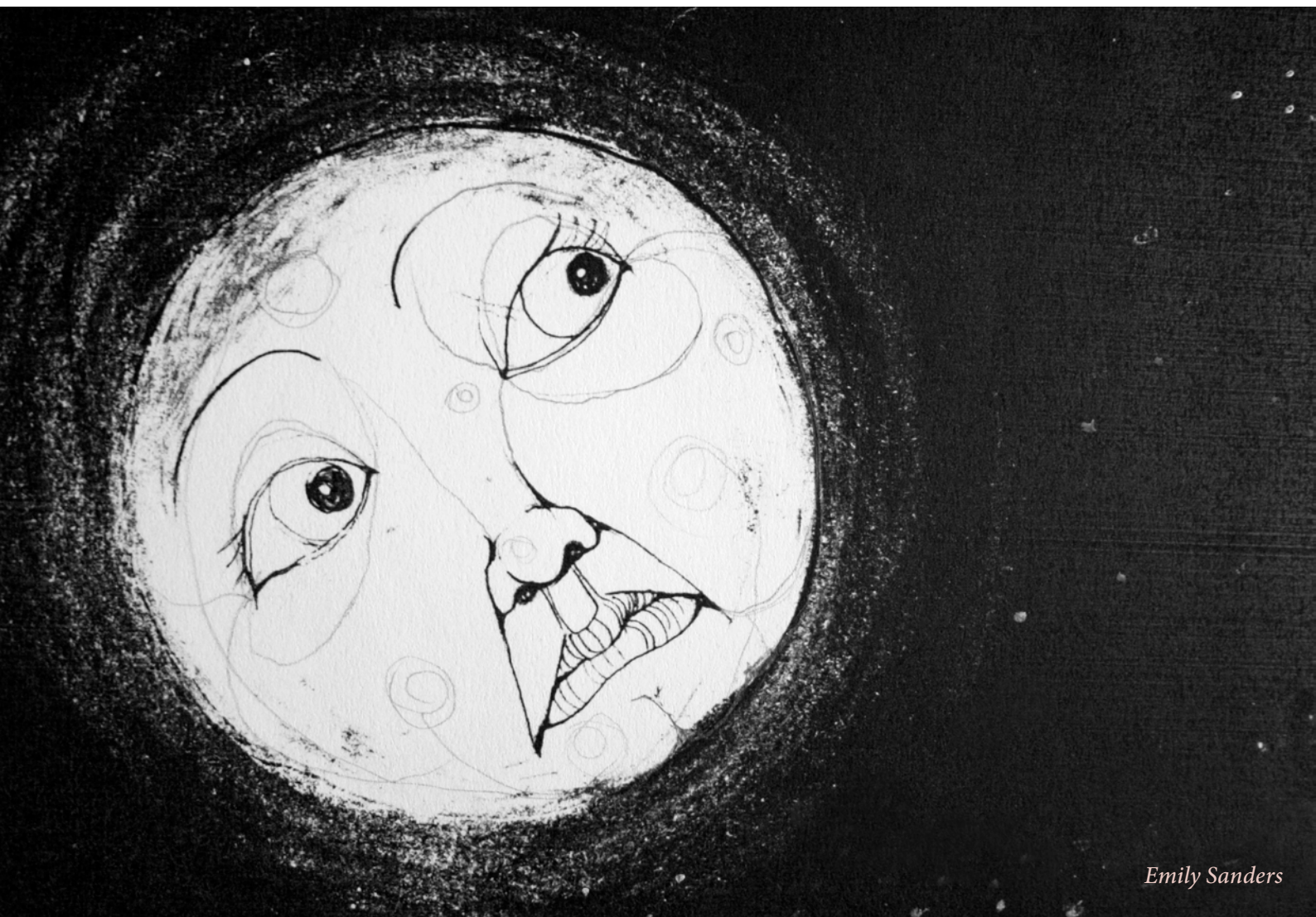
- Jenna Jones & Sophie Maguire -

We've chased our wanderlust around the globe and back again, delved into the deepest, darkest corners of our mind and rejoiced in the imperfectly perfect nature of the self and that's just scraping the surface. Here's the tale of ten issues, two editor's and one ever-changing publication...





*Madeline Masarik*



*Emily Sanders*

Born out of creativity and curiosity, Semple magazine began its life in the summer of 2012. A figment of imagination turned into a reality, its purpose was to look to the future, to reach for what some might deem impossible and to do it with an open mind. From the planes of Africa to the frozen world of winter. From the celebration of women and their irrevocable strength, to the possibilities of the future. From the voyage into the inner most workings of our minds and to the wanderlust that would see me, Semple's then editor embark on a personal voyage of my own.

Issue one was, looking back, a huge learning curve. Naive to the work and the devotion it would take to produce a magazine of worth we jumped in head first. Tapping into colours, movement and texture, our African theme came from Semple's roots; Maggie's Marks and Spencer Safari inspired collection dress that birthed the company. Through our safari shoot we aimed to transport the mind to the sun drenched plains and colour our reader's world with its vibrant palette. Our features delved into topics loosely linked and although we pulled it off we knew that we could, and would, be better.

Just five short months later issue two was proof of that. Ever the forward thinker, and never content with the obvious, we decided to challenge the icy season and explore subjects that embodied a chilling theme. Honing the skills of our writers and perfecting our aesthetic, issue two challenged issue one more than we ever expected. From bondage to the fur trade, issue two pushed the envelope and took a darker turn, carried through by our bewitching shoot that symbolised the gothic and the macabre set within the grounds of a haunted manor house.

