

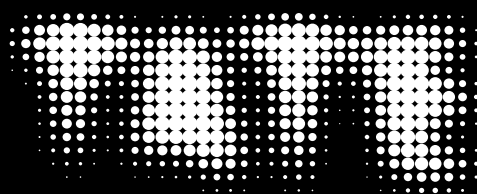
LEIGH BOWERY

27 FEBRUARY – 31 AUGUST 2025

LARGE PRINT GUIDE



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ROOM 1

ROOM 1

ANTI-CLOCKWISE FROM THE WALL TO THE RIGHT OF THE ENTRANCE

[Wall Text]

LEIGH BOWERY

Leigh Bowery (1961–1994). A smalltown boy from Sunshine, a Melbourne suburb in Australia. He's bored. Inspired by the punk scene, Bowery leaves fashion college and arrives in London in October 1980. The New Romantics hold court. That December, he writes his New Year resolutions:

- 1. Get weight down to 12 stone**
- 2. Learn as much as possible**
- 3. Become established in the world of art, fashion or literature**
- 4. Wear make-up everyday**

This would be just the beginning of Bowery's aspirations.

In his brief life Bowery was described as many things. Among them: fashion designer, club monster, human sculpture, nude model, vaudeville drunkard, anarchic auteur, pop surrealist, clown without a circus, piece of moving furniture, modern art on legs. However, he declared **if you label me, you negate me** and always refused classification,

commodification and conformity. Bowery was fascinated by the human form and interested in the tension between contradictions. He used makeup as a form of painting, clothing and flesh as sculpture, and every environment as a ready-made stage for his artistry. Bridging the gap between art and life, he took on different roles and then discarded them, presenting an understanding of identity that was never stable but always memorable.

Bowery embraced difference, often using embarrassment as a tool to release both his own inhibitions and those of people around him. He wanted to shock with his 'Looks' and performances. At a time of increasing conservative values in Britain, Bowery refashioned ideas around identity, morality and culture. At times this caused offence.

This exhibition traces Bowery's beginnings as a fashion designer and club kid in the nightlife of 1980s London, through to his later performances in galleries, on the stage, the street and beyond, until his death in 1994. It is a journey into the dynamic creative scene inhabited by Bowery and friends.

Steve Pyke born 1957

Leigh Bowery and Trojan, Farrell House, London

1984, printed 2025

Photograph, C-print on paper

Steve Pyke, MBE

X91465

[Wall text]

1

HOME: FASHIONING A WORLD

From the late 1970s, the underground culture of the New Romantics had been at the forefront of London's club scene. Inspired by glam rockstars like David Bowie, Slade and Roxy Music, this flamboyant style often defied gender conventions. By the time Bowery arrived in London in 1980, however, New Romantic style had started to change. People on the scene began to adopt the 'Hard Times' look, wearing garments with dull colours and frayed edges. For his first fashion collection, Bowery created his own version of this look, made with meagre funds saved while on unemployment benefit.

In 1984 he shifted gear, developing a collection that featured brightly coloured clothes made from shiny synthetic fabrics, sequin-covered vinyl hats and platform boots, with models' faces painted different colours. The collection combined his range of interests: sci-fi, astrology, glam rock (then considered out of fashion), Hindu deities, as well as garments worn by the Bangladeshi community in East London (where Bowery was living). In other designs, he used cut-aways and ruched fabric to emphasise different parts of the body. He used makeup to create a variety of abstract shapes or imitation scabs and warts.

Bowery's artistry extended to his living environment, which he created with his best friend, the artist Trojan. With little resources, they transformed their home into a capsule that continued their interest in bad taste, exaggerated forms and the other worldly. Charles Atlas's video in this room shows Bowery and friends in their flat as they get ready to go out clubbing. Some of Bowery's garments from different fashion collections are on display here, alongside personal items, sketchbooks and photographs from his early years in London.

Stephen Willats born 1943

Leigh Bowery ('What is he trying to get at? Where does he want to go?')

1984

Two panel work (photographic prints, photographic dye, ink, acrylic paint, and objects mounted on board) with tower of ten painted breeze blocks

Stephen Willats's works explore the relationship between art and society. This portrait of Leigh Bowery comes out of Willats's research into different subcultures. He interviewed people associated with various scenes and worked with them to visually express their ideas. Here, Bowery and Willats explore how the home can be a capsule or spaceship to create your own world. Bowery wrote the text and selected and placed the objects. The stack of breeze blocks represents the block of flats where he lived, painted with bright contrasting colours to reflect his flamboyant aesthetic.

Lent by the National Portrait Gallery, London

X91086

[Intermediate Wall Text]

CULTURE CLASH

Bowery was inspired by many different sources when he designed his collections. One of the outfits he wore during this time appropriates various motifs from South Asian cultures that he saw while living in East London. He told an interviewer:

One of the huge bonuses about this area is that there's lots of Indian and Pakistani people living here and I'm forever seeing the most fantastic colour combinations... seeing Asian women wearing their traditional silk dress or "sari" with a pair of tracksuit bottoms and trainers or a baseball cap, such a clash of cultures but it gives me ideas for my clothes!

While Bowery's combination of references happens quite frequently in art and design, it can misrepresent some aspects of a culture.

Bowery described his fashion collection from this time using a racial slur, combined with a reference to outer space. He sometimes named his collections using words with

negative or hurtful connotations. By doing so, he sought to be provocative, while also trying to challenge the typical associations of the words.

Bowery's approach took place against the context of a society rife with social and racial tensions. There were anti-immigration movements and South-Asian and Black communities faced violence. In light of this, his use of negative language can be questioned.

Sue Tilley born 1957

Leigh Bowery 1961–1994

Untitled (Portrait of Leigh Bowery)

1985–6

Cotton reels on metal on acrylic paint on wood

Sue Tilley is a writer, model and artist. She was one of Bowery's close friends and later wrote his biography. 'We met at a nightclub and as we had similar backgrounds and family, we just became friends very quickly', Tilley says of their relationship. After she painted this portrait, Bowery added spools of thread on top. Through doing this, the artwork becomes a metaphor for the way Bowery used fabric as a way to fashion his identity.

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery Estate

X91456

Charles Atlas born 1949

Hail the New Puritan (excerpt)

1985–6

Video, projection, colour and sound

6 min, 3 sec

Charles Atlas is a filmmaker known for his work with contemporary dancers. In **Hail the New Puritan**, first screened on Channel 4, he depicts an imaginary day in the life of dancer and choreographer Michael Clark. In this scene, set in the living room of the flat Bowery and Trojan shared, they hang out with Rachel Auburn and change outfits while they wait for Clark to arrive.

Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York

X91445

David Gwinnutt b.1961

Trojan; Leigh Bowery

1983

Photograph, bromide fibre print

Photographer David Gwinnutt created many of the key images of London's art and queer scenes in the 1980s and beyond, including photographs of the artists Derek Jarman, John Maybury and Cerith Wyn Evans. This photo is one of the earliest portraits of Bowery and Trojan, who sports the Picasso-inspired makeup that would become one of his trademarks. A version of this makeup was later used in Michael Clark's dance productions.

Lent by the National Portrait Gallery, London

X82627

David Gwinnutt born 1961

**Leigh Bowery in Fur Coat, Farrell House, Whitechapel,
London, 1983**

1983, printed 2025

Photograph, C-print on paper

© David Gwinnutt. All Rights Reserved, DACS/Artimage. 2024.
X92107

**Jacket (brown patchwork with
suede bootlaces)**

1984

Cotton, satin, suede tassles

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery
Estate

X91447–49

During his early years in London, Bowery explored many different styles in his fashion collections. His tailored jackets show the influence of British fashion designer Vivienne Westwood in their use of traditional materials and unusual construction. They also reference the trendy 'Hard Times' look. As Bowery gained confidence, his designs moved from these muted tones towards brightly coloured materials and frilly patterns. While he retired most of these Looks in 1984, Bowery would go on to wear the brown checker-board jacket with shoelaces throughout the decade.

Leigh Bowery 1961–1994

Look: Jacket (brown with star motif)

1983–4

Cotton

Blazer (white) with Trousers, white with lace

1983

Wood and cotton on foam; Satin/Rayon and lace

**Look: Kaftan (yellow and green)
with Double Sleeves**

1983–4

Synthetic fabric and cotton

Leigh Bowery 1961–1994

Mr Pearl born 1962

**Look: Coat (fake fur) with Red
Satin Playsuit**

1988, based on 1984 designs

Fake fur on cotton support, satin and sequins

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery Estate

X91446, X99480–81, X91450, X91453

Trojan (Gary Barnes) 1966–1986

Leigh Bowery in the Bath

1985–6

Acrylic paint on wood with metal and toilet roll

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery Estate

X91461

**'I only want the paintings to be vulgar.
I hate good taste.'** Trojan

Trojan was a visual artist and well-known fashion icon on the scene, and one of Bowery's closest friends. He once described his paintings as depictions of 'fights and fucks in nightclubs', inspired by his time working as a rent boy. Trojan and Bowery shared a flat in East London and Bowery would often dress up Trojan in his designs. In return, Trojan made caricatures of Bowery's ideas in his paintings and drawings. Having little money, Trojan painted with found materials, adding real objects onto the canvas. On display is his portrait of Bowery, referencing Bowery's fondness for taking long baths.

Rachel Auburn born 1958

Leigh Bowery

1982

Ink on paper

Rachel Auburn met Bowery at her stall Vena Cava in Kensington Market while working as a fashion designer. They quickly became friends. Bowery soon also opened a stall at the market, which he called Bargain. Auburn and Bowery shared fabric and ideas, and then went on to show their collections in London, New York and Tokyo. This drawing is one of the first formal portraits of Bowery. Auburn would go on to DJ at Bowery's club Taboo, and later became a hard house and trance DJ and music producer.

Rachel Auburn Collection

X100106

[Vitrine in center of the room (order may vary)]

Leigh Bowery, Music Examinations Board certificate

1977

Ink on paper

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery Estate

X100478

Bowery was an accomplished pianist. Initially offered a place at a music school in Melbourne, he decided to study fashion instead at Emily MacPherson Ladies' Fashion College, part of the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology. He followed the course for a few months before deciding to save money to come to London. The photograph of Bowery in the bath was taken by his sister Bronwyn, who would often come from Australia to visit her brother.

Bronwyn Bowery–Ireland

Leigh in the Bath

1984, printed 2025

Photograph, inkjet print on paper

Courtesy Bronwyn Bowery–Ireland

X91442

Leigh Bowery and Friends Photobooth Photographs

1984–5

Print on paper

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery
Estate

X99363

Thomas Bowery

Saying goodbye, Leigh and his mum Evelyn

1986, printed 2025

Photograph, inkjet print on paper

Courtesy Bronwyn Bowery–Ireland

X100608

Leigh Bowery's Transport for London Photocard

Plastic on photograph on paper

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery
Estate

X100479

Pete Moss born 1960

Iain R. Webb (art director)

**'Leigh Bowery', Model: Trojan, Blitz magazine, no.34,
September 1985**

1985

Printed paper

Courtesy Pete Moss

X100709

Leigh Bowery 1961–1994

Diary

1980–81

Ink on paper

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery Es-
tate

X100105

Leigh Bowery

c.1986

Photograph, print on paper

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery
Estate

X100475

Taboo Founders Tony Gordon and Leigh Bowery in Bowery's Bedroom

c.1986

Photograph, print on paper

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery
Estate

X100476

Leigh Bowery, Living Room in Farrell House

c.1986

Photograph, C-print on paper

Bowery spent his early years in London moving between flats, while briefly earning money working at Burger King. Social housing, squats and unemployment benefit provided a way for artists to survive in the city. Bowery finally secured a council flat in Farrell House in east London. He initially lived there with Trojan and friend David Walls. After Trojan's death in 1986, Bowery would remain in Farrell House for the rest of his life.

