

## **A Riot Of Our Own**

Vibe Gallery, The Old Truman Brewery, Brick Lane, E1

Curator Carol Tulloch  
Design Graphicsi

Saturday 24 – Friday 30 April 2010

‘A Riot of Our Own’ is the feature exhibition of the East End Film Festival.

‘A Riot Of Our Own’ revisits the energy of the Rock Against Racism (RAR) Movement, 1976-1981. It show cases the personal archive of Graphicsi—Ruth Gregory and Syd Shelton who were RAR (London) committee members. The archive is a unique repository of graphic and photographic material on this pivotal period in British political activism.

RAR London, where the movement originated, based its operations in the East End. It was a collection of black and white political activists, reggae and punk musicians, artists, graphic designers, photographers, actors, writers, fashion designers, and fans who came together to pool their energies and talents in the fight against the growth of racism and the National Front. Through such a formidable collaboration RAR members took on the orthodoxy through five carnivals and some 500 gigs throughout Britain.

Many of the works featured in ‘A Riot of Our Own’ were produced by Ruth, Syd and other RAR members at the Hackney studio the duo established in 1979. Some of the objects belong to one or the other: the badges acquired and diaries written by Ruth; the photographs taken by Syd of RAR events—the shot of Paul Simonon of The Clash on stage facing the vast crowd at the first RAR Carnival at Victoria Park in April 1978 has become a collector’s item—and socio-cultural images many of which were taken on the streets of East London; other pieces are jointly owned, such as the RAR publication *Temporary Hoarding*.

Syd and Ruth’s intuitive act of keeping this material is ‘a form of self-historicisation’. Therefore, the exhibition has been curated along the lines of ‘self-archiving’- an exploration of one’s own history through a re-acquaintance with, and re-assemblage of, the objects held in a personal archive—to transform it into an exhibition of visual quotes that reflect RAR and the social tempo in Britain between 1976 and 1981.

‘A Riot of Our Own’ was first shown at CHELSEA space, 2nd July-2nd August 2008.