A year later and Semple magazine had its eye firmly on women and the future. Both of which would be the themes for our coming issues. Issue three looked at what it meant to be a woman; a friend, a daughter, a partner and a fighter. A force to be reckoned with and with each feature focused on the idea of 'I am woman: hear me roar', the tone was powerful. Then came issue four, bringing with it the possibilities of what lay ahead. By now the magazine knew its destiny, its purpose and its weight. It was no longer teetering on the edge of uncertainty, it was evoking an audience. >

“ With every passing year Semple magazine has grown, enriched by the abundance of creatives who’ve lent their talents to our publication. ”

By 2014 the magazine had shown not only our readers but myself that fear is a useless emotion and that we must take control; with this in mind issue five looked inside our heads. The most beautiful servant and our most dangerous master - the mind is everything, what you think you become. This was to be one of our most intricate issues as we delighted the senses and evoked imagination in our pictorial fantasy world unearthed, 'The Hollow' coupled with features that put the brain to work.

Later that year I had itchy feet, my mind wandered with possibility and I had become home sick for places I had never been. Adventure called me and while I began to set the wheels into motion to answer that calling so did Semple magazine. Issue six was to be my last and it seemed only fitting that it took its theme from the one thing that would take me away - wanderlust. From Australia, Bali and India to South Africa and the USA, issue six saw us all jet off and escape through the mediums of music, fashion,

art, love and colour. It dared to look outside of its small corner of the globe and embrace its gypsy soul. Passionate and inspired we sought to take our readers on an adventure they wouldn't forget.

Semple magazine was a journey I was proud to have started and its ending was one that was bitter sweet. But while I moved on the magazine was to continue in the capable hands of my successor.

With the precedent set and a standard to uphold I took over the reigns with a head full of ideas and a fierce desire to uphold the standards of Semple magazine all the while establishing my own creative voice. With six issues under its belt it was time for the magazine to go back to its roots and celebrate women by redefining sexuality as we know it. Passionate to push boundaries we asked questions and challenged the answers to some of society's most pressing current issues. Arousing discussion on bisexuality and celebrating the female form, issue seven was an ode to women everywhere.



*Fallen Broken Street*



By this point in Semple magazine's lifetime we had featured, photographed, interviewed and questioned to the deepest depths; encompassing all manner of themes across the globe and it was then that I knew there was no better next step than to come home. Issue eight's theme was to be 'London Calling', putting the spotlight on our eccentric capital and all it had to offer. From avant-garde brands that can only be found in our capital to our very own bespoke dress collection made right here in Britain. The 'Mind the Gap' photoshoot was an androgynous descent into fashion; influenced by the dapper English gent and the best street style around, played out on the iconic streets of London's Primrose Hill. A photoshoot that would see us recognised by the Marketing Vice President of electronic publishing platform, Issuu, on Twitter. Just one tweet led to impression statistics topping 1 million and over 10,000 reads for our eighth issue.

Riding high on the heady heights of issue eight's success, issue nine saw us tackle superficial judgements and the vanity driven existence of the world that we found ourselves living in.

Far from bowing to the pressures and stigma of society, we aimed to break through the tainted hollow looking glass of appearance to unearth inner beauty and rejoice. As ever we unpacked pressing, current issues and strove to rewrite the archaic rules of beauty. Tackling diversity within the modelling industry and measuring women's aspirations, issue nine was a wondrous celebration of the imperfectly perfect.

After four incredible years and nine inspiring issues, the tenth edition of Semple magazine could be nothing other than a celebration of our evolution as a company, a brand, and a voice for women. Today, Semple magazine is an all encompassing legacy of one small idea come to life. With every passing year the magazine has grown, enriched by the abundance of creatives who've lent their talents to our publication. Through inspirational writers, imaginative illustrators, incomparable photographers and unique visionaries the pages of Semple Magazine have brought artistic will to life and delved into inquisitive minds to unearth powerful messages and ideas. So from us to you, here's to the next ten.



Aase Hopstock

# The Story Of *SEMPL*E

- *Stephanie Barker-Fry* -

After six successful years it's hard to imagine how it all began. Stephanie Barker-Fry, former Semple employee and current Associate Lecturer at London College of Fashion, describes just what it was like in the early days of Semple...

After graduating university and undertaking a number of fashion communications jobs I found myself searching for the perfect role to kick start my career in the industry. In 2010 I came across Semple via a job advert on the University of the Arts Creative Careers site and was intrigued by the role and the ethos of the brand; holding women, fashion and their stories in high esteem, it was clear that Semple had a clear vision from the beginning. The thought of working on a start-up business, linking fashion with women's personal experiences sounded incredibly unique and so I applied.

I first met Maggie Semple herself at my interview, held at what is now the Semple atelier in Goodwin's Court, Covent Garden. She was charming, welcoming and clearly driven; all great qualities to look for in a potential employer. I liked her instantly and knew that a role at Semple was exactly what I had been searching for.

The early days were exciting as many things were unknown at that stage, as is often the case with start-ups. The overall aim was to create the original Semple book, documenting the treasured items of a range of influential women, and a series of events which enabled global audiences to engage with interesting women from a variety of disciplines about their most treasured items of clothing. It meant women all over the country were delving into their wardrobes and reminiscing about how certain garments made them feel at a key moment in their life. Each piece had a unique story to tell. The Semple book and subsequent events were a fantastic success! Our events featured a range of guest speakers ranging from Claire Wilcox, Senior Curator at the V&A,

to magazine editor, Louise Chunn and we spoke to a very inclusive demographic of all ages providing us with additional content to be placed on the Semple website.

I think that it was the true uniqueness of the book project that initially drew me to the Semple brand as it was such an incredible experience and learning curve. I will never forget Christmas 2010 when the book was finally published, it was such a rewarding end to all the hard work and effort that had gone into the project; it truly is a career highlight that I will remember forever.

The process opened Semple's door to so many unique women with interesting backgrounds and careers and it was such a pleasure to meet so many incredible ladies; not forgetting Maggie herself who really inspired me in the early days. Above all I admired Maggie's professionalism and sheer ambition. She is a very charismatic person and great at making things happen by maintaining good relationships and a positive outlook; something which I try to replicate to this day in my own career. I learnt so much from her entrepreneurial attitude and most importantly she looks after her employees.