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery Estate X100477

Nicola Bowery Rainbird

born 1965

Leigh Bowery's Work Room

1987

Photograph, C-print on paper

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery
Estate

X91443

Leigh Bowery 1961–1994

Trojan Hat

1983–4

Plastic on cotton and other fabrics with fake hair

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery
Estate

X91457

Trojan's Photo Albums

c.1981–6

Photographs on paper, bound

John Maybury / Trojan Archive

X100360, X100108, X100102, X100104

Stephen Luscombe born 1954

John Talbot

Leigh Bowery and Trojan

**performing at The Crypt near Warren Street, organised by
the Neo Naturists**

1984

3 photographs, C-print on paper

These photographs capture a performance that involved Bowery covering Trojan in cling film. At one point, Bowery accidentally pulled the ring piercing on his nipple, which started bleeding. Then the cling film caught fire creating billows of black smoke.

Sue Tilley/Stephen Luscombe

X100092–4

Johnny Rozsa born 1949

i-D magazine, no.48, 'The Plain English Issue', June 1987

1987

Printed paper

Tate Curatorial

X100426

Leigh Bowery 1961–1994

Sketchbook

1984–6

Ink on paper

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery Estate

X91455

Leigh Bowery 1961–1994

Hot pants

1983–4

Lamé

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery Estate

X91458

i-D no.19, October 1984:

'The Inside Out' issue

1984

Printed paper

Tate Curatorial

X100422

ROOM 2

ROOM 2

ANTI-CLOCKWISE FROM THE WALL TO THE RIGHT OF THE ENTRANCE

Dick Jewell born 1951

Attitudism

1983–7, printed 2025

Photograph, inkjet print on paper

Dick Jewell is an artist who captured many of the key figures of the London nightclub scene and beyond. In these works, he asks his friends to express different emotions. Jewell photographed and filmed Bowery multiple times throughout his life.

Courtesy of the artist

X91468

[Wall Text]

2

CLUB: WOULD *YOU* LET YOURSELF IN?

The most fashionable place to see-and-be-seen is Taboo on Thursday. The policy is simple. Dress as though your life depends on it, or don't bother.

TIME OUT

It took time for Bowery to find his people. In 1981, a chance encounter with drag queen Yvette the Conqueror took him to the The Cha Cha Club in the back room of Heaven, the UK's biggest gay nightclub at the time. It opened a world to him. However, it was only when Bowery, Trojan and designer David Walls went out together wearing Bowery's designs that he solidified his position on the scene.

The 1980s was the era of club culture – no social media, only hand-made or word-of-mouth invites. IYKYK. Clubs represented an underworld of queer revelry where creatives belonging to various subcultures came together. It was a way of testing out ideas, being inspired by what others were wearing, then reading about it in the new style magazines **i-D**, **The Face** and **Blitz**.

By 1983, Bowery was showing his fashion collections internationally. Soon, though, he decided that he was more interested in creating designs for his own body and for a select clientele rather than for the general public. London's nightclubs became the catwalk for his creations.

In 1985, Bowery and promoter Tony Gordon set up Taboo – an ironically named club because you could do anything there. It soon became known as **London's sleaziest, campest and bitchiest club of the moment**. On the door, Marc Vaultier would hold a hand-mirror up to badly dressed punters and ask: **Would you let yourself in?** Taboo remained open for a little more than a year before it was shut down due to tabloid accusations of drug-taking on the premises. Soon after, Bowery's Looks became increasingly elaborate, covering his whole body with fabric, featuring more sequins, and exaggerating proportions to draw attention to himself.

VARIOUS CLUB PHOTOS FROM ALEX GERRY, PETER PAUL
HARTNETT AND DEREK RIDGERS

Nick Knight born 1958

LEIGH BOWERY PORTRAITS

1987, printed 2025

2 photographs

Photographer Nick Knight was a frequent contributor to **i-D** magazine, creating his own distinctive aesthetic. He took these portraits of Bowery in 1987. They were first included in a feature for **i-D** magazine called '8 for '88' (on display in the vitrine). In the feature, Bowery returned to many of his key creations, or 'Looks', that he had made to 'provoke people into thinking'. Bowery would use his entire body as a canvas: he extended spots from his clothing onto his face, dripped paint down his head and attached fake herpes scabs to his face. Spots later gave way to sequins. **i-D** magazine stated, 'he had transcended fashion and become something else, closer to the imagery of "pop surrealist".'

Image courtesy of Nick Knight

X91549, X91553

Alex Gerry

CLUB PHOTOS

1986–93, printed 2025

9 photographs, inkjet print on paper

Alex Gerry is a nightlife and music photojournalist and writer based in London. Since the late 1980s, he has contributed to numerous publications, including the **Evening Standard**, **i-D**, **Dazed** and **Mojo**. Gerry first met Bowery at The Cha Cha Club and his photographs show us Bowery's Looks in various clubs. Other images show the range of personalities at Taboo and other notable clubs of the time, including a shot of a Princess Diana look-a-like.

Alex Gerry

X100189, X100190, X100191, X91695, X91697, X91699,
X91701, X91705, X100417

Dave Swindells born 1961

CLUB PHOTOS

1984–7, printed 2025

28 photographs, inkjet print on paper

Photographer Dave Swindells has been a frequent documenter of nightlife in London and beyond, especially the beginnings of the rave scene in Ibiza. These images capture Bowery and friends dancing and performing in various clubs, including their regular rolling around on the floor.

Bowery met designer and artist Nicola Rainbird (née Bateman) at Taboo. She was studying textiles at the time. Rainbird would soon become an essential part of Bowery's life, first helping sew sequins onto outfits, then assisting him in performances, and later marrying him.

Dave Swindells (c/o Unravel Productions

X100111, X100112, X100113, X100384, X91555, X91558,
X91564, X91566, X91569, X91570, X91571, X91572, X91573,
X91575, X91576, X91581, X91598, X91599, X91600, X91601,
X91602, X91603, X91604, X91605, X91609, X91611, X91612,
X91613

Michael Costiff

Trojan, Tokyo

1986, printed 2025

Photograph, inkjet print on paper

Michael Costiff is a designer and club promoter. He organised the fashion show **London Goes to Tokyo**, where he also presented an exhibition of Trojan's paintings. This image shows Trojan wearing Bowery's 'Mincing Queens' collection while in Tokyo for the show. Bowery's collection demonstrated his fluid approach to gendered clothing. He stated: 'The fashion industry only presents two images: heterosexual men and heterosexual women. But in the world of high fashion many groups and individuals are using clothes to create their own identity and to express themselves. I just wear whatever I like, whatever I think becomes me ... I don't care for traditional male and female clothes. Gender doesn't come into it.'

Collection Michael Costiff

X100816

Dick Jewell born 1951

Portrait of Leigh Bowery and Rachel Auburn

c.1985

Photograph, C-print on paper

Courtesy of the artist

X91469

Steve Speller born 1961

Leigh Bowery's 'Mincing Queens' collection, 'Performing Clothes' exhibition, ICA, London, 1984

1984, printed 2025

2 photographs, inkjet print on paper

Since 1985, Steve Speller has worked as a professional photographer covering music, portraiture, design, architecture and events. These images capture Bowery, Marc Vautier, friend George Gallagher and others posing before the show.

Courtesy of Steve Speller

X100447, X100448

'The fashion industry only presents two images: heterosexual men and heterosexual women. But in the world of high fashion many groups and individuals are using clothes to create their own identity and to express themselves. I just wear whatever I like, whatever I think becomes me. ... I don't care for traditional male and female clothes. Gender doesn't come into it.'

[Vitrine]

**Leigh Bowery's 'Mincing Queens'
Collection, London Goes to Tokyo Fashion Show, Toyko**

1985

5 photographs, prints on paper

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery
Estate

X100480-2, X100486-7, X100484

Bowery formed part of a new wave of British fashion designers, including creatives such as BodyMap (Stevie Stewart and David Holah), Rachel Auburn and Judy Blame. Designers showed their collections internationally. From 1982 to 1986, Bowery presented four fashion collections, two of which were shown in New York.

Bowery's frilly **Mincing Queens** collection, based on what he imagined his mum would think a 'rent boy' looked like, was shown in London, Manchester and Tokyo. Bowery often used the catwalk as an opportunity for provocation and play, at times featuring flashes of nudity. He later tired of the fashion industry, remarking: 'I hate fashion, [it's a] really boring and quite dirty environment.'

London Goes to Tokyo fashion show poster, featuring artwork by Trojan

1985

Print on paper

Collection Michael Costiff

X91467

**Leigh doing the splits at Calugi
E. Giannelli fashion show**

1986, printed 2025

Photograph, inkjet print on paper

Courtesy Bronwyn Bowery–Ireland
X100610

**'Newsflash' article
i-D Magazine, no.31,
November 1985**

1985

Printed paper

Tate Curatorial
X100425

Leigh Bowery & Fat Tony Present 1985–1986 (New Years Party) flyer

Printed paper

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery Estate

X100119

'Naff off' article

i-D Magazine, no.57, 'The Surreal Issue', April 1988

1988

Printed paper

Tate Curatorial

X100427

'The Trojan Story'
The Face, January 1987

1987

Printed paper

Tate Curatorial

X100428

'My look is getting stronger ... and more alarming and disturbing. I want to make a bold statement. At the minute, I like completely sequinned outfits with a strong empire-line tunic – yes, some people would call them dresses – and wide trousers. I'm tall, about six-foot-one, and when I'm in three-inch heels the whole thing is very impressive.'

VARIOUS CLUB PHOTOS FROM ALEX GERRY, PETER PAUL
HARTNESS AND DEREK RIDGERS

**The Clothes Show, BBC, London, UK, series 1, episode 6,
Monday 17
November 1986**

1986

Video, monitor, colour and sound

3 min, 54 sec

In this episode of **The Clothes Show**, a BBC TV programme about fashion, Bowery is shown at home wearing his 'Alternative Miss World' Looks. He then walks through Covent Garden in London with his friends, Rachel Auburn, Nicola Rainbird, Alan (Lanah) Pillay, Mark Lawrence and Sue Tilley's lodger Luke Branson, all wearing outlandish outfits.

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X100645

Trojan (Gary Barnes) 1966–1986

Pig (Policeman)

1985

Acrylic paint and buttons on wooden crate

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery
Estate

X91460

John Maybury born 1958

The Union Jacking Up

1985

Video, projection, colour and sound

18 min, 5 sec

Filmmaker John Maybury used technology to create layered effects and visual distortion in his early experimental video works. He was part of a squat scene in Warren Street alongside other creatives such as DJ Princess Julia and designer David Holah. **The Union Jacking Up** contrasts scenes of Leigh, Trojan and friends against footage of the 1985 Brixton and Toxteth uprisings and riots against the police. It also shows tabloid newspaper headlines including one about the emerging AIDS epidemic. Maybury's work frames the revelry of his friends against the context of the oppressive climate and fractured nature of Thatcherite Britain.

Courtesy of the BFI National Archive

X91121

Leigh Bowery 1961–1994

Look: Jacket (pale green) with Wings

1985

Wool with padded foam support

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery Estate

X91539

[Intermediate Wall Text]

QUEER NIGHTLIFE

Social movements in the 1970s had brought visibility to the LGBTQIA+ community. However, prejudice toward the community was a recurring fact of British life in the 1980s and beyond.

The Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act of 1967 decriminalised consensual sexual relationships between adult men in England and Wales. It was later extended to Scotland in 1980 and Northern Ireland in 1982. Signs of sex acts taking place in public could still result in being targeted

by police. As the age of consent was 21, when Bowery moved to London in 1980, at 19 years old, it was unlawful for him to freely embrace his sexuality. However, he did.

After the AIDS epidemic emerged in 1981, prejudice and harassment against the LGBTQIA+ community increased. This was exacerbated by the lack of accurate public information about the virus and its effects. Many people died due to AIDS-related illnesses. Despite this, information about HIV transmission, about the dangers of intravenous drug use and about harm reduction, continued to be poor. Government health policy was heavily criticised for its failures.

Nightclubs became spaces for the community to express themselves proudly and defiantly. Drug experimentation became a part of this experience, which, alongside the pleasure, for some led to addiction.

In 1986, Trojan died of an accidental drug overdose at the age of 21. Marc Vautier also died three months later, aged 20. Bowery reflected on their deaths stating: 'I still find it hard to understand that they're dust now, nothing left'. Five years later he would remark how Trojan was 'still so alive in my head. It's the small things – like if someone were to put different weights in my hand, I'd be able to say which one was the weight of his hand.'

