

SOUTHEND'S

TWILIGHT

WORLDS

**Access Friendly Version of
Exhibition Captions**

Ordered from entrance of the
Project Space to the back, anti-
clockwise around the panel
structure.

Archive Table 1

LECTURE ON LESBIAN LOVE

In January 1980, a woman named Jacqueline Forster gave a talk to the students of South East Essex Sixth Form College (SEEVIC). Forster was one of the most prominent founders of Sappho, a radical lesbian magazine which ran from 1972 to 1981. In this article, the reporter quoted some of her talk that told students to embrace their sexuality, stating that “it’s no-good kidding yourself any longer”. Forster apparently also spoke of lesbian stereotypes, of how lesbians are perceived to be “all big and butch with short back and sides” but this isn’t always the case, she noted how her lover is “quite beautiful”.

'Teenagers get lecture on lesbian love', Evening Echo, 17 January 1980. Image courtesy of the Echo & the Lesbian and Gay News Media Archive.

SAPPHO

Sappho magazine was established in 1972 by Jackie Foster and other women involved in the Press Freedom Group. The magazine was a politically committed feminist magazine, linked to a program of social activities, including support groups for lesbian mothers and lesbian teachers. Sappho also coordinated and funded the legal defense of servicewomen accused of lesbianism, and it helped to establish the London Lesbian

and Gay Switchboard in 1974. Due to declining readership and criticism the magazine was not sufficiently political, Sappho's last issue was in 1981.

Sappho, Vol 7 No 8. On loan from The Glasgow Women's Museum.

Sappho, Vol 7 No 9. On loan from The Glasgow Women's Museum.

KEDDIES

Keddies had been a regular fixture of Southend-on-Sea's high-street since 1892, until it closed down in 1996. Now, where the department store used to stand is a combination of commercial stores: HMV, Clinton Cards, Sports Direct and Super Drug.

Keddies at Christmas in 1970. Courtesy of Southend Museums.

SBC Borough Engineers, Southend High Street at Christmas, 1968, Southend Central Museums. On loan from Southend Museums.

Christmas carrier bag from Keddies, late 20th century, Southend Central Museums.

Courtesy of Southend Museums. Photography by Tessa Hallmann

CHANGES IN TERMINOLOGY

This Christmas card housed within the stores of Southend Central Museum dates to around 1912, and was published in London by E.A. Schwerdtfeger and Co. An older

gentleman dressed as Santa Claus peers through large wooden doors, with a sack of presents in hand. Whilst directly above their head is the writing: 'May your Christmas be merry and gay, take your choice'. This card uses the word gay in its original meaning, as to be happy, or 'light-hearted and carefree'.

Christmas card, circa 1912, Published in London by E.A. Schwerdtfeger and Co, Southend Central Museum. On loan from Southend Museums.

GAY SANTA GETS SACK

In 1986, a local actor named Danny Ford was subject to a tabloid scandal in The Sun newspaper with the headline 'Gay Santa Gets Sack'. Ford was working at the Keddies

department store as Santa Claus during the festive season. According to the Sun's article, he was fired from his role as they found out about his sexuality. This was during the height of the AIDS crisis and so the reporters interviewed other employees who stated he did not have AIDS and would not be able to pass on the virus by kissing children who visited the grotto. However, HIV/AIDS could not be transmitted this way and so the article in The Sun is an example of the regular misinformation spread within the press then that often encouraged violence towards gay men.

TIME, DEREK JARMAN, 1992

This painting by the widely known artist, film maker and gay rights activist Derek Jarman features the 'Gay Santa Gets Sack' headline from The Sun in 1986 about a local actor named Danny Ford.

Derek Jarman, Time, 1992, Oil and photocopy on canvas, 251.4 x 179cm. Copyright Keith Collins Will Trust.