It's so wonderful for me to take a nostalgic look back at my time at Semple; to see how the company has evolved and how much the team has grown. Semple continues to reach new audiences and craft new content, vital in the digital age and I am proud to have played a part in this, however small it may have been. From 2010 when it all began, to this day, women, fashion and their stories continue to be at the heart of everything Semple do and long may it continue.





# How *Women* Tell Stories

- Sophie Berry -

“ To dismiss fashion as simply avant-garde looks on Fashion Week runways is to dismiss the egalitarian nature of getting dressed. ”

Throughout history, women have always been storytellers. Finding a way to preserve the stories of the past and hand them down to the next generation was an important job, often left in the hands of the matriarch of the family. In a pre-digital (not to mention, pre-written word) age, storytelling was how people documented their lives, passing on traditions and lessons. Women were the people with lots to say, and everyone listened. But somewhere along the way, the balance shifted, and women started to lose their voices. Maybe it was the shift in the jobs that men and women had, as hunter/gatherer roles were swapped for systems that gave men more perceived power in society. Or perhaps it was the disproportionate number of men versus women who were able to learn how to read and write. Stories became something that appeared on tablets and parchment, rather than intangible words spoken as dinner was cooking, and carefully committed to memory. Storytelling - like painting, sculpture and composing - morphed into something that women featured in, rather than created themselves. Even in societies where women were highly regarded and had a lot of power, stories were still written about them and not often by them.

"When women talk 25% of the time or less, it's seen as being 'equally balanced'. And if a woman talks for 25-50% of the time, they're seen as 'dominating the conversation'." That quote came from a recent American study. That quote makes me equal parts angry and sad. It also makes me want to speak up the next time I feel like I should be quiet. When I read such comments I sometimes feel hopeless; like the battle for equality is so far from being won, it has barely even started. When I found that statistic I was sitting on a train, researching this piece. My notebook was full of scribbled ideas and thoughts. I was excited. >

I wanted to write about George Eliot, Jane Austen, Maya Angelou, Caitlin Moran, Germaine Greer, Bell Hooks. I wanted to write about the women who have told stories and shared words that have helped and inspired and taught so many. When I think about the incredible things that women have achieved using words, it slightly blows my mind. The words of women, nurtured by the power and protection the pages of a book can offer, have helped launch and build the feminist movement. Women have communicated their most private thoughts, angry feelings and inconvenient truths through literature in the last few hundred years. But just 25%; that's how big a share we are allowed, apparently. You have a quarter of an hour. Then it's silence for 45 minutes now, please.

I put down my notebook. A woman gets on the train. She's tall. Her hair is pulled taut into a bun. It shines, and looks smooth, like a warm stone. It's a cold day, and a surge of sharp air lifts her into the carriage, but she's poised and just quickly shifts her bag on her shoulder. The bag matches her shoes. Not because they're the same colour or bought from the same store, but in that imperceptible, innate, impossible to learn way that governs how the truly stylish select their accessories. As she turns to find a seat, I notice how she's wrapped the belt of her trench coat around her body and tied it in a bow at the small of her back. I know absolutely nothing about her, but I instantly know so much.

Fashion is often ridiculed. The fashion industry - which directly contributes £26 billion to the UK economy alone - is spoken of as if it's some sort of economic Saturday job; kids with a little lemonade stand playing at running a business. Now is not the time to unpack why but I figure now is the time to explore why I think that idea is wrong. It's an industry dominated by women, with modelling being one of the few professions where the gender pay gap is turned on its head. I think fashion is dismissed as 'girl stuff' a lot of the time, and this is why it isn't given the respect it deserves. But to dismiss fashion as simply avant-garde looks on Fashion Week runways is to dismiss the egalitarian nature of getting dressed. We all do it. We all get dressed every day. We all 'do fashion' every day. Maybe fashion is important to women, not because we are frivolous, silly or superficial, but because it gives us a chance to tell a story every single day. When you get 15 minutes out of every hour to speak, is it any wonder that you want to tell a story with the way that you look, too?

Logo T-Shirts. Victory Rolls. Skirts down to the ground. Hoods all the way up. Box fresh trainers. Tilting stilettos. Vicious red lips. Vicious bare lips. Army green. Rose pink. Nan's scarf. Boyfriend jeans. Navy blue pea coats. Leopard print fur. Leather. Cashmere. Patches. Holes. Monday power dressing. Sunday best. Women are telling stories all the time. You just have to look hard enough to read them.



Illustration - Iris van Gelder  
Photograph - Sabelnikova Olga/Shutterstock.com



# The *Makeup* Of ...

Ever since it all began, Semple's resident makeup artist has been bringing each and every magazine shoot to life with her vivid palette and creative vision. But from festival fun to brushing shoulders with celebrities, there's a lot more to Hannah Ovenden's incredible career than first meets the eye...

“ It’s the classic, healthy makeup look that everyone craves and it honestly never fails to make an impact. ”

*How did your career as a makeup artist begin and what was it that made you want to work in the beauty industry?*

I finished my GCSE's and A Levels and always knew that I wanted to do something more creative, I just wasn't sure what. Then whilst at a college careers day a makeup artist came in and told us all about her career. I knew then that it was exactly what I wanted to do. She was my inspiration and from there I never looked back!

*What or who inspires your work?*

Quite literally everything and anything inspires my work. From celebrities, advertising and fashion designers to social media, YouTube and my friends. It could honestly be any number of things and that's what is so exciting about my role as it can be influenced by all walks of life.

*You also run your business, Festival Faces. How did that start and what is it about festival makeup that you love?*

I originally started Festival Faces as a side project as I love creative makeup, theatre

and colour. So when my uncle, who works at a festival, offered me the opportunity to run a face painting stand I jumped at the chance. I soon realised that there was a definite market for face painting at festivals and that it could become a lucrative and fun opportunity for me. From that day Festival Faces grew into the successful business that it is today. I now have a team of face painters, makeup artists and hair stylists whom I send out to festivals and fetes across the country as well as providing services for events companies and even feature films. The sky really is the limit for Festival Faces and I'm loving every second of the ride!