Nick Knight born 1958

i-D Magazine make-up feature 'Leigh Bowery's All Gay Family'

c.1985, printed 2025
Digital print on vinyl

Courtesy of Nick Knight
X99559

Derek Ridgers born 1950

TABOO AND ALTERNATIVE MISS WORLD

1981–6, printed 2025

17 photographs, inkjet print on paper

Derek Ridgers has been photographing street and club subcultures since the late 1970s. One of the images shown here shows Trojan and Marc Vaultier at Taboo. Trojan's love of extremes was the perfect match for Bowery. He once tried to cut off his own ear, in an echo of Vincent van Gogh, because he was fed up with people copying his looks. Here he exaggerates his mutilated ear with red makeup. Bowery was deeply affected by Trojan's death in 1986, at the age of 21, saying afterwards 'I didn't want to go on doing outrageous things ... Trojan's approval meant a lot to me, he shared the joke we were playing'.

© Derek Ridgers c/o Unravel Productions

X100115, X100116, X91649, X91689, X91690, X91691, X91693,
X92021, X92022, X92023, X92025, X92026, X92030, X92032,
X92033, X92034, X92035

**'Drunk George is Top of the Poppers', The Sun, Tuesday 10
March 1987**

1987

Ink on paper

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery
Estate

X100488

Nick Knight born 1958

'8 for '88' photoshoot

**i-D Magazine, no.54, 'The Happy Issue', December 1988/Jan
1989**

1988

Printed paper

X91716

Johnny Rozsa born 1949

i-D magazine, no.48, 'The Plain English Issue', June 1987

1987

Printed paper

Tate Curatorial

X100426

Stephen Willats born 1943

Cha Cha Cha

1982

Artist book, printed paper

Tate Library (ID 43579)

Z89857

Stephen Willats born 1943

Inside the Night exhibition invitation, Lisson Gallery

1982

Ink on printed paper

Tate Library (239269–1001)

Z89856

Taboo flyers

c.1985

Photograph, C–print on paper

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery
Estate

X100717, X100720

Johnny Rozsa born 1949

Greeting Cards

1987

3 photographs, print on card

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery
Estate

X100519-21

LAM Magazine, 1985

1985

Printed paper

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery
Estate

X91713

**Leigh Bowery birthday party invite at Red Zone, New York,
hosted by Kenny Kenny & Michael Alig, Friday 31 March,
1989**

Print on paper

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery
Estate

X100718

Anthony
Trojan
Tony Gordon
Trojan & Richard Habberley
Marc Vaultier & Trojan
Rachel Auburn: All Coppers Are Bastards Man!
Nina Hagen
John Maybury
Mark Erskine (Mr. Pearl)
Leigh Bowery & Marc Vaultier: FAB
Jayne County
Leigh Bowery
Fat Gill (Gillian Beckett)
Dinner Lady Julia (Princess Julia)
Leigh Bowery
Andy the Furniture Maker (aka Andrew John Marshall & Andrew John Byrne): Help
Michael Costiff: Kopywrite
Leigh Bowery: Too Hot!
Jalle Bakke
Alan (Lanah) Pillay
Leigh Bowery
Jalle Bakke
Leigh Bowery
Dencil Williams
Luciana Martinez de la Rosa
Moa

Poly Styrene
Malcolm Duffy
Wayne Shires
Dinner Lady Julia
Marc Vaultier
Nicola Rainbird
Anthony Doughty: Q
Marilyn
Philip Sallon
Richard
Mark & Marc Vaultier
Pinkietessa
Scarlett Cannon
Scream (Mr Pearl)
Silly Tilley (Sue Tilley)
Christine Bateman
Moonie: Sick + Ugly
Tasty Tim
Matilda (Matthew) Glamorre
Fiona Russell Powell

1985–6, printed 2025
45 facsimiles of Polaroid prints

© Peter Paul Hartnett / Camera Press
Taboo, Maximus, Leicester Square, London 1985–1986
X100311–56

John Maybury born 1958

**Alan (Lanah) Pillay,
'Pistol in my Pocket'**

1986

Video, monitor, colour and sound

3 min, 25 sec

Maybury shot this music video at Maximus in Leicester Square, the club venue that hosted Taboo. Intended to mimic the club's energy, it features many of Taboo's key figures, including Rachel Auburn, Marc Vaultier, Jeffrey Hinton, Scarlett Cannon, Nicola Rainbird, Princess Julia, Sue Tilley and the star of the video Alan (Lanah) Pillay.

Courtesy of the BFI National Archive X99325

Peter Doig born 1959

Taboo

c.1985

Oil paint and graphite on paper

Collection of the artist

X91117

JStephen Willats born 1943

Are you Good Enough for the Cha Cha Cha?

1982

Metal, plastic, fabric, glass, wood, paper and other materials

The Cha Cha Club was run out of the back room of the gay club Heaven, in Charing Cross, from May 1981 to November 1982. Co-founder Scarlett Cannon enforced a strict door policy by asking people at the door 'Are you good enough for the Cha-Cha?'. Cannon told Bowery she'd only let him in if he ditched his blue velvet cloak. This work was made in collaboration with Cannon and Cha Cha co-founder Michael Hardy (aka Maria Malipasta). It features their handwritten statements, detritus from the club floor, and photos of the revellers including Bowery.

Tate. Purchased 1983

T03795

John Moore 1955–1989

**Shoes with a Louis XIV
heel in brown**

1986

Leather and cork

These shoes were made by John Moore, the founder of The House of Beauty and Culture (HOBAC), an alternative store and creative studio in Dalston, East London. He created the square toe and extended sole by mutilating or adapting traditional shoe lasts. Figures associated with HOBAC include Fric and Frack (furniture makers Alan McDonald and Fritz Solomon), artist Dave Baby, designers Judy Blame, Christopher Nemeth and Richard Torry, as well as photographers Cindy Palmano and Mark Lebon. Trojan designed their shop sign.

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery Estate.

Column 1: X91542, X91540

Column 2: X91538

Column 3: X99485

From left to right

Leigh Bowery 1961–1994

Nicola Bowery Rainbird

born 1965

**Look: Blazer (pale green
with feathers)**

1988

Satin, ostrich feathers

Leigh Bowery 1961–1994

Mr Pearl born 1962

Look: Suit with Printed Spots

1988

Based on 1985 design, screenprint ink
on cotton, two pieces

Leigh Bowery 1961–1994

**Look: Jacket (yellow)
with Frilly Y-front Underwear**

1984

Jacket: satin, wool; Underwear:
cotton and synthetic stretch fabric

Bowery called his creations 'Looks', explaining that they were made to 'provoke people into thinking.' He used his entire body as a canvas: extended spots from his clothing onto his face, created a bigger splash by dripping paint down his newly shaved bald head, and embraced the abject by faking herpes scabs on his face. Dots later gave way to sequins. Reflecting on Bowery's Looks during this period i-D stated: 'He had transcended fashion and become something else, closer [to] the imagery of "pop surrealist" ... a cartoon character, less than human but larger than life'.

From left to right

Leigh Bowery 1961–1994

Blazer with Shorts (green pinstripe fabric with silver sequins), worn at the Alternative Miss World 1986

1984–5

Sequins glued and sewn onto wool

Crash Helmet with Sequins

1984

Plastic sequins on plastic with foam

Glasses with Eyes

1984

Tippex on plastic

Leigh Bowery 1961–1994

Nicola Bowery Rainbird

born 1965

Look: Masked A-Line Dress with Trousers (silver and pale blue sequins)

1988

Two pieces: plastic sequins sewn on fabric

John Moore 1955–1989

Shoes with a Louis XIV heel in yellow

c.1986

Leather and cork

Leigh Bowery 1961–1994

**Look: Masked A-Line Dress
(Dalmation)**

1988

Fake fur

Leigh Bowery 1961–1994

Nicola Bowery Rainbird

born 1965

**Look: Masked A-Line Dress with Cape (green with salmon-
pink lining), worn in 'Mirror' performance**

1988

Two pieces: satin, sequins on wool fabric

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh
Bowery Estate.

Column 1: X91541, X92073, X100026

Column 2: X100021, X91788

Column 3: X91710, X91765

ROOM 3

ROOM 3

ANTI-CLOCKWISE FROM THE WALL TO THE RIGHT OF THE ENTRANCE

[Wall Text]

3

CATWALK: COURT JESTER

I like the [Looks] to be as strong as they are, especially now that everyone's being so conservative and austere. I don't want the things I make to be merely flamboyant; that's been done before. ... It has to have that edge, you know, because if I'm laughing at the way I'm dressing myself ... what possible criticism can people make, really? If the joke's on me and I know it?

LEIGH BOWERY

Humour was a dominant feature of Bowery's Looks, as well as being central to the way he performed and acted when wearing them. When he appeared on catwalks

and TV shows, he used parody and slapstick to disrupt established conventions of fashion, high society and culture. This extended to his personal life, where he often spread rumours to wind people up. When asked by a journalist: **On what occasions do you lie?** Bowery responded: **On what occasions do I breathe?** Bowery's brand of humour and innuendo was shared by eccentric TV personalities of the time, from the likes of Quentin Crisp and Kenneth Williams to Dame Edna Everage and Lily Savage.

In the art world, Andrew Logan's **Alternative Miss World** provided Bowery with another way to consider dressing up as a performance. First created in 1972 and still ongoing, the competition reimagined the **Miss World** beauty pageant to celebrate the art of transformation. Contestants present daywear, swimwear and eveningwear looks, and are judged on the same criteria as the **Crufts Dog Show: POISE! PERSONALITY! ORIGINALITY!**

Bowery first met many of his London friends after attending the 1981 **Alternative Miss World**. He would later participate in (and fail to win) the 1985 and 1986 competitions. The 1986 event was meant to take place at Chislehurst Caves in Kent, but was banned by the police after the local community raised concerns that it would spread AIDS. Instead, it went ahead at Brixton Academy, London.

Leigh Bowery 1961–1994

Levi Strauss & Co.

BLITZ

1986

Jacket: Denim and hair, brass, plastic

Iain R. Webb was the fashion editor of **Blitz** magazine. One of several innovative fashion shoots he directed involved asking 22 designers (including Bowery, BodyMap and Vivienne Westwood) to customise a Levi's denim jacket. Bowery added hundreds of hairgrips to his design. The jackets were later showcased in a fashion show, where Bowery was the only designer to also model for the occasion. Bowery performed a pretend fall, which he often did in front of friends. The V&A later exhibited the collection.

Victoria & Albert Museum. Given by Carey Labovitch and
Simon Tesler

X91085

Mark Baker

**Leigh Bowery in Denim jacket, 'BLITZ', by Levi Strauss & Co.,
1986**

1986

Photograph, C-print on paper

Getty Images: Hulton Archive, Avalon Collection
X91543

Brendan Beirne

**Leigh Bowery and Boy George backstage at the Albery
Theatre during the Blitz fashion show**

1986

Photograph, C-print on paper

Brendan Beirne / Shutterstock
X91544

**The Clothes Show, BBC, London, UK, series 4, episode 1, 25
September 1988**

1988

Video, monitor, colour and sound

2 min, 47 sec

The Clothes Show was a BBC TV programme about the current fashion trends. Bowery appears in two episodes; the first is shown in room 2. In his second appearance, Bowery shops and lunches at Harrods where he is interviewed by presenter Caryn Franklin, previously fashion editor at **i-D** magazine. Adopting a posh accent, Bowery claims (falsely) to have been taken to Harrods as a child, prances around to Divine's 'Walk Like a Man' and retorts that he is 'not sure what effect fashion has on me.'

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X91721

Jean Claude Lagrèze 1957–1994

Leigh Bowery

1988, printed 2025

Photograph, C-print on paper

Photographer Jean Claude Lagrèze was close friends with Bowery. He was known for photographing many artists and celebrities including Boy George and Divine, one of Bowery's favourite stars. Lagrèze invited Bowery to perform on the stage of club Le Palace in Paris, at the club nights French Touch 1987, French Kiss 1988 & 1989, and London Calling 1993. Here, Bowery's outfit features sequins carefully laid out and sewn on by Nicola Rainbird.

