

The American creative's collections *tell a story*, says Grace Cain, with the clothes *drawing on the history* of the designer's *muses*

Emily Bode

In an industry that is so often chasing the new, Emily Adams Bode is something of an outlier. Her most famous fans may be fashion-forward – we're looking at you, Donald Glover and Harry Styles – but the Atlanta-born designer is best-known for looking back. “Bode is founded on the idea of historical preservation,” she says of her eponymous label, which offers boxy garments constructed from salvaged antique textiles (many of which were originally created by women for the domestic space). “I've always been drawn to vintage fabrics, because they tell stories. It might be a quilt created using techniques passed down over generations, or a tablecloth your great-grandmother brought over from Ireland. I like that these things can be part of your future, while grounding you in the cultures that have shaped you since childhood.”

What began as a small collection of one-off pieces has quickly earned its creator a series of impressive accolades: the first female designer to show at New York Fashion Week: Men's in 2018; CFDA's Emerging Designer of the Year in 2019; and a Woolmark Prize winner in 2020. Currently, Bode tends to centre her collections around what she describes as “a

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narrative of an individual” – who could be a friend, relative or creative collaborator. “It often has a lot to do with how their childhood has shaped who they are,” she explains. “The latest collection follows the year before my uncle met his wife, whom he was then with until her death two years ago. It's looking back at that turning point, the last moments before his life became defined by her – and then reflecting on the journey to where he is today, without her again.”

Much is made of Bode's sustainable credentials, but the designer isn't keen on the descriptor. “It's just such a loose term,” she sighs. “When you say a business is sustainable, do you mean that its fabrics are 10 per cent recycled, or are the offices run in an eco-friendly way? To be truly sustainable, you have to check a lot of boxes, and I think it's important to take a thoughtful and holistic approach.”

One thing is certain – these aren't the sort of clothes likely to end up choking a landfill site. “The hope is that people are investing in pieces they're excited to give to their family,” Bode says. “We've had people tell us that they will be leaving something we've created to their kids, and I think that's really beautiful.” □

From top, left BODE jacket £1,957 and shirt £437; shorts £364

Menswear, Second Floor