*What is your favourite beauty look to create and why?*

I've always been a huge fan of a clean 'tv makeup' look; obviously as a makeup artist I love to do all kinds of different looks but for me clean, dewy skin with the slightest of contouring, a bronze smokey eye and a natural lip is my ultimate favourite. It's the classic, healthy makeup look that everyone craves and it honestly never fails to make an impact.





*Leanne Dixon*

“ That’s what is so exciting about my role as it can be influenced by all walks of life. ”

*What is the most memorable shoot you've been on in your career?*

I once did a shoot in Majorca with two professional dancers from Strictly Come Dancing for their calendars and we went to some incredible Spanish mansions and even shot on a yacht! So that shoot definitely sticks out in my mind, maybe not the most memorable for the reasons you might have thought but it's certainly the shoot that made me feel like I'd made it to the big time.

*What advice would you give to someone who is thinking of pursuing a career in the beauty industry?*

I think that the best piece of advice I can give to anyone thinking of pursuing a career in the beauty industry is to work hard and to not give up, as unfortunately things don't happen overnight. If you've got the determination and drive then you just have to keep going as more often than not that break that you were searching for will come along when you are on the brink of giving up. Also any job you do, always try to make as many contacts as you can

so that you can keep in touch and connect later on in your career. And finally, do your work experience when you start out but don't let people take advantage of you and overall just try to be as proactive and positive as you can be.

*How did you first come to work with us and what is it about the team and the photoshoots that always keeps you coming back?*

At the time of the very first issue of Semple magazine back in 2012, editor at the time Sophie, who was an old school friend of mine, asked if I would like to be involved in this new magazine project that she was currently a part of and ten issues later I guess the rest is history!

It's been so great to be a part of the Semple team from the beginning and to see how much we've all grown and evolved over the years. The magazine has come such a long way in four years and issue after issue the photoshoots just get bigger and better. Most importantly I see the Semple team as friends so they are always shoots that I look forward to each year.

# *Victorian* DESCENT

*Photography by Leanne Dixon, Styling by Jessica Wykes*



*Previous page -*  
*Lace top: Poppies Cottage*  
*Corset: Corsets by Caroline*  
*Necklace: Begada*  
*Trousers: Modes & More*  
*Shoes: ASOS*

*This page -*  
*Jacket: Chazbat*  
*Belt: Una Burke*  
*Skirt: Emma Wallace*  
*Large brooch: Stylist's own*  
*Small brooch: Victory Anne Vintage*  
*Small silver brooch, long gold necklace, Filigree square ring, gold orange ring: Arabella Bianco*  
*Gold ring: Vinita Michael*









*Top and Skirt: Modes & More  
Necklace: Arabella Bianco  
Belts: Una Burke  
Shoes: ASOS*



*Top: Modes & More  
Skirt: Poppies Cottage  
Headpiece and long necklace:  
Nadia Minkoff  
Leather choker: Lydia Wall  
Pearl & Diamante necklace:  
Arabella Bianco  
Bracelet (left): Begada  
Large pearl necklace, multi pearl  
necklace, bracelet (right):  
Vintage Kitty*







Top: Modes & More  
Belts: Una Burke



Jacket: as before  
Belt: as before  
Brooches: as before  
Rose necklace: Victory Anne Vintage  
Onyx ring, coin necklace, filigree  
oval ring, silver and amber  
ring - Arabella Bianco  
Large circle ring - Vinita Michael





Headpiece: The Crystal Shoe Co  
Choker: Begada  
Blazer: Mr Fox Clothing Co  
Leather gloves: Lydia Wall  
Skirt: The Gothic Shop  
Shoes: ASOS





*Black lace top: Mr Fox Clothing Co  
Culottes: Modes & More  
Necklace: Begada*





*Ellie Smith*

# *Behind* The Lens

She's been with us every step of the way, from press images and headshots to ten magical magazine shoots, capturing every milestone of Semple with her distinctive photographic style. So after such an amazing journey, we thought it was high time we found out a little more about what really makes Leanne Dixon 'click'...

*Do you remember the moment that you decided to become a photographer?*

During my time studying photography at university I had a fantastic teacher named David Lloyd who was an incredible influence on me and really helped to shape me as a photographer. During one of our very early lessons he stood at the front of the class and warned us that a degree in photography guarantees nothing. He stressed that if we wanted a career we had to get ourselves out there, create a folio and make contacts.

It was in that moment that I thought, I'm going to do this! So from that day forward I took on board any advice given to me and did everything it took to succeed. During the three-year degree, I immersed myself in free work experience alongside my studies; shooting weddings, working with local modelling agencies, shooting portfolios, photographing gigs, theatre productions, friends, family - basically anything and anyone who said yes. By the time I graduated I had a degree, work experience and a brimming portfolio full of my very own clients and it was all thanks to David Lloyd.

