

1980s FASHION ARCHIVE DISPLAY
11th – 27th September 2014

Introduction

Cities change rapidly and the outward signs of this are often the shifts in land and building usage. What we sometimes forget is that it is the lives of the people who inhabit these buildings which give areas shape and nuance. It is these people who change the fabric of our society on a day to day basis and give it a presence and a face.

In only 20 years, the area known as Bethnal Green and the East End has undergone massive change including dramatic gentrification. An example is this impressive Rich MiX building, which is now a dynamic Cultural Foundation but once housed Davies & Field, one of the UK's largest dress manufacturing companies.



Lorna Holder in the late 1980s
Photographer Damian Walker

Lorna Holder's career between 1979–1986 at Davies & Field in this Rich MiX building excitingly reveals a Jamaican Hidden History and the changes of our society both nationally and locally. Born in Saint Thomas, Jamaica in 1952 Lorna moved to England when she was seven in 1959, to join her parents who had already emigrated. After attending art college, and being the first black student to graduate from Nottingham Trent with a BA honours in Fashion and Textiles, she embarked upon her career. Lorna travelled around the world to work with respected people and companies before she began working for Davies & Field as the Head of Young Fashion.

Lorna's employment at Davies & Field went beyond race, it was about her capabilities as a designer and her ability to deliver what was needed when it was needed. Employment like this which focused on talent and left prejudice behind showed a way forward, which was good for the community and good for business cohesion.

Highlighted here from her extensive career — indeed it has been difficult to narrow down for this exhibition — are personal narratives which illuminate important societal changes. Included are artifacts such as drawings and designs, which reveal how the fashion industry operated in contrast to the industry today and uncover our changing attitudes to fashion and material goods.