ACTOR DANNY HITS BACK,
SANTA: GAY TALE MADE ME QUIT

Two days later the Evening Echo interviews Danny in The Cliff enabling him to explain his side of the story. Ford had not been fired, but chose to leave after another national newspaper insinuated they were going to incorrectly publish that he had AIDS. This led to him making the decision to leave his role in order to avoid the unwanted attention and harm that such media exposure would have brought at the time.

‘Actor Danny hits back, Santa: Gay tale made me quit’ in Evening Echo, 8 December 1986. Courtesy of the Echo & the Lesbian and Gay News Media Archive.

Cork Board Structure Panel 1: Gay News

GAY NEWS

Gay News launched in 1972 as the very first independent gay magazine. The magazine ran for over a decade before it ceased operation in 1983, during which it faced frequent opposition from numerous bodies such as local authorities and was often censored. Before the dawn of the internet, magazines such as Gay News were one of the only ways the public could find out about LGBTQ+ issues and events. On an issue from 1978, it claims to be 'The World's Largest Circulation Newspaper for homosexuals'.

Front Cover of Gay News, Number 147, July 13-26 1978.

GAY NEWS' GAY GUIDE, 1978

Circled in red are the listings in a 1978 issue of Gay News, advertising The Cliff pub in Westcliff-on-Sea, and the Forester's on Southend's seafront as gay friendly venues at the time.

'Gay News' Gay Guide' in Gay News, July 13-26 1978.

GAY NEWS' GAY GUIDE, 1982

Circled in red are the listings in a later issue of Gay News from 1982. In this instance, they also list The Cliff as a gay friendly venue, but they also advertise how to join the Campaign for Homosexaul Equality. Under Westcliff, a gay disco happening every Wednesday night is advertised titled 'Sparks at Mr Millers' on Station Road.

'Gay News' Gay Guide' in Gay News, August 5-18 1982.

GAY NEWS BAN LIFTED IN SOUTHEND

Gay News magazine became available in Southend Central Library in April 1980, after Essex County Council lifted the ban; the Southend division of Campaign for Homosexual Equality (CHE) had decided to supply it to the library free of charge for a year. At the time, the ban still existed in Thurrock and further protests happened in September 1981 outside council offices to lift the ban.

'Gay News ban lifted in Southend', clipping from Evening Echo, 1980. Image: Courtesy of the Echo & the Lesbian and Gay News Media Archive.

THE CLIFF

The Cliff pub is now Essex's only exclusively LGBTQ+ venue. The pub has been operating for fifty years, they celebrated their fifty year anniversary this summer. In Sarah Wayman's essay 'Queer by the Pier: The Cliff and Beyond', she details her current oral history project to archive the stories of the pub's fifty years in operation. If you have a story you would like to tell Sarah please talk to one of our Project Space Assistants to be put in touch.

Exterior of The Cliff pub. Courtesy of The Cliff pub, Southend-on-Sea. Photography by Tessa Hallmann. Interior of The Cliff pub. Courtesy of The Cliff pub, Southend-on-Sea. Photography by Tessa Hallmann.

GAY RAY WINS PUB BATTLE

Despite The Cliff being a gay pub for fifty years, it has also come up against several attempts to stop it from being so. The clipping with the headline 'Gay Ray wins pub battle' is one of these instances. In 1981, publican of The Cliff Raymond Stone had to fight a court battle after the police questioned whether his own homosexuality would affect him in his role as licensee. Find out more by reading Sarah Wayman's essay in the Southend's Twilight Worlds publication.

'Gay Ray wins pub battle', clipping from Evening Echo, 1981. Image: Courtesy of the Echo & the Lesbian and Gay News Media Archive.

Cork Board Structure Panel 2: Kursaal & Southend Museums Objects

KURSAAL

The Kursaal, an abandoned amusement arcade on Southend's seafront, figures prominently within the city's history. Vittorio Ricchetti considers how a piece of garish carpet taken from the Kursaal in the 1990's could be considered as camp in his essay for the Southend's Twilight Worlds publication.