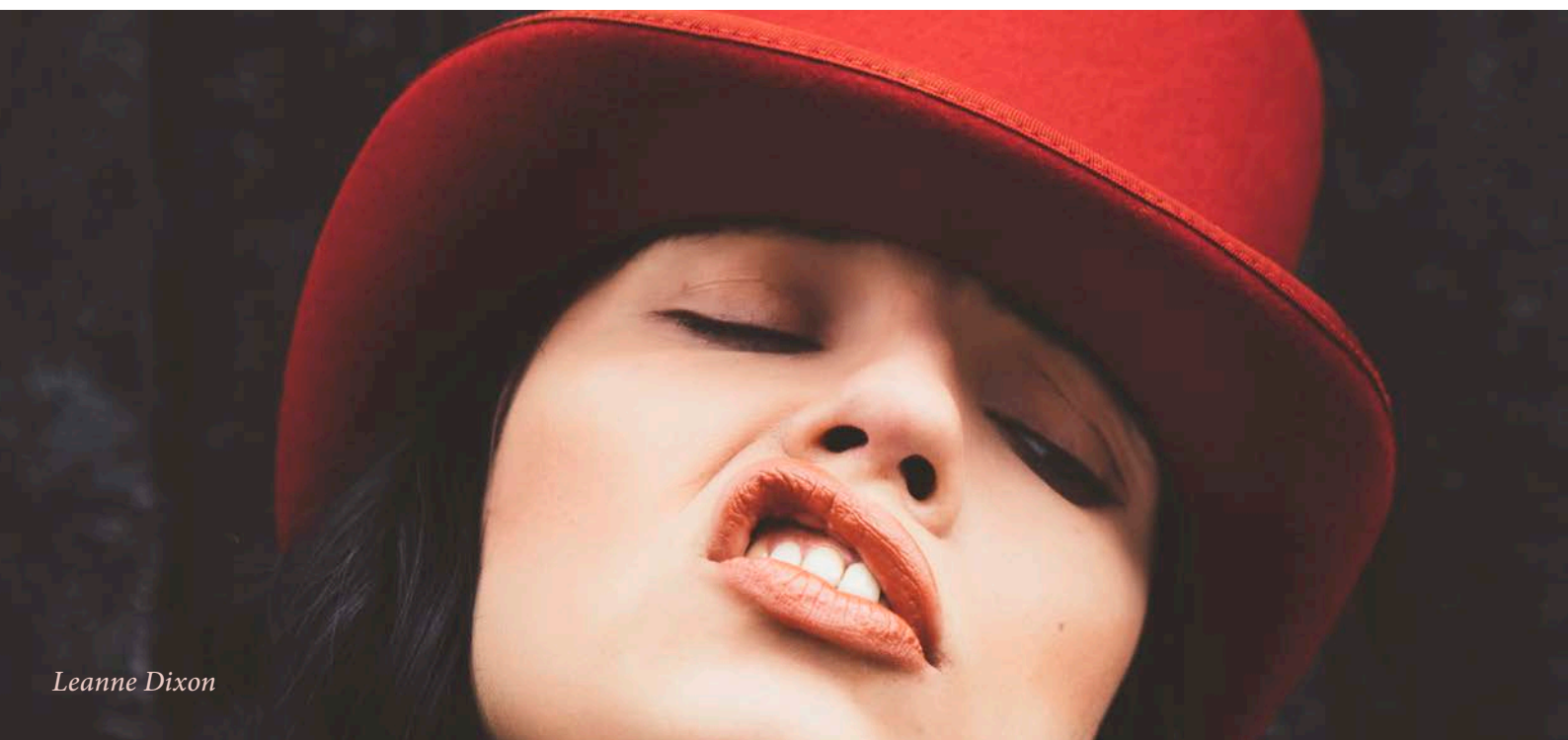
*What artist or photographer alive or dead inspires you?*

When I was 16 I moved to Australia from the UK with my parents to attend high school and university and during that whole period I missed the UK a great deal. In an attempt to stem my homesickness I began to watch

BBC news (something I never did before) and British TV programmes and it was during this period that I came across the work of Martin Parr. His photographs made me feel like I was home and gave me the connection to Britishness that I craved. Parr struck a chord with me and I grew to adore his work as it captures the essence of the British social scene in a really comedic way. For me he represents all of the things I love about being British, from the quirks and stereotypes to the sarcasm and everyday eccentrics. Whenever I look at his work, I feel a real sense of nostalgia and a love of being British. Anyone's work that can make you feel that way about your own country most definitely deserves to be recognised.

*Why photography?*

Embarrassingly I actually ended up studying photography by default. As the only member of my family to graduate, it had always been a lifelong ambition of mine to obtain a degree so I was thrilled to learn that I had been accepted to study a Bachelors in Interior Design. Unfortunately my envisioned dream of picking patterned cushions and wall colours was very different to the reality which involved drawing skills that I sadly didn't possess. So firmly stopped in my tracks and in a slight panic I spoke to the campus guidance counsellor who suggested I do an internal transfer within the university to study a different subject. It turned out that the only other degree that didn't involve drawing was photography.



*Leanne Dixon*



*What type of work do you enjoy the most and why?*

For me there really is nothing better than photographing people, they really are fascinating. It may seem like a very broad answer as most photographers specialise in one area specifically, but I thrive off the versatility of the jobs that I get to do. Working with different people from all walks of life means I grow, my work grows, and it's a continuation of learning. As each job is unique I have to rethink and approach it differently but ultimately it comes down to being able to capture a moment in time, whether that's a groom setting eyes on his wife for the first time, a model taking direction from a stylist or the elation on a singer's face when they hit that high note. Being able to capture an essence of a person is a real privilege to be given the opportunity to do.

*How would you describe your style?*

I majored in photojournalism at university, so my style often has a documentary feel to it. While shooting fashion for example, it's sometimes the moments caught just before or after the pose that provide the greatest shots. It's the 'off' moments that more often than not make the grade.

*What advice would you give to someone pursuing a career in photography?*

Do it! Life's too short not to chase your dreams. If you have passion and an abundance of perseverance then there is no reason why you can't make a photography career a reality.

*How did you first come to work with us and what is it about the team and the photoshoots that you enjoy the most?*

Even before the launch of the first magazine Semple were in need of a photographer to take some marketing images of Maggie. One of the interns at the time had come across a feature shoot I had shot for a local London magazine and contacted me as the style was similar to what they were looking for. I came along to photograph Maggie and have basically stuck around ever since! I like that you feel part of the family with Semple, if you're a friend then you're a friend for life. So it has been lovely to have formed that relationship and to be able to go along on the journey with them, something which is definitely a rarity nowadays.

The Semple girls are amazing so the magazine location photoshoots are always something that I look forward to. When you're working with a team you genuinely like and get on with it's fun and becomes a really great collaborative experience. We bounce ideas off each other, so it's never just a solo effort.

The styling for each Semple magazine shoot is also one of my favourite parts. It's wonderful to have a wide variety of options on a shoot, and Semple have been lucky enough to collaborate with some incredible brands as well as local designers, which is always exciting. Jessica Wykes is the styling queen!