Pascal Lagrèze, Estate of Jean Claude Lagrèze

X100401

Alternative Miss World 1986: Contact Sheet

1986

Ink on paper

From the Papers of Andrew Logan, De Montfort University
Special Collections, Leicester

X100473

Alternative Miss World 1986: Scoring Sheet, Evening Wear

1986

Ink on paper

From the Papers of Andrew Logan, De Montfort University
Special Collections, Leicester

X100466

Leigh doing makeup for Alternative Miss World

1986, printed 2025

Photograph, C-print on paper

From the Papers of Andrew Logan, De Montfort University
Special Collections, Leicester

X100579

Alternative Miss World 1986: Application Form: Miss Fuck It (Leigh Bowery)

1986

Ink on paper

From the Papers of Andrew Logan, De Montfort University
Special Collections, Leicester

X100460

**Alternative Miss World 1986 News Clippings: Time Out,
10-17 December 1986; The Telegraph, January 1987**

1986-7

Ink on paper

From the papers of Andrew Logan, De Montfort University,
Special Collections, Leicester

X100470

**Alternative Miss World 1986 News Clippings: Time Out, 9-15
April 1986, and others**

1986

Ink on paper

From the papers of Andrew Logan, De Montfort University,
Special Collections, Leicester

X100469

**Chislehurst Times reporting on Alternative Miss World
being forced out of Chislehurst**

1986

Ink on paper

From the papers of Andrew Logan, De Montfort University,
Special Collections, Leicester

X100471

**Alternative Miss World 1986 Correspondence: Letter from
Buckingham Palace to Andrew Logan**

1986

Ink on paper

From the Papers of Andrew Logan, De Montfort University
Special Collections, Leicester

X100474

Alternative Miss World 1986 Correspondence: Letter from Andrew Logan to Prince Charles and Princess Diana

1986

Ink on paper

From the Papers of Andrew Logan, De Montfort University
Special Collections, Leicester

X100472

Invitation to Andrew Logan's Alternative Miss World Competition

1986

Ink on card

From the Papers of Andrew Logan, De Montfort University
Special Collections, Leicester

X100467, X100468

Andrew Logan born 1945
Robyn Beeche 1945–2015
Stage photographer unknown

Alternative Miss World 'Earth' 1986

Row 1: left to right

**Scintillating Secretary Luciana Martinez de la Rosa and Host
Andrew Logan**

Miss L Toe

Miss Galaxina

**Miss Fuck It (Leigh Bowery) and Fat Gill (Gillian Beckett): Day
Wear**

Miss Fuck It (Leigh Bowery): Day Wear

Wilma Johnson and Miss Born Again Christine (Binnie)

**Miss Born Again Christine (Binnie) with Wilma Johnson and
Jill Westwood**

Miss Conception (Jennifer Binnie) with Wilf Rogers

Row 2: left to right

Unknown woman leading Miss Fuck It (Leigh Bowery)

**Miss Fuck It (Leigh Bowery) with Fat Gill (Gillian Beckett):
Swim Wear**

Miss National Geographic (Jenny Runacre)

Miss Cora the Earth

Miss Cora the Earth and Andrew Logan
Miss Fuck It (Leigh Bowery) and Fat Gill (Gillian Beckett):
Evening Wear
Andrew Logan with co-host Murial Gray
Miss National Geographic (Jenny Runacre) crowned
Alternative Miss
World 1986

From the Papers of Andrew Logan, De Montfort University
Special Collections, Leicester

X91729, X100453, X100581, X100583, X100453, X100454,
X91726, X100580, X100457, X91725, X91727, X91723,
X100451, X100582, X100456, X100455

ROOM 4

ROOM 4

ANTI-CLOCKWISE FROM THE WALL TO THE RIGHT OF THE ENTRANCE

[Wall Text]

4

STAGE: CAMP PUNK

Bowery found a more prominent stage for his imagination when he started to design costumes for choreographer and dancer Michael Clark in 1984. Clark was a key figure on the scene. Classically trained in ballet, he injected the dance world with a lightning bolt of energy, bringing in references to punk, gay sexuality, club culture, musical theatre and Scottish Highland dancing. Clark's interest in punk chimed with Bowery, who said it had prompted his own move to London.

Soon becoming close friends, Bowery designed costumes for the Michael Clark Company from 1984 to 1992. Clark gave free reign to Bowery, remarking that traditional costume designers were too 'accommodating'.

The dance sequences in Charles Atlas's film **Hail the New Puritan** 1986 showcase the range of Bowery's designs for

Clark. Featuring frilly underwear, exposed bums and chests, elements of glam rock and deconstructed tailoring, the designs echo Clark's anarchic spirit.

Bowery's natural flair for movement and comic timing led him to appear in several Clark productions from 1985 to 1992. Clark's show **Because We Must** 1987, filmed by Charles Atlas in 1989, features Bowery in a range of Looks as he plays the piano, performs skits with dancer Les Child and participates in the dance routines. Bowery's designs for the Michael Clark Company highlight his continued interest in exaggeration and camp sensibility, which were complemented by the additional costumes by fashion designers BodyMap, who also frequently collaborated with Clark.

Yes to spectacle.

Yes to virtuosity.

Yes to transformations and magic and make-believe.

Yes to the glamour and transcendency of the star image.

Yes to the heroic.

Yes to the anti-heroic.

Yes to trash imagery.

Yes to the involvement of the performer or spectator.

Yes to style.

Yes to camp.

Yes to seduction by the wiles of the performer.

Yes to eccentricity.

Yes to moving or being moved.

MICHAEL CLARK, *YES MANIFESTO*, 1984

A response to artist/choreographer Yvonne Rainer's **No Manifesto**, 1965

and First Lady Nancy Reagan's **Just Say No** anti-drugs campaign, 1982

Charles Atlas born 1949

Hail the New Puritan (excerpts)

1985–6

Video, projection, colour and sound

15 min, 36 sec

This video features two excerpts from Atlas's film. In a 'dream sequence' Clark performs with his dance company, including members of the Neo Naturist group. Bowery, Trojan and Sue Tilley sit on a sofa watching TV then eating. A studio setting in the second excerpt features Clark's choreography, costumes by Bowery, an orange stage-set based on a painting by Trojan, and music by The Fall. Atlas is known for his creation of 'media-dance', using techniques such as abrupt edits to reimagine how dance is presented in moving image. These experiments continue in a scene featuring Clark and Mark E. Smith and Brix Smith of The Fall.

Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York

X91907

Director/Editor: Charles Atlas

Two excerpts from feature length film, courtesy of Charles Atlas and Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York

Producers: Best Endeavors; Channel 4, London; New Television, Boston

MUSIC: The Fall

Cast (on screen):

Michael Clark Company dancers:

Gaby Agis, Leslie Byant (Les Child),

Michael Clark, Matthew Hawkins, Ellen

Van Schuylenburch; with Cerith Wyn Evans, Leigh Bowery, Christine Binnie, Jennifer Binnie, Julie Hood, Wilma Johnson, Princess Julia, Grayson Perry, Trojan for 'dream sequence'.

Interview segment: Michael Clark,

Brix Smith-Smart, Mark E. Smith

Broadcast: 21 May 1986, Channel 4, UK

Leigh Bowery 1961–1994

Nicola Bowery Rainbird born 1965

**Look: Mask with Jacket and
Cape/Skirt for The Love Ball**

1989

Cotton; plastic sequins on wool and felt

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery
Estate

X91964

Leigh Bowery 1961–1994

Nicola Bowery Rainbird born 1965

**Look: Masked A-line Jacket with Train and Puffball Skirt,
costume for Michael Clark's 'I am Curious, Orange'**

1988

Sequins and wool; orange sequins on felt

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery
Estate

X91737

During this time, Bowery was also assisted by designer and corsetier Mr Pearl, who helped construct and make the garments. They made the tartan look for Bowery's hosting appearance at the Love Ball, a fundraiser for those affected by HIV/AIDS

set up by the New York nightlife icon Susanne Bartsch. The long satin-lined train was used to hide Mr Pearl on stage so he could pass Bowery pages of the script and give him swigs of vodka.

Charles Atlas born 1949

Michael Clark's Because We Must

1989

Video, projection, colour and sound

52 min, 30 sec

Atlas's second film with Michael Clark is a dramatised version of Clark's 1987 stage show **Because We Must**. It shows scenes from the dance on stage at Sadler's Wells Theatre in London, and imaginary vignettes in other interiors. Bowery's costumes feature in the show, such as his 'Multiple-glasses' Look and crewel fabrics with sequins. Many of the other costumes were designed by BodyMap (Stevie Stewart and David Holah), most notably the 'dinosaur' costume with a stegosaurus tail worn by Clark. At the end of the film an image of Bowery in a star-shaped suit floats toward the viewer, eventually gobbling up Clark.

Electronic Arts Intermix, New York

X44495

Cast

Leigh Bowery, Leslie Bryant (Les Child), Joachim Chandler, Michael Clark, Dawn Hartley, Matthew Hawkins, David Holah, Amanda King, Rachel Lynch-John, Russell Maliphant, Gisela Mariani, Leesa Phillips

Broadcast

1 January 1990, Channel 4, UK

Matthew Donaldson

Design: unknown artist

Poster for 'The Homosexual'

1993

Lithographic print

Dick Jewell archive

X91763

Pierre Rutchi

Michael Clark, 'Modern-Masterpiece'

1991

2 photographs

Tate Archive (TGA 20232/11/20/1, TGA 20232/11/20/3)
Z89871-2

Fred Whisker born 1923

Michael Clark's 'mmm ...'

1992

Photograph

Tate Archive (TGA 20232/11/21/11)
Z89870

Leigh Bowery 1961–1994

Nicola Bowery Rainbird born 1965

Look: Mask with Blazer and Cape (crewel fabric with sequins and wig)

1989

Plastic sequins on satin (mask); plastic sequins and fake fur on wool; plastic sequins on wool with satin lining

Bowery started using crewel fabrics (a type of embroidery with wool) during Clark's production **I am Curious, Orange** 1988. Nicola Rainbird would then sew on hundreds of sequins.

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery Estate

X100022

**Leigh Bowery as Madame Garbo in Copi (Raul Damonte)'s
play 'The Homosexual (or the Difficulty of Sexpressing
Oneself)' 1971,
directed by Stewart Laing 1993**

1993

Photograph, C-print on paper

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery
Estate

X100501

Cerith Wyn Evans born 1958

**Sketches of Leigh Bowery and dancers in Michael Clark's
'mmm...', 15 June 1992**

1992

Ink on fax paper

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery
Estate

X100495, X100497

Letter from Leigh Bowery to RSA Advertising Limited, 1992

1992

Ink on paper

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery
Estate

X100512

**Architecture Association: Foundation Unit 92–93. Project
One: Parade (course description set by Leigh Bowery)**

1992

Ink on paper

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery
Estate

X100761

Richard Haughton

**Michael Clark and Leigh Bowery
in 'I am Curious, Orange'**

1988

Photograph

Tate Archive (TGA 20232/11/17/6)
Z89869

Nick Knight born 1958

**Michael Clark Company:
'Because We Must'**

1987

Photograph

Tate Archive (TGA 20232/11/16/9)
Z89868

Richard Haughton

**Leigh Bowery and Michael Clark during the filming of
Charles Atlas's 'Hail the New Puritan'**

1985

Photograph

Tate Archive (TGA 20232/11/12/11)

Z89867

Chris Harris

**Michael Clark's 'our caca phoney
H.', Riverside Studios**

1984

Photograph

Tate Archive (TGA 20232/11/11/28)

Z89866

Leigh Bowery 1961–1994
**Outfit Sketch for Michael Clark's
'Because We Must'**

1987
Ink on paper

Tate Archive (TGA 20232/9/1/5/1, TGA 20232/9/1/5/2)
Z89859–60

**Michael Clark and Company & Sadler's Wells Theatre:
'Because We Must' flyer**

1987
Printed paper

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery
Estate
X100527

Michael Clark's 'Because We Must' programme

1987

Ink on paper

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery Estate

X100526

Leigh Bowery 1961–1994

Costume design for Michael Clark's 'I Am Curious, Orange'

c.1986

Graphite on paper

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery Estate

X100491

Leigh Bowery 1961–1994

**Michael Clark, Julie Hood, and Ellen van Schuylenburch,
Matthew Hawkins and Les Child out of frame**

c.1986, printed 2025

Facsimile of Polaroid print

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery
Estate

X100500

Nelson Sullivan 1948–1989

**Leigh Bowery hosting The Love Ball
at Roseland**

1989

Video, monitor, colour and sound.