Exterior of Kursaal, Southend-on-Sea, 2022. Photography by Tessa Hallmann.

Carpet from Kursaal, 1997, Southend Central Museums. Courtesy of Southend Museums. Photography by Tessa Hallmann.

PRINCESS ESSEX

Princess Essex is a play written and performed by Anne Odeke (RSC, Shakespeare's Globe, Queen's Theatre Hornchurch). Odeke's play draws upon research previously uncovered by Steve Martin and Elsa James. In 1908, at the Kursaal on Southend's seafront Princess Dinubolu entered herself into one of the country's most prestigious

beauty pageants. Princess Essex is a funny and dynamic tale of the first black woman to ever enter a beauty pageant in the UK.

Poster of Princess Essex, 2022. Courtesy of Anne Odeke.

SOUTHEND'S ONE BRIGHT SPOT

In *Forgotten Black Essex: Princess Dinubolu* (2018), the artist Elsa James shone a light on the 1908 media scandal over a young black woman competing in a beauty pageant at the Kursaal through video and performance. As such, the Kursaal may have been Southend's 'one bright spot', as once declared on a souvenir Kursaal mirror held within

Southend Museums, but it is also one of the sites at which many misconceptions about Southend and its history can be disrupted.

Kursaal souvenir mirror, 1950s, Southend Central Museums. Courtesy of Southend Museums. Photography by Tessa Hallmann.

SWIMMING THONGS

In Southend Museums' swimwear collection, one of the largest and more unique collections of its kind in the whole country, are a group of historical and contemporary male swimming thongs from the 1920s and from the 1980s/90s.

1920's thongs and stringed briefs were often linked to baths and saunas, the only places where they would have been permitted. Baths and saunas have historically been places of encounter for gay, bi or pan men. Male thongs and loincloths were also associated with Beefcake magazines and the underground queer photographic circuit. These were largely fitness and bodybuilding magazines with homoerotic images produced to avoid laws restricting explicitly gay erotica.

Swimming thong, 1920s, Beecroft Art Gallery. Courtesy of Southend Museums.

Photography by Tessa Hallmann.

SPEEDO

Not only was the original designer of the contemporary Speedo, Peter Travis, a gay man, but the Speedo itself became so iconic within the queer community that it even gained its own category of gay pornography. This particularly garish animal print design from the Southend Museums collection fits perfectly into our contemporary reading of 'campness'.

Speedo swimming briefs, Beecroft Art Gallery. Courtesy of Southend Museums.

Photography by Tessa Hallmann.

ROMAN SESTERTII OF HADRIAN

The Roman Emperor Hadrian is frequently referenced as having publicly had a male consort, Antinous, who accompanied him on his travels around the empire. It was not uncommon for his predecessors to have taken gay lovers alongside a female spouse, however Hadrian was unique in making his love “official” in a way that no other emperor before him had ever done. When Antinous drowned in mysterious circumstances in the River Nile, Hadrian was so distraught that he chose to commemorate the young Greek man by making him a divinity, founded a cult in his name and erected monuments in his

honour. There are also memorials to Hadrian's dead lover at the emperor's villa in Tivoli.

Roman sestertii of Hadrian, AD 117 to 138. Courtesy of Southend Museums.

Photography by Tessa Hallmann.

SILVER SHILLING & SIXPENCE OF QUEEN ANNE

In 2018, period black comedy film *The Favorite*, directed by Yorgos Lanthimos, became a great success. The film follows Queen Anne who reigned over England, Scotland and Ireland from 1702 to 1714. Numerous historians have explored an exchange of letters

amongst Queen Anne and Duchess of Marlborough Sarah Churchill, through these letters many have debated that a lesbian love affair ensued between them. It is the potential of this romantic relationship that informed the hit film *The Favorite*. In Southend Museums' collection are a number of coins dating to the early eighteenth century that feature the profile of Queen Anne, now a historical lesbian icon.

