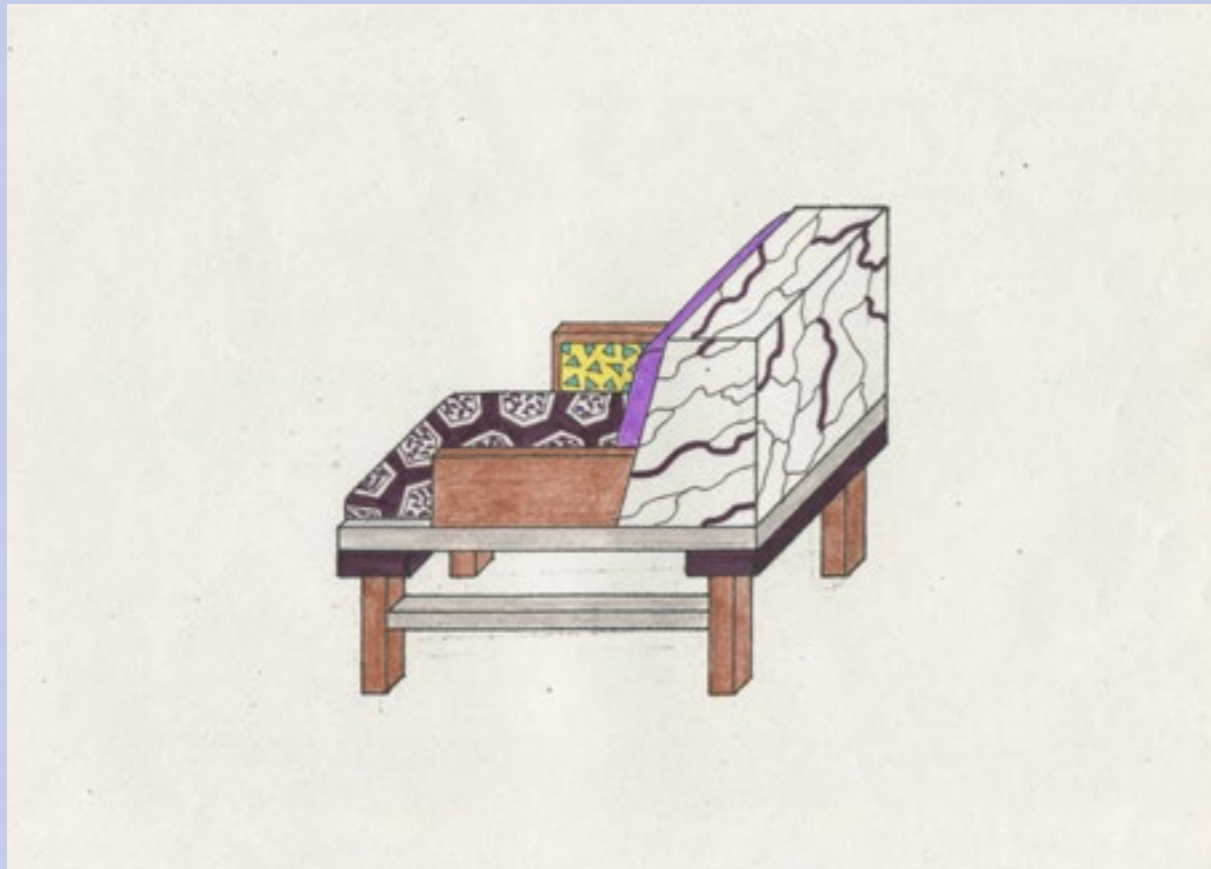


The handles, the filing cabinets, the cupboard doors, the file boxes and folders, the papers and the backs of the photos, the alphabetical order and the chronologies, things missing and things found again. This is where archivists tell stories, including their own.

CABINET



Nathalie Du Pasquier. Drawing of an interior, 1982.
Nathalie Du Pasquier Private Archive.

Q&A PEOPLE BEHIND FINDS

I HOW DID YOU START THIS JOB?

II CHOOSE A FEW DOCUMENTS FROM YOUR ARCHIVE WHICH NARRATE THE '80s.

III CHOOSE ONE FROM ANOTHER ARCHIVE.

IV WHAT'S THE VALUE OF MEMORY?

V WHAT'S THE DOCUMENT WHICH SO FAR HAS AMAZED YOU THE MOST?

VI WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE PLACE IN THE ARCHIVE?