Edit by Robert Coddington

6 min, 1 sec

Nelson Sullivan's video and photography work provide a unique insight into the downtown scene of New York in the 1980s. Bowery frequently visited the city, first as a fashion designer, then working with Michael Clark and later to host

various public events. In 1989 and 1991 Susanne Bartsch invited him to host the Love Ball AIDS benefit. This video features Naomi Campbell, drag queens RuPaul and Lady Bunny, singer Lady Miss Kier from Deee-lite and vogue dancer Willi Ninja. The long-cloaked costume Bowery wore is displayed in this room.

Courtesy of Kinolibrary
X100202

Leigh Bowery 1961–1994

Angel Wings

worn in Michael Clark's '**No Fire Escape in Hell**'

1986

Cotton on wire

Private Collection

X92071

Chris Harris

Michael Clark's 'Le French Revolting', Paris Opera Ballet

1984

2 photographs

Tate Archive (TGA 20232/11/9/1)

Z89863-4

Richard Haughton

**Michael Clark and Company
press-shot**

1984

Photograph

Tate Archive (TGA 20232/11/10/3)

Z89865

[Vitrine]

Love Ball 2 brochure

1991

Ink on paper

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery Estate

X100494

Leigh Bowery 1961–1994

Nicola Rainbird born 1965

Leigh Bowery Sequin Mask worn in Michael Clark's 'mmm ...'

c.1992

Sequins on cloth

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery Estate

X100758

Leigh Bowery backstage during Michael Clark's 'mmm ...'

c.1992

Photograph

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery
Estate

X100499

Leigh Bowery

c.1991

Photograph

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery
Estate

X100498

**Leigh, Leslie Chilkes, David Holah and Ellen Van
Schuylenburch on a plane**

c.1986

Photograph, C-print on paper

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery
Estate

X100496

**Postcard from Michael Clark and David Holah to Leigh
Bowery,
2 January 1987**

1987

Ink on card

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery
Estate

X100523

Letter from Leigh Bowery to Sue Tilley regarding his parents' negative reaction to performance in Australia, 14 February 1987

1987

Printed on paper

Sue Tilley

X100044

**Flyer for 'Leigh Bowery: No Fire Escape from Fashion',
Melbourne Town Hall**

1986

Printed paper

Courtesy Ellen Van Schuylenburch

X100200

In 1986 Bowery joined the Michael Clark Company on their tour of **No Fire Escape in Hell**, which included a stop in Australia. While in Melbourne, they put on a free 'fashion show' titled **No Fire Escape from Fashion** in the local town hall. Bowery's family was in the audience. Featuring nudity and sexual overtones via props such as police truncheons, the show shocked and upset Bowery's parents, who had brought their friends from the Salvation Army. This letter to Sue Tilley recounts the story.

Chris Harris

**Michael Clark's 'our caca phoney
H.', Riverside Studios**

1984

2 photographs

Tate Archive (TGA 20232/11/8/7)

Z89861-2

[Vitrine]

The Fall 'Hey! Luciani', Handbill Newsletter, Riverside Studios, London, 5–20 Dec 1986

1986

Printed paper

Tate Curatorial

X100429

Bowery took on acting roles, although he preferred to use the term performer. In 1986 he appeared in Mark E. Smith's play **Hey! Luciani: The Life And Codex Of John Paul I** at Riverside Studios in London. The plot was loosely based on the true story of Pope John Paul I – born Albino Luciani – who died 33 days into his papacy. Michael Clark, artist Cerith Wyn Evans, Bowery's friend Angus Cook, dancer Lucy Burge, actor and singer Alan (Lanah) Pillay and members of the post-punk band The Fall all featured in the play.

In 1993 Bowery played 'Madame Garbo' in an adaptation of Copi (Raul Damonte)'s play **The Homosexual (or the Difficulty of Sexpressing Oneself)** 1971, directed by Stewart Laing. It was staged in London and Glasgow.

Sheila Burnett

**Leigh Bowery and Richard Hawley in Mark E. Smith's 'HEY!
LUCIANI: The Life and Codex of John Paul I'**

1986

Photograph, inkjet print on paper

Sheila Burnett / ArenaPAL

X91761

Sheila Burnett

**Richard Hawley and Michael Clark in Mark E. Smith's 'HEY!
LUCIANI: The Life and Codex of John Paul I'**

1986

Photograph, inkjet print on paper

Sheila Burnett / Performing Arts Images

X100126

Leigh Bowery 1961–1994

**Costume designs for Michael Clark's 'No Fire Escape in Hell':
Angel; Devil; Police**

c.1986

Pen on paper; graphite and coloured pencil on paper

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery
Estate X100490, X100492, X100493

[Vitrine]

Leigh Bowery 1961–1994

Glasses worn in Michael Clark's 'Because We Must'

1987

Plastic with wire

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery
Estate

X91736

Leigh Bowery 1961–1994

Lightbulb Headpiece

1986

Leather and plastic with wire

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery
Estate

X99482

**Flyer for 'French Kiss' party at Palace, Paris, created by Jean
Claude Lagrèze**

1988

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery
Estate

X100722

**Postcard from Bessie Clark and Michael Clark to Leigh
Bowery, 20 December 1993**

1993

Ink on card

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery
Estate

X100522

Nick Knight born 1958

Michael Clark Company press shot: 'Because We Must'

1988, printed 2025

Digital print on vinyl

Courtesy of Nick Knight

X91738

ROOM 5

ROOM 5

**CLOCKWISE FROM THE WALL TO THE LEFT OF THE
ENTRANCE**

Fergus Greer born 1961

Session VII, Look 36, June 1994

1994, printed 2025

Photograph, C-print on paper mounted
on aluminium

© Fergus Greer, Courtesy of Michael Hoppen Gallery, London
X91909

[Wall text]

5

STREET: HARDCORE NORMCORE

**I can't really tell the difference
between a stage and a street.**

LEIGH BOWERY

Bowery's everyday look was just as fascinating as his club and stage clothes: bad wigs, tatty jumpers, heels in clogs hidden by baggy trousers, one eyebrow taped up to create a wonky appearance. He said he wanted to look **like the weirdo on the street that you tell your mum about**. At times Bowery would wear these outfits while cruising for sex in public toilets and parks.

Every environment, including the street, was a potential stage for Bowery's exhibitionism and desire to subvert 'normality'. On one occasion police arrested him for putting on a show in the middle of the road. Using car headlights as spotlights, he performed on the street while wearing an all-nude outfit save for a merkin (pubic wig) and headpiece.

Bowery extended his peculiar brand of normality to the styling for the music video 'Generations of Love' 1990 by Boy George's band Jesus Loves You. Directed by Bowery's friend Baillie Walsh, it features Bowery and friends playing sex workers as they run through the streets of Soho and pop into a porn cinema.

The street was also the set for Bowery's photo-work **Ruined Clothes** 1990. Bowery and his friend, fashion designer Nicola Rainbird, threw garments ruined on previous nights out from the balcony of Farrell House, then photographed them. The

works were shown at an exhibition in Tokyo, along with the real garments on the floor. Bowery also did a performance. **Ruined Clothes** provided a way for Bowery to view his creations when they weren't on his body, demonstrating their status as a second skin.

Ellen van Schuylenburch

LEIGH BOWERY AND THE MICHAEL CLARK COMPANY

1987–8, printed 2025

8 photographs, inkjet print on paper

Ellen van Schuylenburch is a contemporary dancer and educator. She was a founding member of the Michael Clark Company and featured in many of his productions.

Photograph: Ellen van Schuylenburch

X100192, X100193, X100194, X100195, X100196, X100197,
X100198, X100199

Sue Tilley born 1957

LEIGH BOWERY AND FRIENDS

1980s–90, printed 2025

18 photographs, inkjet print on paper

Sue Tilley

X100095, X100096, X100098, X91790, X91792, X91799,
X91800, X91801

X91802, X91803, X91805, X91808, X91809, X91810, X91811,
X91812, X100097, X91791

Baillie Walsh born 1951

**Jesus Loves You/Boy George with MC Kinky (FERAL is KINKY),
'Generations of Love (Oakenfold Remix)'**

1990

Video, projection, colour and sound.

7 min, 4 sec

Baillie Walsh is a film director and screenwriter. Bowery both styled and appeared in Walsh's video for this song by Boy George's band Jesus Loves You. The video was never released due to its sexually explicit content. It features Bowery, dancer Les Child, Rachel Auburn, Princess Julia, David Holah, Sue Tilley and Boy George as sex workers soliciting men on the streets of Soho. Boy George's lyrics mention political issues including the AIDS epidemic, Apartheid in South Africa and Section 28 in the UK.

Written by C. Geary/ G. O'Dowd/ S. Rogers

Music video directed by Baillie Walsh

Courtesy Black Dog Films

X91789

[Intermediate Wall text]

SECTION 28

'Generations of Love' was included on the album **The Martyr Mantras** 1990, which included Boy George's 'No Clause 28' 1989. The song was a response to the introduction of a law by the Conservative government as part of the Local Government Act 1988. The new law (Section 28, aka Clause 28) prohibited local authorities in the UK from promoting homosexuality in schools or through publications. At a party conference the year before, the Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher declared that children needed to be taught to 'respect traditional moral values' rather than the 'inalienable right to be gay'. That same year, a national survey stated that 75% of the British population said that homosexual activity was 'always or mostly wrong'. Clause 28 was repealed in Scotland in 2000 and England and Wales in 2003.

Leigh Bowery 1961–1994

Padded bra

1987

Calico fabric on foam

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery Estate

X100271

Leigh Bowery 1961–1994

Wigs

c.1980s

Fake hair and glue on gauze fabric

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery Estate

X100803

Leigh Bowery 1961–1994

Nicola Bowery Rainbird born 1965

**Look: Masked A-Line Dress
(flower motif with sequins)**

1988

Plastic sequins, satin, wool

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery
Estate

X91708

Leigh Bowery 1961–1994

Merkin

1990

Net tulle sewn on wool

Merkin

1990

Fake hair and glue on gauze fabric

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery
Estate

X99486–7

Leigh Bowery 1961–1994

Nicola Bowery Rainbird born 1965

Bugle-beaded Headpiece with Fringe (green and orange)

1988

Bugle beads on string

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery
Estate

X91981

Leigh Bowery 1961–1994

Nicola Bowery Rainbird born 1965

**Look: Masked A-Line Dress
(orange diamonds on green)**

1988

Plastic sequins on felt and satin with net tulle
on cuffs

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery
Estate

X92070

Leigh Bowery 1961–1994

Merkin

1990

Fake hair and glue on gauze fabric

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery
Estate

X99488

Leigh Bowery 1961–1994

**Clown mask worn in performance
at Serpentine Gallery, London**

1989

Satin and Swarovski jewels

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery
Estate

X91967

Leigh Bowery 1961–1994

Nicola Bowery Rainbird born 1965

Look: Masked A-Line Dress, sequins in ombre pattern

1988

Plastic sequins on fabric with ridgeline support

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery Estate

X91772

Leigh Bowery 1961–1994

Nicola Bowery Rainbird born 1965

Ruined Clothes

1990, printed 2025

18 photographs, C-print on paper

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery Estate

X91787, X99296, X99298–9, X99300–2, X100171, X100173, X100177–81, X100790–6

Ruined Clothes is a photo project in which Bowery and Rainbird threw Bowery's clothes out of his flat in Farrell House and photographed them. Bowery created the project for an exhibition at the PARCO department store in Tokyo. The images were shown alongside clothes strewn on the floor of the gallery, while Bowery stood in the corner wearing a brown velvet dress and pretended to vomit. A photo in this room shows him wearing the costume. As part of the exhibition, he also performed in the shop window with a mirror backdrop. This was a revised version of his 'Mirror' performance from two years earlier (shown in the next room).