A silver shilling of Queen Anne, dated 1711. Courtesy of Southend Museums.

Photography by Tessa Hallmann.

A silver sixpence of Queen Anne, dated 1705. Courtesy of Southend Museums.

Photography by Tessa Hallmann.

SILVER PENNIES OF EDWARD II

Edward II was King of England in 1307 until his deposition in 1327. He frequented Hadleigh Castle in South Essex throughout his reign, the ruins of this medieval castle is remain to this day. Edward II's sexuality has also been the site of much speculation. These coins from Southend Museums' collection feature the profile of Edward II.

It is believed that his aid Piers Gaveston was Edward's lover. While there is no concrete historical evidence to support Gaverston and Edward II having a homosexual

affair, in Christopher Marlowe's theatrical rendition of 1592, their relationship is very much queer.

In 1970, BBC Two broadcasted Prospect Theatre Company's production of Edward II, featuring Ian McKellen as Edward and James Laurenson as Gaveston. The production drew upon Marlowe's telling and so McKellen and Laurenson exchanged a kiss: thus, this moment was Britain's first gay kiss. More contemporary works drawing upon this story include queer British filmmaker Derek Jarman's Edward II (1991), a film using the medieval past to critique the anti-queer politics of Margaret Thatcher's Britain.

Silver pennies of Edward II, 1307 to 1327, found in South East Essex.

Cork Board Structure Panel 3: SEACA, UK Black Pride, Southend Pride, and Gender Bending Nights

STEEL PAN, JOSEPHINE MELVILLE, 2022

The Steel Pan exhibited is a Bass Drum and is played with wooden beaters that are encased with rubber at one end. As the sounds fuse together, and the harmonious tunes of the Steel Pans are played in unison, you can't help but be lifted in spirit and for a moment, in some way be transported to the Caribbean.

HISTORY OF STEEL PANS

The musical instrument evolved from musical practices once used by Trinidad's African descendants. Drumming was a form of communication among the enslaved Africans that were subsequently outlawed by the British Colonial government.

The Steel Pan was popularised in Trinidad and Tobago during the 1930s and 50s. Ships docked at the island with drums full of oil. These discarded empty drums were then used by islanders to make musical instruments, which lead to the development of the melodic and rhythmic Calypso sound.

STEEL HERE PAN BAND

The formation of the Steel Here Pan Band came out of workshops created by the South Essex African and Caribbean Association and initially funded by Essex Community Foundation to encourage young people to come out and socialise, make new friends and to improve their wellbeing.

It was not long before adults were joining in and the workshops soon became an inter-generational opportunity for all. The Steel Here Band developed as the commitment from participants was such that when the project was completed, with an outcome of working towards their first performance at the Hamlet Court Road in Harmony Festival in September 2021, the group wanted to continue.

Working with our amazing tutors Shirley Potter and Wilf Hohenkirk, the decision was taken to persevere, and the dream of the first Community Steel Pan Band in the City of Southend was born. The Steel Here Band have had the opportunity of performing at the Cliffs Pavilion, The Palace Theatre, various charity events and the unforgettable moment when they performed for the Royals, HRH Prince Charles and the Duchess of Cornwall.

The band members' ages range from 7 - 78 and we welcome new members as the Steel Here Pan Band grows and the journey continues.

Images courtesy of South Essex African and Caribbean Association. Photography by Tessa Hallmann.

UK BLACK PRIDE

Founded in 2005, UK Black Pride is Europe's largest celebration for LGBTQ+ people of African, Asian, Caribbean, Middle Eastern and Latin American descent, and is a safe space to celebrate diverse sexualities, gender identities, gender expressions and cultures. UK Black Pride organises an annual celebration during Pride month, as well as a variety of activities throughout the year, which promote and advocate for the spiritual, emotional and intellectual health, and wellbeing of the communities they represent.