Thanks for having me on board Semple and here's to many more issues to come!



# Building *Confidence* With Style

- Ruth Cooper-Dickson -

“ My Simple dress is my go-to garment for a big work occasion, as I know that it fits me perfectly and I always feel at my most confident when wearing it. ”

"Confidence is the only key. I can't think of any better representation of beauty than someone who is unafraid to be herself." - Emma Stone, actress.

Reflecting back on my twenties I didn't have inside of me the confidence I seemingly projected to the outside world. Often I felt uncomfortable in my own skin and it took life's journey for me to learn and appreciate the flaws and differences which made me unique, and to then be comfortable in presenting them to the world as my authentic self. Today there is so much more discussion around building your 'personal brand' and although this is not necessarily about clothing, I believe your individual style is an intrinsic part of the DNA that makes up 'brand you'.

When it comes to style I've always loved trying new looks and I've experimented with many trends over the years. From platform trainers to combat trousers and a crop top (I blame the Spice Girls and All Saints respectively!) my style did, and still does, vary widely. For me fashion has always been about having fun but being comfortable in what you are wearing and quite often I change my look based on what I'm doing. Now slightly older and wiser I've definitely drawn a line under certain styles, colours, and trends which I know don't work for me at all,

but that doesn't mean I don't continue to experiment from time to time. I simply have a better awareness of what not only looks great but what also makes me feel great.

In the early 2000's I worked in financial services in the city and I developed my 'signature style'. My go-to outfit was always a short dress and a suit jacket which set me apart from the majority of my female colleagues who all wore a two piece suit combination. It would become a ritual for me that if I was leading an important meeting or launching a new project that I would pop out to a shop on Bond Street and purchase a new dress. At that time, I was someone climbing the rungs of the corporate ladder and working in a male dominated industry my 'armour' had a huge impact on my outward behaviour and inner confidence.

Scientists have recognised how what you wear affects how you think, coining the phrase "enclothed cognition", suggesting that your style and the clothes you choose have the ability to reflect and affect your mood, health and overall confidence. I'm sure there are people who would argue against this, insisting confidence comes from within but personally if I know the outfit I'm wearing fits me well and looks good, it has an unequivocal effect on my confidence. >

Above the knee shift dresses will forever remain as my work wardrobe staple, so I was intrigued when I was invited to a networking event at the Semple atelier in Covent Garden. The evening offered the opportunity to not only network with like-minded female professionals but also view the Semple Collection, a bespoke dress brand based and manufactured in London. Living in Hong Kong I had purchased tailor made shirts, but I had never experienced anything like the Semple journey. From the initial fitting and choosing the style, colour and fabrics, right down to the length, sleeve option and lining, you have input into the entire design process. Seeing the dress take shape at each fitting filled me with anticipation and when the dress was finished I was actually a little sad as I had come to know the Semple team so well that I felt like an extended part of their work family.

My Semple dress is my go-to garment for any big work occasion, as I know that it fits me perfectly and I always feel at my most confident when wearing it. I know all my work shoes compliment it and when running a start-up business, it is refreshing to have one less thing to worry about. My dress is navy in colour, sleeveless and above the knee in length, the material works well for any season and compliments nearly any colour palette. I chose a dress that I could wear at any time of the year, day or night, and can accessorise accordingly to make it special.

My start-up is an inclusion and wellbeing consultancy called Champs Consulting, the Champs stands for Collaborative, Happiness, Authenticity, Mindfulness, People and Success. I am a huge advocate of establishing your personal brand and being true to your authentic self. When it comes to presenting to a client, giving a talk, or delivering a training module I know that my Semple dress is representative of my style and I am part of its story. From a diversity perspective, having worked in the male dominated worlds of both aerospace and financial services, I've known women who avoided clothing with patterns and bright colour, or wearing jewellery or heels because of the risk of standing out, or worse not fitting in. In my twenties a female manager in financial services took me to one side and advised me to perhaps not wear a red pair of court shoes as I wouldn't be taken seriously! Thankfully I didn't listen to her comments and it hasn't harmed my career. I'm sure many others have taken similar advice to heart, and yes, there is a time and a place for something you might wear to dinner or to a party but it very much depends on your individual work environment.

If like Emma Stone I could offer one bit of advice to my younger self, it would be this: be true to yourself, be authentic, embrace your own personal brand of style and don't give a damn what anyone else thinks.





# The *SEMPL*E Collection

- *Maggie Semple* -

To understand the Semple Collection it is important to first understand the ethos of my business and the three strands of Semple that distinguish it from other fashion brands; Women, Fashion, Stories. Women are at the heart of everything I do, they are my muse as I travel along this road; through their words, advice and support I am inspired each and every day. Through fashion I am able to provide women with beautifully crafted, bespoke dresses that make them look and feel fantastic; helping them to strive and achieve with confidence through their sartorial choices. And finally stories, through the blog and magazine the Semple voice is heard, providing me with a platform upon which I can share my vision for the future. Together, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts and forms the inquisitive and aspirational nature of the Semple brand.

