

The one
lesson I've
learned
from life

Elizabeth Emanuel

FASHION designer Elizabeth Emanuel, 65, is best known for designing Princess Diana's wedding dress with her ex-husband, David, in 1981. She has two grown-up children, Oliver and Eloise, and lives in London with her long-term partner.

NEVER THROW ANYTHING AWAY!

YOU can find my entire life in fashion in a huge storage container near my home. I keep everything — and I mean everything — from my student days to my career as a designer.

I have things that go back to 1978: archive sketches, scraps of fabric, photographic print and correspondence.

Some people might call me a hoarder, but I'm very particular about keeping my archive in order, and it's very useful from a research point of view.

Spring cleaning's all very well, but you never know when something might come in handy.

My ex-husband, David, and I made a strapless black dress for Princess



Diana's first public outing as Prince Charles's fiancée, but she lost so much weight that we decided to make her another. We kept the original and put it in storage, wrapped in a bin liner, where it stayed until we auctioned it in 2010.

There are so many other precious memories in that container: sketches for dresses I've made for Elizabeth Taylor and Joan Collins, Virgin Atlantic uniform designs for Richard Branson, ideas for ballet costumes for the Royal Opera House, and swatches of material from outfits worn by Enya in her videos.

It is a treasure trove of inspiration; in many ways, a history of British fashion.

Visitors love coming to my studio in Maida Vale, West London, because I keep all sorts of weird and wonderful objects: buttons, bits of vintage lace, unusual jewellery finds.

I'll be working on a design and suddenly I'll remember an old reference book I had years ago. I do a lot of research before starting a new collection. I keep a notebook handy, even at bedtime, as the best ideas can strike in the middle of the night.

I firmly believe age and gender don't matter when it comes to contemporary fashion. It's just dressing up — and — people will always love dressing up.

■ ELIZABETH'S new couture collection, *Paris 1902*, is available for orders from her Maida Vale studio (elizabethemanuel.co.uk)

Interview: SARAH RAINEY