Phyll Opoku-Gyimah (Lady Phyll), founder of UK Black Pride, discusses how the organisation began with a visit to Southend-on-Sea. In 2004, Lady Phyll was running the organisation BLUK (Black Lesbians in the UK) and organised a trip to Southend that spurred on the idea for UK Black Pride which was inaugurated a year later in the same place.

ELLIOT GIBBONS (EG): Southend-on-Sea didn't have its first Pride march until 2003, following the repeal of Section 28 that year. After this, it was not for another fifteen years that Southend had another Pride, in 2018 when local residents Dan Turpin and

Sam Adams helped to form Southend Pride. Could you talk about what drew you to Southend-on-Sea to begin what was to later become UK Black Pride in August 2005?

LADY PHYLL (LP): When I was younger, my dad couldn't afford to take us 90 abroad, so he took us to Southend for holidays. I have such fond memories of these trips with my dad, so it made sense to make more with a group of women who needed spaces to celebrate together. It was a really very special and transformative day.

EG: Once in Southend, how did you and the 'three coach-loads of lesbian and bisexual Black women' celebrate?

LP: What stands out to me about our day in Southend, almost 18 years on, is just how celebratory and intimate our celebration was. From the smell of jerk chicken roasting on BBQs, to the music from a wide range of Black diasporic cultures, to the warm embraces and belly-laughter among and from the women, we really felt we had created a safe space for ourselves – and we just felt so good, as if Southend had become ours.

EG: Did the experience of celebrating in Southend, positive and, or, negative, inform what has now become UK Black Pride?

LP: While we were definitely enchanted by the little world we had created for us, we were aware of the stares from the locals, who were perhaps not wholly used to seeing large crowds of Black women, nevermind Black queer women; but that's our life as Black women and as Black people: wherever we go in the UK, for the most part and even in 2022, there will be looks. There will be questions, "What are you doing here?" It's a sad reality, but one which reaffirms how important it is to create spaces like UK Black Pride. At UK Black Pride, just as in Southend in 2004, our people and communities come together to celebrate and protest in the face of a country that continues to slide backwards. And if we can celebrate being Black and queer in Southend, then I imagine we can do it just about anywhere.

ABOUT LADY PHYLL

Phyll Opoku-Gyimah is the nucleus of the award-winning celebration and protest that is UK Black Pride. Widely known as Lady Phyll – partly due to her decision to reject an MBE in the New Year's Honours' list to protest Britain's role in formulating anti-LGBTQI+ penal codes across its empire – she is also the executive director of Kaleidoscope Trust, an organisation working to uphold the human rights of LGBTQI+ people around the world; a community builder and organiser; an Albert Kennedy Trust patron; and a public speaker focusing on race, gender, sexuality and class. She's

regularly called upon to advise nascent LGBTQI+ organisations around the world to help leaders create cogent organising strategies, establish robust partnership networks and work effectively in service of the LGBTQI+ community.

Lady Phyll talking at UK Black Pride event in 2019. Photography by Elainea Emmott.

Image courtesy of UK Black Pride.

SOUTHEND PRIDE

Southend Pride began in late 2017 and the first parade took place along the high street in the summer of 2018. This was not the first Pride the borough had seen however. In 2003, a seemingly discreet Pride took place in Southend to celebrate the repeal of

Section 28 within England that year. Fifteen years later locals Sam Adams and Dan Turpin helped to bring people together to form what Southend Pride has now become, alongside a group of passionate people who manage the various different elements which form part of the organisation year round.

You can read the full interview with Sam Adams & Dan Turpin in the Southend's Twilight Worlds publication.

Image: Southend Pride stage at Warrior Square, 2019. © Gaz de Vere

SPARE RIB

This copy of Spare Rib magazine from October 1982 was just one of the many issues, amongst other feminist and LGBTQ+ magazines, donated to the project by Southend Pride's Sam Adams. Spare Rib was an important part of the Women's Liberation Movement in the late twentieth century, the magazine challenged the way society viewed women. The magazine started in 1972 and ceased production in 1993.