The Semple Collection has always been about so much more than just 'dresses'; it is a personal and cathartic process between myself, my staff and my clients. With each stitch I learn their story and with every fitting the relationship grows. And while a bespoke Semple dress is the definitive end product, it is the discussions had, the advice given, and the time invested that makes the journey so unique. Each and every woman that walks through the doors of my atelier has a story to share and with each one so the network flourishes. It is these strong, dependable relationships that form the back bone of the brand and like the relationships, Semple dresses are made to last. A timeless garment that defies the seasons, a dress that is not just part of a woman's wardrobe, but a part of her life. >

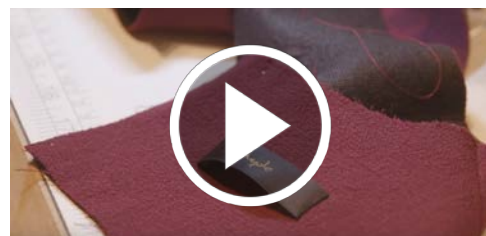


Many women acknowledge that a large percentage of the clothes in their wardrobe are part of the fast fashion movement. To my mind it is a movement of contradiction. On the one hand it gives greater choice and on the other it gives very little. For example, greater choice if you fit specific sizes and reduced choice, if you don't! Women know that fast fashion has limited their choice of fabric, colour, length of sleeve, shape of neckline and so on; that they have had to compromise their personality to fit with what brands create for the season. They also know that the provenance of a garment is important to their own personal values. It is not surprising therefore to see a rapidly growing interest in clothes made by independent artisans who match their passion of including women in the creation of their garments to their expertise and skills. The view that impeccably made pieces are more expensive than those that are not, may well be true. It is however a false belief, as investing in lovingly made bespoke garments gives greater choice and enables a woman to extend rather than limit her personality.

When I began the Semple Collection my research showed that well designed dresses for professional women was an

untapped market. I wasn't looking to answer every woman's sartorial needs but simply that if I require boardroom, pitch or presentation-ready dresses then so will millions of other women. Semple has one primary goal for 2017: to grow our UK and international client base through the use of technology so that women can experience the Semple bespoke garment service no matter where they are in the world. I also have three aspirations. The first is to maintain our unique personal service. Currently I meet every client and I want to continue to do this both face-to-face and virtually. Secondly, I am reminded of Pablo Picasso's comment "Inspiration exists but it has to find us working". I would like to remain curious and be inspired by things that I do not know. Lastly, 2016 was a great year for brand recognition. We featured in Vogue, Tatler, and Harper's Bazaar but on the back pages. Wouldn't it be great if we featured on the front pages of a magazine.

I want the Semple brand to become a habit. Not just a dress you wear or a story you read, but a way of life. A thriving global network of empowered women, who aren't afraid to voice their opinions and support one another. And if they so happen to be impeccably dressed? Well that's just a bonus!





# The *SEMPL*E Women

Over and above all else, the thing that we cherish is our relationship with women. Be it clients, colleagues or just those we strike up a conversation with in the street, our women are what make Semple tick and there is no truer testament to a brand than the honest words of those that we hold so dear...



Sheryl

“ My dress is wonderful but it really has been the whole bespoke journey that has made the experience so special. I loved every minute of it! ”



## Cheryl

“ When I put my Semple dress on I feel really glamorous, regal and pretty! It’s so unique knowing that I have a dress that’s one of a kind and was made especially for me. ”



## Tracey

"My bespoke journey was truly amazing and out of this world! I've never had a made to measure experience so it was such an unexpected pleasure. What became apparent very early on was that the whole process was about so much more than the dress, Maggie and the team dig deeper to find out who you are as a person, not just a customer, and create a unique dress on that basis and you would never get that experience anywhere else."



## Jane

"My journey was fantastic, really personal and comfortable and I particularly loved my initial consultation. To sit down and discuss my personality and explain what I liked, what I felt comfortable with and what I'd learnt over the years about my own body shape made the whole process so much more personal. I knew then that the Semple experience was about so much more than just the dress."



## Uma

“ Through my fantastic experience I’ve become a Semple brand ambassador. I love Maggie and what she does, the ethos and ethics behind the collection and most importantly I love the fact that the business is from the heart. ”



*Images courtesy of WeAreTheCity*

# *Meeting* VANESSA VALLELY

- Jenna Jones -

Vanessa Vallely is a woman of substance; she knows what she wants and isn't afraid to stand out from the crowd to get it. Trading in a quarter of a century in the financial sector for a lifelong ambition, Vanessa is now heading up one of the leading women's career networks in the UK, shining some much needed light on the female pipeline...

*Take us back to the beginning and your early days in banking. How did you find working in such a male dominated environment?*

I started working in the city when I was 16 and it was a very different place to what it is now. I wouldn't say that I particularly noticed any prejudice against me because I was a woman, it was more because I came from a different background, which is an area of diversity that often gets overlooked. From a socio-economic standpoint I was different as I hadn't gone to college or university which in turn meant that I didn't speak with the right accent or have the credentials that perhaps my peer group had.

Of course at that time the city was incredibly male dominated, even more so than what it is today, but it wasn't something that I noticed and it certainly wasn't something that affected me. It was an aspect of the environment that I didn't begin to notice until I became more senior within the technology organisation I was working in. But I can honestly say that I've never let my gender bother me and I think that sometimes as women we can create these barriers ourselves and then use them as excuses to not push the boundaries. I see those barriers as red flags and it makes me want to break down the walls. Instead of shying away because it's territory that a woman has never crossed, we should be making history, we should be the first and inspire other women to follow in our footsteps.

*It was this stage in your career that inspired you to write your book, Heels of Steel. Why was it so important for you to share your personal story?*

I have quite an unconventional career story and that's what inspired me to put pen to paper. From nine different banks to a transition into technology. I'd be the one putting my hand up for the work that no one wanted because I didn't want my CV to play out like everyone else's and I would never opt for the easy route.

When I got to a senior level within my career I decided that I wanted to start giving back. It's so easy to get entrenched in your role and become so busy 'doing the doing' that you forget to help others. So for me the book was about sharing my story and hopefully inspiring other women to continue to push for their dreams.

*Gender equality in the workplace continues to be very high on your agenda. In your experience how far do you think we've come and what more is there still left to achieve?*

Sadly not far at all but I do believe that companies are doing a lot more. Firms now recognise the importance of gender equality and are putting policies in place to ensure that there are more women in their pipeline that can advance into senior positions. We still have a long way to go but the willingness and recognition of the issue is there; we're making traction but sadly not moving the needle massively.

The book cover features a stylized illustration of a woman with long dark hair, wearing a black business suit and high heels, walking away from the viewer on a yellow cobblestone path. The path leads towards a city skyline rendered in shades of green and grey. The skyline includes several prominent skyscrapers, such as the Chrysler Building and the Empire State Building, along with a large, curved, modern building. The background is a light, hazy blue.