Dolce Cioffo, 30 years of age, Archive and Special Project Manager at Vivienne Westwood Archive, London, UK, since 2015

I I have never had a nose-to-the-grindstone approach to studying. It seemed to me that life was something else, that there was more fun to be had elsewhere. “In my opinion, the girl could aspire to more than the Scuola Normale Superiore in Pisa,” a high school teacher told my mother, “she might even think about Cambridge.” And indeed, against my will, I went to Cambridge. I graduated in Latin and Greek, with a course of study that provided me with a structure of thought based much more on analysis than words. I then did a master’s degree at the London College of Fashion, on what was then Europe’s first Fashion Curation course. One evening at a dinner party during that period, I met someone who worked as a human resources manager for Vivienne Westwood. I told her about myself and she said she thought I could work for Vivienne’s archive. “But,” she added, “you know, you’re going to be a bit bored because it’s a pretty dull department, so maybe bring some books so you can study while you’re there—there’s not necessarily always anything to do.” At the time, the department was perceived as ‘passive’ both within the company (it was considered an uninspiring place, with boring and restrictive work dynamics) and from the outside: very few initiatives were taken with regard to museum projects or the like. It was a department that did not produce any income or direct value, and for this reason it was considered ‘dead’. Let us remember that Vivienne Westwood’s attitude is undoubtedly punk, and that perhaps the very concept of preserving some of her work for posterity might have sounded like nonsense. Well, I went into the archive and was stunned: there were pieces from the 1970s, and for every single line. It was certainly not the archive of Dior or Prada, where you might imagine

white walls, bright lights and impeccable order. It was a punk archive: dark, steely and unwelcoming. The temperature was normal room temperature, which is always right in the end. You might think, “I’m sure she doesn’t have an archive,” but then you go there and you find all that material, and in such an intimate way that is so typical of Vivienne. I didn’t like this label of the ‘dead department’, and I based my entire archival practice on the search for value associated with this corporate heritage. For the first three months in the archive, I worked on the framework of an MO: I studied every single box, I reorganised, I cleaned, I tried to understand the history and the reasons behind it all.

II The first archive item I’m going to choose is a dress that is rarely shown. It’s a very important piece from the Vivienne Westwood Archive because it was



23—C

made in collaboration with Keith Haring. It comes from a collection called *Witches*, from fall–winter 1983–1984. The two, who were introduced in New York by Malcolm McLaren, began to collaborate on the

basis of a common source of inspiration: the book *Voodoo and Magic Practices* (1975) by Jean Kerboul: a missionary priest from Haiti. Haring gave Vivienne two panels of fabric decorated with subjects such as witches, priests, voodoo, people with dog heads and figures that conjure up the practice of black magic, all reappraised in a Pop key. From these fabrics, Vivienne created the collection. It’s meaningful to me because it’s a process of reworking the cultural material of the time which originated with Haring, who would later become one of the greatest artists in history, and Vivienne, who would become one of the greatest designers in history. At that time they were both exploring their own genius and presenting it to the world. This decade was particularly important for Vivienne: it was during that time that she emerged and stood alone as an independent woman, no longer as Malcolm McLaren’s right-hand woman but as Vivienne Westwood, fashion designer.



23—D

The second item is a newspaper article related to the spring–summer 1982 show *Savages*. In this work too there are references to the past, to roots: specifically to the culture of the Native Americans and to African culture. The article is titled ‘New Generation’ and the text takes up the slogan of the collection programme: “The savage is you in 1982.” This sentence reflects the designer’s hoped-for reception of her collection, but also—considering the title of the article—the actual reaction of the public and critics. I don’t think fashion sets anything in motion in society, but I do think it is called upon to witness

and translate its changes visually. London in the 1980s was a hotbed of different subcultures, aspirations and revolutions. New codes were being sought out through the re-examination and questioning of the old, not through mere negation with it. According to the press, therefore, this model represented the ‘cool kid’ enjoying life in the city, with a more open mind to the world, just as London was at the time.



23—A

The last item chosen is an invitation to the *Time Machine* show for the fall–winter 1988 collection. Two years later, Vivienne would win the Designer of the Year title. In 1985, she met Carlo D’Amario in Italy, who became her partner and business partner in England, and helped her put the brand together. So it was no longer the beginning of a fashion project but of a real fashion house, or as Carlo calls it, *la maison*.



23—A

In this show, one of the elements that would most characterise Westwood’s narrative comes to the fore: theatricality. Inspired by the structure of haute couture shows, Vivienne divided the *Time Machine* collection into different passages and consequently also the show into different acts. She began to consolidate those areas of exploration that would consecrate her poetics for posterity: her English roots, her relationship with

classicism, the Wallace Collection and its collections, from which she drew great inspiration. In an almost dialectical process, cultural material from the past would be taken up, studied, pulled apart and re-proposed so as to create something modern. I have always been fascinated by this dynamic, and it inspired me in the creation of my archival method. To derive new values from what has been (what we call heritage), be they educational, promotional or commercial.