THE ODD COUPLE

'OH BOY! THE ODD COUPLE: Brothers who go gender bending' was the headline of a tabloid article from an issue of the Evening Echo in 1984. The author Peter Wilson

wrote a short exposé on two brothers, who were two of many that used to attend 'special gender bending nights at Rains club in Southend-on-Sea'.

Paul & Tim Rider outside of Rains club in Southend-on-Sea, from 'OH BOY! THE ODD COUPLE: Brothers who go gender bending', Evening Echo, 1984. Courtesy of the Echo & the Lesbian and Gay News Media Archive.

GENDER BENDING NIGHTS

In this double-page spread within the Evening Echo from 1984, the reporter documents a Tuesday night party at the Rains club called The Zig-Zag Club. A person named Toni

Valentine set-up the event for people who also wanted to 'bend the rules of conventional fashion'. From these images we can see that in the 1980s there were people in Southend who sought to dismantle the gender binary and express their true selves despite the largely conservative attitudes held within the area at the time.

'Gender Benders: Boy will be girls', Evening Echo, 1984. Courtesy of the Echo & Tessa Hallmann.

Cork Board Structure Panel 4: The Agency of Visible Women & Transfeminine objects found along the Thames

A SNAPSHOT OF SOUTHEND AS A CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT FOR WOMXN,
2019,

DAMIEN ROBINSON & RUTH JONES

Ruth Jones founded The Agency of Visible Women in 2018. Initially intended as a play on words for a group exhibition, The Agency's positive impact on its members in its capacity as an artist network resulted in Ruth and Damien Robinson's determination to explore its potential. Ruth and Damien conducted research in their home town of Southend, working with the womxn and femmes they know and those they had not yet

met. Out of this they created a publication giving voice to their collaborators' (and their own) experiences within the creative sector.

VENUS FIGURINE FROM WICKFORD, ESSEX

This figurine was found at the site of a Roman villa and would once have sat atop a household shrine as a focus of worship. Venus was the goddess of sexuality- which was described in the classical world as *ta aphrodisia* meaning "Aphrodite's things." This included lesbian sexuality, and the most celebrated lesbian of all time- Sappho of Lesbos- wrote many poems to the goddess. Her "Ode to Aphrodite" is a prayer calling upon the goddess to descend from heaven to yearning Sappho and aid her in winning

the love of another woman. The cult of Venus was enthusiastically embraced in Roman Britain, and many women must have prayed just as Sappho did to such figurines, using them as objects of lesbian devotion.

Romano-British Venus figurine, AD 43-410, pipe clay, Southend Central Museums.

Courtesy of Southend Museums. Photography by Tessa Hallmann.

VENUS FIGURINE FRAGMENTS

FROM CANVEY ISLAND, ESSEX

In the first to second centuries AD, Venus figurines in pipeclay were mass-produced to an identical model in Gaul (modern France) and imported into Britain in significant numbers. They depicted the goddess at the moment of her birth as an adult woman, rising from the sea at Cyprus and wringing out her hair. A collection of fragmented parts were found on the foreshore at Canvey Island. Experimental studies have shown such figurines were fragile and prone to break when dropped, thus the fragmentation is likely accidental. Previously they would have stood in household shrines, and perhaps received lesbian prayers of their own.

Fragments of Romano-British Venus figurine, AD 43-410, pipe clay, Southend Central Museums. Courtesy of Southend Museums. Photography by Tessa Hallmann.

HERMAPHRODITE CALLIPYGE FIGURINE FROM THE RIVER THAMES

Hermaphrodite was a figure likely originating from Aphrodite's cult centre on Cyprus, where she was worshipped in various forms including as a female with a penis. In the classical context her gender was read from her overall form and not her genitals alone, and thus her penis became a feminine organ. This bronze figurine is of the callipyge or kallipygos type- meaning "beautiful buttocks", an epithet once given to Venus who was also depicted in this pose. In one hand she holds a mirror, gazing down over one

shoulder to admire the reflection of her beautiful buttocks. Her gaze invites the admiration of the viewer- who may have been of any gender.

