

Audio Description Transcript:

Evelyn Hofer, Harlem Church, New York 1964

Written and read by Eleanor Margolies

Three black women dressed in Sunday best stand facing us, outside a shopfront church. The woman in the centre is smiling, while the other two have slightly more quizzical expressions. The first woman, on the left, is the most elaborately dressed: she wears a hat made of rosettes of black silk, sunglasses with cats-eye-shaped frames, a red satin knee-length sleeveless dress with a black lace shawl, a black handbag over one arm and black high-heeled court shoes. She has a choker of beads and a gold heart on a bracelet and her black gloves are held in one hand. The central woman is in a white short-sleeved dress, with a dainty hat of pale blue and lilac flowers that sets off her curls, a light blue silk scarf jauntily thrown around her neck and over one shoulder, and navy gloves and handbag. The third woman is in simple black shirtdress, and like the others, she wears heeled court shoes. Her crowning glory is a tall hat of gold satin rosettes and ruffles.

The name of the church, 'The Holy Prince of Peace Pentecostal Church', is hand painted in neat capital letters on a signboard between two ventilation grilles.

Above, there is an old shop sign that has been roughly obliterated with white paint, but the embossed letters spelling out LUNCHEON can still be read, while on the edge of a tattered awning below, it's just possible to make out the words LITTLE CHIPS RESTAURANT. The shop window has been hand painted with two arched panels filled with coloured triangles to give the effect of a stained glass church window. A large handwritten notice in the centre reads in capital

letters: STOP LOOK; and in smaller capital letters reads: STARTING SUNDAY
AUGUST 11 THERE WILL BE A TWO WEEK GREAT OLD FASHIONED
REVIVAL MEETING HERE. The rest of the text is slightly cut off by the edge of
the handbag belonging to the woman in red: BRING THE SICK... AND YOUR
SOUL REVIVE ... EVERYONE IS INVITED TO ATTEND. It's signed: MOTHER
COLE, PASTOR.

To the sides of the narrow shopfront, there are glimpses of the awnings and
closed metal grilles over the neighbouring shops. The sun casts shadows behind
the women, as if they have emerged late on a summer afternoon from a long
church service.

This colour photograph, and most others in the exhibition, was made using Dye
Transfer printing process. A popular process from the 1920s, it remained in use
until the mid-1970s. Three layers of dye – cyan, magenta and yellow – are
applied sequentially to one emulsion layer. It is a laborious, time-consuming
process that gives exceptional control over the final colour balance and results in
a richly-toned photographic print.