# *Heels of Steel*

**Surviving & Thriving in  
the Corporate World**

**VANESSA VALLELY**



*WeAreTheCity is a leading support hub for women in business. Can you tell us the story of how it all began?*

As my career progressed to senior level I became aware of the fact that I had neglected my network and in doing some research I soon realised that there was a lack of online resources for working women in the city of London. With this in mind I set about creating WeAreTheCity a website solely focused on supporting the female pipeline. I made it my mission to research the available women's networks at the time, source relevant events and discover first-hand stories of women that had been there, seen it and done it. Also by doing so I went on my own journey, forcing myself out of my comfort zone to learn and make connections.

After the initial launch of the site we embarked upon a handful of events to the point where it eventually got so big, and my love for it became so strong, that I decided that WeAreTheCity was far more important to me than my full time corporate role. I realised that it wasn't about me anymore and I came alive when my time was spent helping other women achieve their goals and ambitions. The first official element of the site was the job board, then followed the events, Careers Club, WeAreTheCity India and finally the Rising Star Awards.

*Why was it so important for you to acknowledge the achievements of women below management level?*

The Rising Star awards allows us - as an influential business - to shine a light

on emerging talent and provide young professionals with the exposure they need to hopefully further their careers and become noticed. Also it encourages nominees to be confident and stand behind their achievements. All of our rising stars will forever be a part of the WeAreTheCity family and we do our best to continue to support them on their career paths long after the ceremony is over.

*As the owner of more than one Semple dress, how important is a woman's wardrobe in the workplace and do your sartorial choices affect your professional mindset?*

Back in the early days of my career my sartorial choices very much reflected a brand that I felt I needed to look like. I was renowned for my masculine pinstripe power suits with a fuchsia pink lining and I think those suits were like an armour for me. As I got older I moved into dresses but regardless of whether it was a three piece suit or a made to measure dress, I've always paid a lot of attention to my work wardrobe and a lot of that was down to my confidence. But as my confidence grew, what I wore became a true reflection of who I am.

Nowadays I wear what I'm comfortable in. I can be in back-to-back meetings all day and then be on stage at an event of an evening so I need a transitional piece that will look just as amazing first thing in the morning as it does last thing at night. It needs to be something that makes me feel good as what I'm wearing has a profound impact on my confidence; and my Semple dresses fit the bill perfectly.



*Jean Denison*

# London's *Unknown* Gem

- Jenna Jones -

“ It’s one of our city’s secret treasures and  
it’s the place that Semple calls home. ”

At Semple we pride ourselves on being unique. Our stories are original, our clothing is bespoke and our location is incomparable. So special in fact that in the midst of London's hustle and bustle you've quite possibly walked straight past without even noticing its existence.

Nestled between St Martin's Lane and New Row lies Goodwin's Court, an inconspicuous alleyway enshrouded by the commotion of London's West End. It's one of our city's secret treasures and it's the place that Semple calls home.

First appearing in the rate books back in 1690 when it replaced Fishers Alley, Goodwin's Court has miraculously managed to avoid the clutches of modern architecture to retain its whimsical, Dickensian feel. Like soldiers in formation, the neat row of coherent mid-18th century houses lean against one another under the amber glow of original 19th century gas lighting.

If you walk down Goodwin's Court you are instantly transported to a bygone era, as your senses depict a historical landscape to complement the sight before your eyes. You can almost hear

the rattle of a horse and carriage along St. Martins Lane and taste the flavour of old London on your tongue as you stroll down the historical passageway.

Once rumoured to have housed Mozart and Arthur Conan Doyle, and home to a 19th century tailor and piece maker (a dealer in cloth remnants), Goodwin's Court is enriched by its cultured past. And as lovers of stories and fashion here at Semple our business helps to cultivate and preserve the creative spirit of the Court.

Over coffee and fabric swatches we learn the tales of dynamic women as they decide on the perfect colour and cut of their bespoke Semple dress. Those tales are then taken and lovingly woven into every garment we stitch and every book we write. We see our quaint mews house as so much more than an office or a postcode. It's an origin for inspiration. It's a home. It's where women come to feel accepted and encouraged. Where secrets are shared and plans are made.

But don't take our word for it, come see for yourself and tell us your story. That is if you can find us of course...

# Stockists

Arabella Bianco  
[www.arabellabianco.co.uk](http://www.arabellabianco.co.uk)

ASOS  
[www.asos.com](http://www.asos.com)

Begada  
[www.begada.com](http://www.begada.com)

Chazbat  
[www.etsy.com/people/Chazbat](http://www.etsy.com/people/Chazbat)

Corsets by Caroline  
[www.corsetsbycaroline.co.uk](http://www.corsetsbycaroline.co.uk)

Emma Wallace  
[www.emma-wallace.com](http://www.emma-wallace.com)

Lydia Wall  
[www.etsy.com/uk/people/lydiawall](http://www.etsy.com/uk/people/lydiawall)

Modes & More  
[www.modesandmore.com](http://www.modesandmore.com)

Mr Fox Clothing Co  
[www.etsy.com/uk/shop/MrFoxClothingCo](http://www.etsy.com/uk/shop/MrFoxClothingCo)

Nadia Minkoff  
[nadiaminkoff.com](http://nadiaminkoff.com)

Poppies Cottage  
[www.poppiescottage.com](http://www.poppiescottage.com)

The Crystal Shoe Co  
[www.thecrystalshoecompany.com](http://www.thecrystalshoecompany.com)

The Gothic Shop  
[www.the-gothic-shop.co.uk](http://www.the-gothic-shop.co.uk)

Una Burke  
[www.unaburke.com](http://www.unaburke.com)

Victory Anne Vintage  
[www.etsy.com/uk/shop/VictoryAnneVintage](http://www.etsy.com/uk/shop/VictoryAnneVintage)

Vinita Michael  
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Vintage Kitty  
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