Fiona Freund born 1965

'Hello Boys', BLOW Magazine

1994, printed 2025

Digital print on vinyl

Courtesy of the artist

X92016

Leigh Bowery 1961–1994

Merkin

1990

Fake hair and glue on gauze fabric

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery
Estate

X91821

Leigh Bowery 1961–1994

Ankle Boots in Clog Shoes

1984–5

Paint on leather and wood

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery
Estate

X91794

[Vitrine]

Leigh Bowery's Halloween, Parco, Tokyo flyer. Photos: Baillie Walsh, Leigh Bowery, Nicola Rainbird

1989

Print on 2 sheets of paper

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery Estate

X92015, X100524

Nicola Bowery Rainbird born 1965

Leigh Bowery, 'Window' Performance, Parco, Tokyo

1990

Brochure; 2 photographs, C-print on paper

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery Estate

X91774, X91777-78

Postcards from Leigh Bowery to Nicola Rainbird

1986–93

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery
Estate

X100160–68, X91817

ROOM 6

ROOM 6

ANTI-CLOCKWISE FROM THE WALL TO THE RIGHT OF THE ENTRANCE

[Wall text]

6

GALLERY: PERFORMER/
AUDIENCE/MIRROR

A gallery, divided in two by a wall with a large two-way mirror. Bowery appears on one side under a spotlight, only able to see his reflection. On the other side, the audience watches. Sounds of insects and the street outside can be heard. Different scents, like banana and marshmallow, fill the room.

This was the set up of Bowery's first performance in a gallery. In October 1988, he posed at the Anthony d'Offay Gallery, London for two hours each day, across five days. He wore a new Look every day, selected from those he had worn over the last four years. The spots suit, checkerboard dress, and green feathery jacket were remade by designer and corsetier Mr Pearl (some of which are displayed in Room 2) due to the originals being covered in 'disco dirt'. Bowery worked closely with the gallerist Lorcan O'Neill, who had invited him to perform, the artist Cerith Wyn Evans who also filmed and

edited the video documentation, and DJ Malcolm Duffy who worked on the sound.

In the 'Mirror' performance Bowery staged the very act of looking, treating his body as an art object. Les Child described the performance as **You watching me, me watching me** and many people remarked it was as much about the visitors in the space as Bowery himself. Dick Jewell's video **What's Your Reaction to the Show? 1988** captured viewers' responses as they left the gallery.

Soon after the performance Bowery began an extensive portrait project with the photographer Fergus Greer, carefully documenting many of Bowery's key Looks.

In November 1988 Bowery was diagnosed with HIV, a fact he would keep to himself, only telling his friend Sue Tilley and later Nicola Rainbird.

Fergus Greer born 1961

Session IV, Look 19, August 1991

1991, printed 2025

Photograph, C-print on paper mounted
on aluminium

© Fergus Greer, Courtesy of Michael Hoppen Gallery, London
X100114

Bowery created his dripping paint/cracked egg Look by combining paint with latex glue. He was inspired by a scene in the film **Staircase** 1969, directed by Stanley Donan. Starring Richard Harrison and Richard Burton as a gay couple, Harrison says Burton's bald head looks like 'ink on a boiled egg'.

Fergus Greer born 1961

Session IV, Look 17, August 1991

1991, printed 2025

Photographs, C-print on paper mounted
on aluminium

© Fergus Greer, Courtesy of Michael Hoppen Gallery, London
X91768

Fergus Greer born 1961

Session I, Look 2, November 1988

1988, printed 2025

Photograph, C-print on paper mounted
on aluminium

© Fergus Greer, Courtesy of Michael Hoppen Gallery, London
X91703

Dick Jewell born 1951

What's Your Reaction to the Show?

1988

Video, monitor, colour, sound

30 min, 3 sec

Dick Jewell's video features reactions to Bowery's performance, including a range of opinions from gallery attendees and Bowery's friends. Andrew Logan described it as a 'highly religious experience', Brix Smith as like a 'really cool zoo', and designer Bella Freud as 'really moving'. Other reactions range from describing the performance as 'incredibly self-indulgent' to 'very sexy'. At the end of the video Bowery provides his own reaction stating: 'I wish everything had been longer so everything could be more extreme.'

Courtesy the artist

X91767

Cerith Wyn Evans born 1958

Live Culture / Leigh Bowery
Performance at Anthony
d'Offay Gallery

1988

Video, projection, colour and sound (stereo)
27 min, 18 sec

Courtesy of the artist, the Estate of Leigh Bowery, and the Live
Art Development Agency
X91766

Gordon Rainsford born 1960

Leigh Bowery performance at the Serpentine Gallery (7 August 1989)

1989, printed 2025

6 photographs, C-print on paper

Photographer Gordon Rainsford captured these images of Bowery's performance at the Serpentine Gallery, London, during an exhibition of Andy Warhol's illustrations and drawings from the 1950s. Rainbird and Mr Pearl also took part in the performance. Bowery wore a clown-face mask and was slowly laced into an elaborate corseted outfit designed with Mr Pearl. The performance culminated with Rainbird stripping down to reveal a thong with a dildo attached. She then danced to music in the adjoining gallery.

Bishopsgate Institute, London

X99533, X99535–9

ROOM 7

ROOM 7

ANTI-CLOCKWISE FROM THE WALL TO THE RIGHT OF THE ENTRANCE

[Wall Text]

7

**STUDIO: WHAT'S DISTURBING
ABOUT DISTORTION?**

**Flesh is the most fabulous fabric. I like
to
camouflage my body because by
concealing you
can reveal, but you can also do the
reverse.**

LEIGH BOWERY

As Bowery entered the 1990s, he moved away from adding sequined embellishments to his outfits. Continuing to create his designs in his home-studio, Bowery worked with Mr Pearl and new assistant Lee Benjamin to produce Looks that used foam, stretch fabric and latex to distort his body into a surreal, and at times alien-like, creature. Increasingly he considered his creations to be stand-alone artworks, and he was photographed and filmed

by artists in studios and on the street to create performances solely for the camera. Bowery's live performances became more shocking and extreme, influenced by the alternative drag and queer scenes in New York – at clubs like Jackie 60 and The Pyramid Club – and avant-garde performance artists.

During this time Bowery began to pose for painter Lucian Freud. Bowery had met Freud at Taboo through his friend Angus Cook. He was then re-introduced by Cerith Wyn Evans after the 'Mirror' performance. Freud painted Bowery on a larger scale than usual for his portraits. The works highlight Freud's continued fascination with how paint can be used to depict the reality of flesh and being. Bowery appears 'unmasked', for once without makeup and clothing. But are these works the real Leigh? Or just another performance?

Bowery and Freud formed a close bond, relishing each other's shocking stories. Bowery in particular was inspired by the painter's refusal to conform to societal demands. Posing for Freud involved multiple sittings, as the artist worked on the paintings over a long period. As Bowery became increasingly in demand abroad, he roped in his friends Sue Tilley and Nicola Rainbird to pose so he would still be connected with Freud's world. Rainbird later made a top from Freud's paintbrushes.

Nick Knight born 1958

Leigh Bowery: Skull

1992, printed 2025

Photograph

Bowery first wore a version of this Look in Michael Clark's mmm . . . where Bowery also wore a fake fur skirt. Impersonating a midwife character, Bowery would 'deliver' Clark by pulling him out from under Clark's mother Bessie, who was also part of the performance. Bowery had always been preoccupied by death, once saying he found the idea of 'a full stop' hard to imagine. He suggested this was a result of his Australian optimism.

Image courtesy of Nick Knight

X91985

Charles Atlas born 1949

Mrs Peanut visits New York

1992/1999

Video, projection, colour and sound

6 min, 5 sec

This video was shot near Atlas's home in Manhattan's West Village. In this Look, Bowery uses padding to exaggerate the body. Seen in daylight, the Look takes on a surreal quality. When Bowery was accused of distorting the body he replied: 'What's disturbing about distortion? The aim's not ... beauty or ugliness... that's all your ideas.' Bowery's assistant Lee Benjamin helped with this and similar Looks, cutting down foam to create padding and to widen the leg. The title refers to the 'Mr Peanut' character on the packaging of the US snack Planter's Peanuts.

Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York

X91978

TRANGRESSION

Bowery's interest in using the body to explore shock value meant that at times he used offensive words and images. In the work here, he has placed the word 'A CUNT' across the head of the costume. This word is often associated with misogyny or contempt, and use of it here could be an example of Bowery naming his own obnoxious behaviour. In other designs, Bowery featured swastikas, sometimes reversed, which many punks had also used. He later played the role of a dominatrix Nazi in a controversial performance at a sadomasochistic nightclub, which was met with outrage.

In 1993 Bowery dressed in blackface, covering his face in black makeup. He was referencing the Minstrel Show, a parodic theatrical tradition dating back to 19th-century North America. Blackface appeared in film and TV programmes up until the early 21st century in the UK. It was also used in drag acts, including a few of Bowery's own performances. Bowery dropped the Look when he was challenged by friends.

Fergus Greer born 1961

Session VI, Look 32, March 1992

1992, printed 2025

Digital print on vinyl

© Fergus Greer, Courtesy of Michael Hoppen Gallery, London
X91980

Leigh Bowery 1961–1994

Look: 'A Cunt'

1991

Ink on lycra on foam

Bowery's 'CUNT' outfit was originally made for Michael Clark's show mmm . . . 1991/92. However, as the show was intended as a celebration of the vagina, Clark felt the outfit was inappropriate in this context. Bowery initially ended up wearing a version of the outfit without the word, but then at times would bring the 'Cunt' version out onto the stage. The disagreement over the costume led to what Clark describes as 'a parting of the ways, between the cunt and the asshole'.

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery
Estate

X91979

Fergus Greer born 1961

Session III, Look 14, August 1990

1990, printed 2025

Photographs, C-print on paper mounted
on aluminium

© Fergus Greer, Courtesy of Michael Hoppen Gallery, London
X91920

Fergus Greer born 1961

Session VII, Look 38, June 1994

1994, printed 2025

Photograph, giclée print on paper mounted
on aluminium

As the photo sessions between Greer and Bowery continued, Greer started to use a white background for his shoots. He printed the photographs with the film-frame visible, reminiscent of the work of photographer Richard Avedon who Greer had assisted at the beginning of his career.

Bowery's form takes on an other-worldly cyborg character, pointing back to his early interest in sci-fi (as seen in room 1). The London S&M fetish scene inspired this Look. Bowery was fascinated by Michelle Olley's club night Skin Two Rubber Ball, which was created partly in response to negative press stories and police raids in fetish clubs.

© Fergus Greer, Courtesy of Michael Hoppen Gallery, London
X91988

Fergus Greer born 1961

Session II, Look 10, July 1989

1989, printed 2025

Photograph, C-print on paper mounted
on aluminium

© Fergus Greer, Courtesy of Michael Hoppen Gallery, London
X91915

Tom Pilston born 1963

Leigh Bowery outside Farrell House, Ronald Street, London

c.1993, printed 2025

Photograph, C-print on paper

Photographer Tom Pilston worked in the music and fashion industries before moving on to document scenes of conflict in the UK and abroad. He created this image for the **Independent** newspaper on a hot day in May. It was taken in the area outside Bowery's flat in Shadwell, East London. The woman in the background was a neighbour who happened to wave to her friend as Pilston took the photo. Bowery's blob-like form – which he referred to as 'fraggle rock' – takes on an alien-like quality when seen in the context of the outside world.

© Tom Pilston/Panos Pictures

X91910

Nigel Parry born 1961

Leigh Bowery: Waiting for elevator, home

1991, printed 2025

Photograph, C-print on paper

Having started his career in fashion, Nigel Parry went on to take portraits for magazines and film as well as music companies. His photographs of Bowery capture him at home in Farrell House and in the studio wearing his 'Tutu-head' Look. Parry's images emphasise the surreal nature of Bowery's Looks at this time by placing him in front of the lift in Farrell House and, in another photo (shown in room 8), by using dramatic lighting in the studio.