Romano-British figurine, AD 43-410, copper alloy, 123.5 mm, British Museum. Image: Copyright The Trustees of the British Museum.

BRONZE HEAD OF HADRIAN
FROM THE RIVER THAMES

The emperor Hadrian was assuredly gay – his official marriage was never consummated and there is no evidence he ever had any attraction to women, while he

wrote erotic poetry to his male lovers. His closest relationship was with Antinous, “a youth fair of face” with whom he shared a love of hunting. Sadly Antinous drowned during a journey on the Nile. Hadrian was distraught and in grief he commissioned an enormous number of statues of Antinous throughout the empire, named a city and constellation after him, and even defined Antinous as a god. His worship continued long after Hadrian’s own death.

Romano-British head of Hadrian, AD 117-138, copper alloy, 430mm, British Museum.

Image: Copyright The Trustees of the British Museum.

Ruth Hazel Wall Panel

IDENTIFY, RUTH HAZEL, 2022

The paths of so many so called subcultures meld to make our own fashions, our own languages.

Scraps can become brightly coloured beacons, proudly displaying our identity, a walking protest or a subtly winking eye, like a small forget-me-not is to a Freemason.

The word or phrase gains recognition from the right clan, your people. To many, you're a degenerate, messy and unkempt, and foul mouthed, but to the right few you nod in solidarity and smile.

Patches with their threads rooted in poverty were used to repair clothes and linen long past their best. I was taught to hand sew at a young age, firstly to make lavender bags to deter moths snacking in our wardrobes; and later to repair what we had rescued from the moths but lost to wear and tear, knees in trousers over played in, elbows on school shirts and holes in socks. We were never taught to be ashamed. Repairing was care, it was love.

Here the words and sayings used in the LGBTQIA* community sing in crude glory.

Many directly, or with, origins from Polari: the secret slang language used by the queer community when it was still illegal to be homosexual. Highly influenced by Romani

Street performers it became a way to communicate and identify your tribe without being recognised by undercover police (the Lilly).

These are a practice of love, a homage to my queer families everywhere. Out and proud or working on understanding themselves. All of us fighting the mundanity of conformity. A homage to my benefit class tongue and every rejection of capitalist aspirational desires, no matter how small.

Mediums: cotton, food colouring, household paint, fabric paint, glass and plastic beads, pearl thread, rainbow yarn.

Archive Table 2

TABBY

The corsets in these photos were made in Southend in 1991. They were worn by a married couple on the occasion of the 1991 UK tour of the Rocky Horror Picture Show in Southend. They are now in the Fashion and Textile collection of Southend Museums alongside the ephemera presented in this case. The Rocky Horror Picture Show, as exemplified by the image of the couple wearing the costumes, challenged and played with the concept of gender and personal expression.

The garments were made by Tabby, a successful business owner, designer, model and artist based in Westcliff. Tabby followed an ingenious business model where the production of her designs was boosted by her own career as a glamour model. These catalogues, printed locally, presented Tabby both as a brand and as a model, showcasing her advanced skills in designing and making corsetry, lingerie and hosiery.

Tabby's business and career are an example of self-determination, representation, agency and sexual freedom in Southend. Together, these images show us a freer and less normative side of Southend's 80s and 90s which, like for the rest of the country, were characterised by a return to conservatism and populist politics.

All Tabby ephemera on loan from Southend Museums. Photographs of garments taken by Tessa Hallmann. Patches magazine spread of Tabby courtesy of Tessa Hallmann.

Signed programme for The Rocky Horror Picture Show at The Palace Theatre, June 1985. Courtesy of Tessa Hallmann.