

Introduction

Shopping is a national pastime. Yet, unlike many of the other ways we spend our time, shopping and shops are not the subject of endless newspaper reviews, makeover shows and ‘how to’ guides.

We have learnt how to move house in three easy steps, how to decorate a previously unappealing bedroom, how to prepare a lively little curry and how to plant bulbs so they pop up at just the right time. The press tell us which books to read, which movies to see, which restaurants to avoid and which motor cars to buy. We are inundated with ideas on how to dress, get the look, copy the celebrities, even (heaven forbid) dress like an individual. Yet no one is showing us what to look out for once we pass the threshold of the shop itself.

And, let’s face it, fashion shopping doesn’t come easily to everyone. In fact, quite the opposite is often true. Is it because retailers have such enormous power that no one dared look beyond the mannequins and window sets to see what actually goes on behind the scenes? I think not.

Shopping for clothes, like shopping for food, is one of the things we all have to do, like it or not. Some of us just get on with it and muddle through the process hoping to score more successes than failures. Some of the girls and a larger percentage of the boys hate it, whilst others are quite frankly too obsessed by it.

When it’s at its best, shopping, to me, should be like the best theatre. Fashion shopping should simply be fabulous. There are the clothes themselves: the colours, shapes and textures. There’s great service if you’re lucky. Window displays should tempt you.