NIGEL PARRY

X91911

Charles Atlas born 1949

Teach

1992/1998

Video, projection, colour and sound

7 min, 47 sec

Bowery didn't consider himself a drag queen but was interested in using drag as a starting point to then go 'someplace else'. In this work Bowery attempts to lip-sync Aretha Franklin's song 'Take a Look' 1966, written by Clyde Otis. He takes turns trying on different fake lips he bought from a joke shop. Inspired by a printing error on a postcard, Atlas frames, crops and repeats the image, evoking Bowery's interest in fragmentation. The video features several takes, with moments of conversation between Atlas and Bowery as they work out the tone of the performance.

Luhring Augustine, New York

X91983

Fergus Greer born 1961

Session VII, Look 37, June 1994

1994, printed 2025

Photograph, C-print on paper mounted
on aluminium

© Fergus Greer, Courtesy of Michael Hoppen Gallery, London
X100288

Bruce Bernard 1928–2000

**Lucian Freud and Leigh Bowery imitating the poses of artist
and model in Courbet's painting
'The Artist's Studio' 1853**

1992, printed 2015

Photograph, inkjet print on paper

Estate of Bruce Bernard, courtesy Virginia Verran
X100130

Lucian Freud 1922–2011

Fragment of Head of Leigh

1993–4

Oil paint on canvas

This work was made while Bowery took breaks from a standing pose for another painting by Freud. Bowery was finding the long periods of posing for Freud challenging, which may have been the result of his HIV diagnosis. The work was left unfinished after Bowery died in 1994. Freud's painting technique complements Bowery's own interest in the body, albeit using different materials.

Private Collection

X100386

Lucian Freud 1922–2011

Nude with Leg Up (Leigh Bowery)

1992

Oil paint on linen

‘Drama for me is inside people. I want to capture their ambiguity, so that one person may say ‘he looks very glum’ and the next say the opposite. After all, how well do we know anyone? But having them there when I paint gives me a greater degree of liberation. ... For me [Leigh is] most paintable as an animal ... yet it’s the quality of his mind that makes me want to paint him.’

Lucian Freud

Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, Joseph H. Hirshhorn Purchase Fund, 1993

X01167

Lucian Freud 1922–2011

Parts of Leigh Bowery

1992

Oil paint on canvas

Courtesy of White Cube

X91818

Lucian Freud 1922–2011

Large Head

1993

Etching on paper

When interviewed about the collaboration with Freud, Bowery remarked: 'I loved the psychological aspect of his work – in fact I sometimes felt as if I'd been undergoing psychoanalysis with him and because he is an artist who has always worked in the figurative idiom, he has given me lots of ideas. His work is full of tension. Like me, he is interested in the underbelly of things. There are parts of myself that I hadn't really thought about before that I now really like, and other parts I'd felt uncomfortable about before that I now quite like as well.'

Tate. Presented Anonymously 1994

P20141

Lucian Freud 1922–2011

Leigh on a Green Sofa

1994

Oil paint on canvas

Former life models for Lucian Freud, Angus Cook and Cerith Wyn Evans thought the artist might paint Bowery in brighter colours than his usual muted flesh tones. He didn't. Bowery automatically assumed he would be naked, stripping off on his first sitting. Freud was fascinated by Bowery's body. The artist made five large paintings of Bowery, eight etchings and one unfinished work, shown nearby. Bowery felt he was as much the author of these portraits as Freud. When the latter wasn't looking, he sometimes painted a stroke on the canvas to leave his own mark on the work.

Private Collection

X91082

Fergus Greer born 1961

Session VII, Look 35, June 1994

1994, printed 2025

Photograph, C-print on paper mounted
on aluminium

© Fergus Greer, Courtesy of Michael Hoppen Gallery, London
X100109

Matthew R. Lewis 1959–2009

Leigh Bowery

1989

Photograph, resin print on paper

Matthew Lewis's photography focuses on documenting people in their natural habitat rather than in a studio setting. This photograph shows Bowery relaxing at home. His baby grand piano, which he would often play as a form of meditation, is in the background. The insect-like headpiece he wears contrasts with the merkin (pubic wig) on his crotch.

Lent by the National Portrait Gallery, London
X91088

Baillie Walsh born 1959

Unstitched

1990

Video, monitor, colour and sound

23 min excerpt from 1 hr 3 min

In this video, Walsh draws attention to Bowery's cut and wounded flesh after a night out. Filmed in slow-motion, Mr Pearl dresses Bowery's cut arm then has his cheeks pierced by tattooist Alex Binnie. The video is accompanied by Bowery playing piano. Body modification had always fascinated Bowery, as he explains: 'Piercing has just been a way of ... claiming my body and transforming it ... I still feel not entirely in charge of my body, I don't feel like I own it exactly – it feels like maybe it belongs to my parents or ... the government or something like that, so every time there is something that's very body based, I kind of feel more in touch with it in a strange way.'

Courtesy the artist

X91816

Lucian Freud 1922–2011

Leigh Bowery

1991

Oil paint on canvas

Tate. Presented anonymously 1994

T06834

Nicola Bowery Rainbird born 1965

Lucian Freud Paintbrush Top

1993

Paintbrushes, twine, cord

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery
Estate

X91908

[Vitrine in the centre of the room]

Leigh Bowery 1961–1994

Nicola Bowery Rainbird born 1965

**Bugle-beaded Headpiece with Fringe (silver and iridescent
white)**

1988

Bugle beads on string

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery
Estate

X100183

Props: fake plastic lips from joke shop and brass face fixing with container

1990

Plastic, brass

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery Estate

X91825

Leigh Bowery 1961–1994

Lee Benjamin

Alien Head-piece

1990

Stretch chenille over foam base

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery Estate

X100023

Leigh Bowery 1961–1994

Mr Pearl born 1962

Neck Corsets

1989

Velvet and satin

As a result of his friendship with Mr Pearl, Bowery increased the amount of corsetry in his Looks, meaning they now required more intricate construction. These mini-corsets were made to wrap around Bowery's neck which can be seen in the photograph by Fergus Greer nearby.

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery Estate

X91990, X91992

Christine Bateman born 1962

Leigh Bowery 1961–1994

Nicola Bowery Rainbird born 1965

Face–vulva mask

1994

Hair and latex

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery
Estate

X91824

**Flyer: Fashion Week Extravaganza Party for Pam Hogg on 12
March**

1990s

Printed paper

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery
Estate

X100505

Raw Sewage: Leigh Bowery and Stella Stein

c.1993

Polaroid

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery
Estate

X100511

Leigh Bowery and Nicola Rainbird perform at Jackie 60, New York 1993

1993

Photograph

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery
Estate

X100506

Bowery, fashion-designer-turned-musician Richard Torry and other friends made these drawings based on the game Consequences. Each person took a word or phrase, drew a part of the body, folded over the paper and passed it on. Made in Torry's flat in Soho, often before going out, the works' titles play on stereotypes of 1980s and 1990s London culture, such as 'A New Romantic' and 'Ad Exec'. Others, such as 'Disco Disco Disco' and 'Drugs', refer to London's club scene. The drawings are similar to the surrealist game 'Exquisite Corpse', which explores spontaneous and subconscious creativity. They also point to Bowery's fascination with the body and sense of play.

Leigh Bowery 1961–1994

Pattern designs for 'Globe' Look with protruding belly

c.1989

Ink on paper

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery Estate

X100513–4

**Backstage at The Joan Rivers Show: James St James,
Michael Alig,
Leigh Bowery and Amanda Lepore; Joan Rivers and Leigh
Bowery**

1990

2 photographs, C-print on paper

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery Estate

X100503–4

ROOM 8

ROOM 8

CLOCKWISE FROM THE WALL TO THE LEFT OF THE ENTRANCE

[Wall Text]

8

BACK TO THE CLUB

When in doubt, go out.

JEFFREY HINTON

The club continued to be a place for Bowery to show off his Looks, stage performances and provoke a reaction. This room features a bespoke multimedia installation by Jeffrey Hinton, who was the main DJ at Taboo. Videos and animated photographs are from Hinton's vast archive, and he has created the collaged soundtrack from music he played at the club, accented with various light effects.

The videos mimic the 'scratch videos' Hinton would show at Taboo. Such films were part of an experimental video movement that featured layered images and quick edits, disrupting the cohesion of mass media imagery. Hinton often

included material ripped from various sources including pornographic films, videos of surgical operations, TV commercials and music videos. A portrait of Bowery and Taboo, the installation is inspired by the layered aesthetic of Bowery and his friends' work, evoking how they created their own world in all of its messy, provocative complexity.

Bowery appeared at clubs in cities internationally, including London, Paris, Amsterdam, Bologna, Tokyo and New York. Among the many London clubs and nights he frequented were Kinky Gerlinky, The Fridge, Bar Industria and The Beautiful Bend at Central Station. The ecstatic and provocative energy of Bowery's presence is captured here in videos by John Maybury and Dick Jewell. Gordon Rainsford's photos show one of his most controversial performances, which took place at The Fridge in Brixton.

Fergus Greer born 1961

Session III, Look 11, August 1990

1990, printed 2025

Photographs, C-print on paper mounted
on aluminium

© Fergus Greer, Courtesy of Michael Hoppen Gallery, London
X91926

John Maybury born 1958

Leigh Bowery dancing

1989

Video, projection, colour, sound

7 min, 39 sec

Maybury is an artist and filmmaker who often collaborated with Bowery. 'My favourite work with Leigh would also be our last. In 1989, I hired a small green screen studio off Parliament Square, normally used for TV news talking-head shots. Leigh danced to imaginary music for my camera. Never tiring, he egged me on to film more and more.' This excerpt was included in Maybury's films **Absurd** 1990, **Maledicta-Electronica** 1996, **Read Only Memory** 1998, and as part of the visuals for rock band U2's **Popmart** stadium tour 1997.

Courtesy of the artist

X92014

Fergus Greer born 1961

Session III, Look 15, August 1990

1990, printed 2025

Photograph, C-print on paper mounted on aluminium

Photographer Fergus Greer met Bowery through the gallerist Lorcan O'Neill soon after the 'Mirror' performance. From 1988 Greer began photographing Bowery in his Looks, covering designs from the mid-1980s onwards. Greer's work is both a portrait of Bowery and an exploration of how clothing, makeup and flesh could reimagine the body as a surreal alien figure.

Greer worked for various magazines and regularly shot covers for **The Sunday Times Magazine** alongside several international publications.

© Fergus Greer, Courtesy of Michael Hoppen Gallery, London
X100131

Nick Knight born 1958

Leigh Bowery: Toilet

1992, printed 2025

Photograph

Image courtesy of Nick Knight

X99558

Gordon Rainsford born 1960

Leigh Bowery performance at AIDS Benefit 'The Heart is in the Right Place', The Fridge, Brixton, London, 14 February 1990

1990, printed 2025

Photographs, C-print on paper mounted on aluminium

This performance shows Bowery spraying the front row with water from his anus. It was created by doing an enema beforehand. He had meant to lie back and create a human fountain with his legs in the air, but his costume made it difficult to get on the floor. An audience member complained to the police and The Fridge almost lost their license. Bowery was briefly banned and privately worried that he'd gone too far. He later described it as a 'real stinker of a show'.

Photo: Gordon Rainsford

X99323-24

Nigel Parry born 1961

Leigh Bowery: home

1991, printed 2025

Photograph, C-print on paper mounted
on aluminium

NIGEL PARRY

X91913

Fergus Greer born 1961

Session VI, Look 31, March 1992

1989, printed 2025

Photographs, C-print on paper mounted
on aluminium

© Fergus Greer, Courtesy of Michael Hoppen Gallery, London

X91771

Jeffrey Hinton born 1959

???Taboooo???