III I would like to underline here a very important value that archives have for me, namely that of space-time evasion. In a historical moment like the current one, characterised by closure and the fear itself of closure, I consult my beloved archives to let my mind travel in space and time. I open my mind through them. I learn, imagine and remember as part of a very personal experience. The example I would like to cite is the Archivio Luce, which is very dear to me. Everything that has to do with television, documentary and cinema has always had a special influence on me.



15—A

As a child, I often stayed awake, without my mother knowing, until 11 pm so as to secretly watch the old Istituto Luce documentaries. I never lost the habit of tracking them down even when I grew up, especially on YouTube. The Archivio Luce is now being digitised, and it is a goldmine for me, one I consult every time I want to escape with my thoughts. There are various fonds to consult, with incredible material. The fond I would like to mention in particular is that of Pino Settanni, a photographer I discovered thanks to my perusals through these archives. Being stuck during

a pandemic in a closed, wintery London is hard, so I would travel around Paris through Pino's beautiful photos of the city's markets, architecture and people. One photo in particular makes me dream, the one entitled *Una giovane coppia abbracciata su Rue du Pont Neuf* ('A young couple embracing on Rue du Pont Neuf'). Taken in 1986 in black and white, it reminds me of the light-heartedness and positivity of Paris in the 1980s. It makes me think of the poetry of sentiment. I get lost in the details given in the descriptions and the beauty of the image itself.

IV We are not fashion historians, we are not tasked with having to study a period, sort out the information and hand it down to posterity. We are the people who help preserve and rework the data that fashion history provides us with. Mine is more of a managerial approach. I observe the product's journey from start to finish, thereby becoming witness to a series of processes that often go unnoticed as it unfolds. This is why I ask myself what forms and creates memory. I have the physical object in front of me, the garment or the collection accessory; I have all the information, the press releases, all the invitations. Then I have the statistical data: how much a given collection sold. I also have all the oral history handed down by the people who worked on a collection or on the shows, the anecdotes that usually get lost



23—B

over time. And one of the last things I did as project manager with Murray Blewett was a book, published by Thames & Hudson, in which we did a great job of reorganising history and images, show by show, from the beginning right up to the spring-summer 2021 collection.

V The most fascinating find I have had the pleasure of dealing with is Vivienne herself. She is a great source of inspiration for me, not only on a personal level but on a practical working level. Working so closely with people of this calibre changes you, especially in my case, as Andreas Kronthaler (Westwood's creative director and husband, ed.), Vivienne and Carlo D'Amario raised me. From them I gained very different kinds of knowledge and working methods, which



23—B

helped me to shape my own. Being in the same room as Vivienne is intimidating; you feel her depth. This memory of last September comes to mind: since we couldn't do the show in Paris as usual, we took photos of the digital presentation of the spring-summer 2021 collection. The workload was the same as for a show, but there were six of us on set: there were two producers, myself and the other creative assistant, and finally Vivienne and Andreas. For the first time she wasn't surrounded by that intimidating aura; that day I saw her as a model, designer, art director and makeup artist. We had Isamaya Ffrench, one of the greatest makeup artists of the moment, shooting videos of her doing her own makeup. Then I saw her become an actress, when we shot videos of her reading extracts from poems. And finally I saw her as a life coach when Andreas had to play his part: "Talk to me as if you were talking only to me in this room." She is not just someone who used to go to museum archives and galleries for inspiration, but also someone who has read, who has discovered new music scenes emerging in England or the new subculture of the moment. She based her design process on the reworking of Anglo-Saxon culture and culture in general, from French to Italian, on the relationship between Anglo-Saxon

culture and that of other countries. Above all, she is a person who has always had a degree of ambivalence towards the past: a relationship of high respect, but also of table-turning in terms of parody.

VI My favourite place is my office. Just as creatives put together moodboards for their projects and collections, I have a noticeboard behind my desk for inspiration, and also for fun. There are photos of work moments that are particularly dear to me: colleagues who have left, memes about Andreas and Vivienne, the models I have worked with and become friends with; there are messages from my students and photos of my idols: the German footballer Hummels, the Italian rapper Fabri Fibra, James Franco and most of all Arnold



23—E

Schwarzenegger. Here, this slightly more pop aspect can remind the new generations that in the end we always remain ourselves, that even in the most difficult situations and in the most unsettled environments, you can always be yourself, like this noticeboard behind me. I keep it because I started it as a joke when I arrived at Westwood in 2015, and it always reminds me where I come from.