1978–94, assembled 2024–5

Videos: Jeffrey Hinton, John Maybury, Julian Cole, Alan Cross,
Tim Dimoline

and other sources

Sound mix: Jeffrey Hinton

Photographs: Jeffrey Hinton

Animations: Josh Quinton

Editors: Jeffrey Hinton, Robert Fox

4 Videos, SD, colour, projected

Sound, 4 channels

Lighting: 1/2 LED Colour Changing Rotating Bulbs (shown in
Light-boxes); 2 mirror balls; 2 PAR 36 spotlight with a rotating
colour wheel; 2 revolving home lamps; chain-link curtain

Approx. 7 mins, looped

Courtesy Jeffrey Hinton

X91476

Dave Swindells born 1961

Leigh Bowery making his entrance at Cambodia at the Hanover Grand, Summer 1990

1990, printed 2025

Photograph, inkjet print on paper

Dave Swindells (care of Unravel Productions)

X91932

Dave Swindells born 1961

Leigh Bowery, the party host dancing with his guests at Cambodia, Summer 1990

1990, printed 2025

Photograph, inkjet print on paper

Dave Swindells (care of Unravel Productions)

X91945

Dave Swindells born 1961

**'Carry On' Kinky Gerlinky:
Leigh and Nicola on parade**

1991, printed 2025

Photograph, inkjet print on paper

Dave Swindells (care of Unravel Productions)
X100385

Dave Swindells born 1961

**Leigh Bowery at Cambodia,
Summer 1990**

1990, printed 2025

3 photographs, inkjet print on paper

Dave Swindells (care of Unravel Productions)
X91939, X91950, X91956

[Vitrine]

Leigh Bowery 1961–1994

Diary

1990

Ink on paper

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery Estate

X100515

Leigh Bowery draft letter in defence of performance at AIDS Benefit at The Fridge

1990

Ink on paper

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery Estate

X100516

'Dear Editor, Leigh Bowery was amazing in the Aids night at the Friday on V. Day. I think it takes real guts for someone his size to appear in the nude and then show everyone his arse hole shooting pints of liquid. There's no one else around like him, and I think we should be grateful for his [original] and [brilliant] style. I am a second-year millinery student, and it's ... very depressing for young people to express themselves as originally in the present political climate. At college there is more and more pressure towards business and enterprise, and less and less on challenging creativity/shock value. Leigh Bowery is one of the few people around who always attempts to be shocking, and funny and wear fab costumes. I think anybody who doesn't like him is uptight and can't take a joke. There aren't many people around these days who people can look up to for inspiration, without having to buy something at the end of the day, Leigh Bowery seems to be just having a good time and doesn't want to be liked by anybody and if you don't like him, which I can't believe, then get out of his so way so that the rest of us can enjoy ourselves. I feel very strongly about this, and I hope that people in these sad and tragic times would look on the bright side of life and stop trying to pick holes in someone like Leigh Bowery who's out there and making it happen.'

These materials relate to Bowery's controversial performance where he accidentally sprayed the audience with liquid from his bottom at an AIDS benefit. The diary recounts the negative reaction and the handwritten note is a draft letter by Bowery pretending to be a student and defending the act.

**Wannabe Model (Kinky Gerlinky - Models Ball) Monday
22nd April
1991**

1991

Video, monitor, colour, sound

8 min, 2 sec

Artist Dick Jewell captured many of the themed nights at the club Kinky Gerlinky, founded by Michael Costiff and Gerlinde Costiff. This video shows one of their live acts: a model's ball competition hosted by London club icon Winn Austin. Fashion designer Vivienne Westwood is one of the judges. Bowery entered the contest at the last minute. The event culminated with Bowery trying to outshine younger performance artist and club figure Transformer (Burnel Penhaul) who is the crowd's favourite.

Courtesy of the artist

X91968

Nick Knight born 1958
Leigh Bowery 1961–1994

i-D Magazine: Weird and Heavy Guy

1992

Photograph, ink

Image courtesy of Nick Knight
X99553

Leigh Bowery 1961–1994
Nicola Bowery Rainbird born 1965

Bugle-beaded Headpiece with Fringe (light pink, blue and yellow)

1988

Bugle beads on string

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery
Estate
X100182

Dick Jewell born 1951

Leigh Bowery 1961–1994

Look: Kirby grip padded bra bodice

1990

Kirby grips, plastic sequins on fabric, with foam

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery
Estate

X91930

ROOM 9

ROOM 9

ANTI-CLOCKWISE FROM THE WALL TO THE RIGHT OF THE ENTRANCE

[Wall text]

9

BEYOND: RE-BIRTH

**In all the things I've done over the last
10 years,
the body has been the central thing.
It's like the
imagination, it's anything, it's endless,
there's so
much you can do. The more I become
involved with
people who do body manipulation and
all kinds of performances the more
exciting it becomes.**

LEIGH BOWERY

On Friday 13 May 1994, Bowery and Nicola Rainbird got married at a private ceremony in East London. While he described the marriage as a performance art piece, the

decision was partly due to fear he might be deported as he'd been arrested for having sex in a public toilet at Liverpool Street train station.

Bowery and Rainbird's partnership culminated in a performance in which Bowery 'gave birth' to Rainbird. Strapped upside down in a harness secured to Bowery's body, Rainbird burst through his costume as he laid back simulating labour. Rainbird appeared to the audience naked, painted red and wearing a string of sausages as an umbilical cord. The performance became an integral part of Bowery's act.

Bowery's band Minty, formed with ex-designer Richard Torry and then later expanded to a full live band, provided Bowery with a new outlet for his artistry. The performance of their song 'Useless Man' featured the 'birth' scene and explored ideas around sexual desire, gender play, and how 'uselessness' could be a productive position.

As well as the 'Birth' performance, Bowery and Rainbird would enact other bodily functions during Minty gigs (apple juice standing in for urine, pea soup for vomit). Presented at a time when fear around AIDS was at its height, by staging these messy parts of life Bowery wanted to challenge and celebrate all aspects of the body.

Bowery died on New Years Eve 1994, at the age of 33, from an AIDS-related illness. A person who incited shock, disgust and joy, his body modifications and provocations sought to question and test all boundaries in art and life. Resisting all forms of definition, Bowery's work pushes us to look into our own mirror and move beyond appearances, to embrace the unknown.

Would you let yourself in?

Leigh Bowery 1961–1994

Nicola Bowery Rainbird born 1965

**Leigh Bowery and Nicola Rainbird Wedding Day, London, 13
May 1994**

9 photographs, C-print on paper

Bowery and Rainbird's wedding took place on Friday 13 May, 1994 at the Tower Hamlets Register Office. It was witnessed by artist Cerith Wyn Evans and Rainbird's sister Christine Bateman. Bowery directed the group to take photos that mimicked traditional wedding photography, including details such as the position of the flowers. Since his death on New Year's Eve 1994, Rainbird has continued to look after Bowery's legacy as Director of the Leigh Bowery Estate.

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery
Estate

X91896, X91904, X91906, X99518, X99522, X99516, X99525,
X99521, X91900

Peter Ashworth born 1953

Leigh Bowery at Home

1994, printed 2025

6 photographs, C-print on paper

Peter Ashworth is best known for his photographs of musicians such as The Smiths, Depeche Mode, Eurythmics and Soft Cell. Much of his work uses experimental lighting techniques to explore textures. Ashworth photographed Bowery for the first issue of the gay magazine **Attitude**, which featured Boy George on the cover. In these images Ashworth captures Bowery at home in Farrell House, dressing up and showcasing his new 'Plastic surgery' Look. The curtains in the living room were made from paint rags taken from Lucian Freud's studio.

Courtesy Peter Ashworth

X92008–10, X92011–12, X100372

Steve Lafreniere born 1953

Leigh Bowery at Wigstock

1993

Video, monitor, colour and sound

4 min, 18 sec

Wigstock was an annual drag festival in New York created by drag queen and artist Lady Bunny. It ran from 1984 until 2018. Bowery performed his 'Birth' piece at the 1993 festival, while badly singing The Beatles's 'All You Need is Love'. Later, Bowery and Rainbird performed the act again at alternative queer club Jackie 60, but without the costume. Clubs like Jackie 60 were a big influence on Bowery's work, because of their extreme aesthetic, which was informed by horror movies, avant-garde performance and alternative drag.

Courtesy of Kinolibrary

X92005

Leigh Bowery 1961–1994

Unitard with breast inserts and velcro for 'Birth' performance

1992

Foam and lycra

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery Estate

X91823

Leigh Bowery 1961–1994

Lee Benjamin

Look: 'Birth' Harness

1992

Cotton calico fabric with foam and satin ribbon

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery Estate

X91995

Leigh Bowery 1961–1994

Make-up Mask for 'Birth' performance and embroidered Turban

1992

Make up and false eye lashes on lycra; velvet embroidered fabric

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery Estate

X92003, X99484

Leigh Bowery 1961–1994

Dr Spiros

Platform boots by Dr Spiros

1991

Plastic and leather on cork

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery Estate

X92074

Fergus Greer born 1961

Session VII, Look 37, June 1994

1994, printed 2025

Photograph, giclée print on paper mounted
on aluminium

© Fergus Greer, Courtesy of Michael Hoppen Gallery, London
X100110

[Vitrine]

Wigstock 1993, programme

1993

Printed paper

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery Es-
tate

X100727

Leigh Bowery 1961–1994

Wigstock 1993: Nicola Rainbird, Leigh Bowery and Charles Atlas; RuPaul

1993

2 photographs, inkjet on paper

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery Estate X100509, X100510

Leigh Bowery 1961–1994

Wigstock 1993: Taboo! (Stephen Tashjian); Lady Bunny

1993

2 photographs, inkjet on paper

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery Estate X100507, X100508

Leigh Bowery 1961–1994
Handwritten story 'Blood'

c.1994
Ink on paper

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery Es-
tate
X100518

Frieze magazine, no.19,
Nov – Dec 1994. Cover photo: Fergus Greer

1994
Printed paper

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery Es-
tate
X100734

Leigh Bowery 1961–1994

Notebook: lyric ideas

c.1993

Ink on paper

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery Estate

X100517

Torture Garden leaflet

c.1993

Print on paper

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery Estate

X100726

**Leigh Bowery, lyrics for
'Comme Des Garcons'**

c.1994

Ink on paper

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery Es-
tate

X100733

Mike Owen born 1954

Minty poster, Freedom Theatre

1994

Printed paper

Nicola Rainbird, Director and Owner of the Leigh Bowery Es-
tate

X100732

A M Hanson born 1969

**Leigh Bowery's Last Performance, Minty show at Freedom
Café, Soho,
24 November 1994**

1994, printed 2025

2 prints: digital photo-collage from original photos
on paper; photograph, print on paper

A M Hanson is an artist and photographer. This image shows Minty performing at Freedom Café in 1994, where they had arranged a one-week residency. At the first gig, Lucian Freud, fashion designer Alexander McQueen and Sue Tilley were in the audience. The residency was cancelled the next day. Westminster City Council had declared the show obscene and pornographic after a call from the public. Some friends think it came from Bowery himself due to the headaches he was suffering from at the time as a result of AIDS-related illnesses.

A M Hanson

X92000

Alex Gerry

'Birth' Performance

1993, printed 2025

3 photographs, inkjet print on paper

John Waters's film **Female Trouble** 1974

initially inspired Bowery's 'Birth'

performance. The character Dawn

Davenport, played by Divine, gives birth to

a baby and bites off the umbilical cord. Bowery performed

his version with Nicola Rainbird, dressed as the Divine

character, strapped to his chest and hidden beneath

his costume. Nicola would then burst

through a velcro opening in Bowery's

unitard. It was first performed at the club night Kinky

Gerlinky 'Sleaze Ball' on 28 September 1992. They performed

the

best-known version of this performance at

the drag-festival Wigstock in New York in 1993. Footage of

the event is shown nearby.

© Alex Gerry

X100185-8

Patrick Whitaker born 1965

Keir Malem born 1965

**MINTY, Performance at Smashing Live, London, 8 February
1994 (excerpt)**

1994

Video, projection, colour and sound

8 min, 14 sec

In this rarely seen video, artists and costume makers Patrick Whitaker and Keir Malem document the first performance of Minty as a full band, at the club night Smashing. The club was founded by promotor, musician and Minty keyboardist Matthew Glamorre, with DJ and Curator Martin Green. In the video, Minty play 'Useless Man', and a cover of David Bowie's 'Ashes to Ashes' 1980 while Bowery strips. Sue Tilley comes out to pick up Bowery's clothes.

WHITAKER MALEM

X91999

