



David Bowie is

In partnership with Gucci

Sound experience by Sennheiser

23 March – 11 August 2013

The V&A has been given unprecedented access to the David Bowie Archive to curate the first international retrospective of the extraordinary career of David Bowie – one of the most pioneering and influential performers of modern times. *David Bowie is* explores the creative processes of Bowie as a musical innovator and cultural icon, tracing his shifting style and sustained reinvention across five decades.

The V&A's Theatre and Performance curators, Victoria Broackes and Geoffrey Marsh, have selected more than 300 objects that have been brought together for the very first time. They include handwritten lyrics, original costumes, fashion, photography, film, music videos, set designs, Bowie's own instruments and album artwork. The V&A takes an in-depth look at how David Bowie's music and radical individualism has both influenced and been influenced by wider movements in art, design and contemporary culture. The exhibition also demonstrates how he has inspired others to challenge convention and pursue freedom of expression.

The exhibition explores the broad range of Bowie's collaborations with artists and designers in the fields of fashion, sound, graphics, theatre, art and film. On display are more than 60 stage-costumes including *Ziggy Stardust* bodysuits (1972) designed by Freddie Burretti, Kansai Yamamoto's flamboyant creations for the *Aladdin Sane* tour (1973) and the Union Jack coat designed by Bowie and Alexander McQueen for the *Earthling* album cover (1997). Also on show is photography by Brian Duffy, Terry O'Neill and Masayoshi Sukita; album sleeve artwork by Guy Peellaert and Edward Bell; cover proofs by Barnbrook for the latest album *The Next Day* (2013); visual excerpts from films and live performances including *The Man Who Fell to Earth* (1976) and *Saturday Night Live* (1979); music videos such as *Boys Keep Swinging* (1979) and *Let's Dance* (1983) and set designs created for the *Diamond Dogs* tour (1974).

Alongside these are more personal items such as never-before-seen storyboards, handwritten set lists and lyrics as well as some of Bowie's own sketches, musical scores and diary entries, revealing the evolution of his creative ideas.

Martin Roth, Director of the V&A, said: "*David Bowie is a true icon, more relevant to popular culture now than ever. His radical innovations across music, theatre, fashion and style still resound today in design and visual culture and he continues to inspire artists and designers throughout the world. We are thrilled to be presenting the first ever exhibition drawn from the David Bowie Archive.*"

Frida Giannini, Gucci Creative Director, said: "*David Bowie is... one of my greatest inspirations. His individuality, originality and authenticity have been defining. Through his creative genius his influence on music, fashion, art and popular culture over decades has been immeasurable and will continue to be for decades to come.*"

Exhibition Overview

The exhibition offers insight into Bowie's early years and his first steps towards musical success. Tracing the creative aspirations of the young David Robert Jones (born 1947 in Brixton, London), it shows how he was inspired by innovations in art, theatre, music, technology and youth culture in Britain in the aftermath of the Second World War. Pursuing a professional career in music and acting, he officially adopted the stage name 'David Bowie' in 1965 and went through a series of self-styled changes from Mod to mime artist and folk singer to R&B musician in anticipation of the shifting nature of his later career. On display are early photographs, LPs from his musical heroes such as Little Richard, and Bowie's sketches for stage sets and costumes created for his bands The Kon-rads and The King Bees in the 1960s. This opening section concludes with a focus on Bowie's first major hit *Space Oddity* (1969) and the introduction of the fictional character *Major Tom*, who would be revisited by Bowie in both *Ashes to Ashes* (1980) and *Hallo Spaceboy* (1995). Inspired by Stanley Kubrick's 1968 film *2001: A Space Odyssey*, the single was released to coincide with the first moon landing and was Bowie's breakthrough moment, granting him critical and commercial success as an established solo artist.

The exhibition moves on to examine David Bowie's creative processes from song writing, recording and producing to designing costumes, stage sets and album artwork. Working within both established art forms and new artistic movements, this section reveals the scope of his inspirations and cultural references from Surrealism, Brechtian theatre and avant-garde mime to West End musicals, German Expressionism and Japanese *Kabuki* performance. On show are some of Bowie's own musical instruments, footage and photography of recording sessions for *Outside* (1995) and 'Hours...' (1999) as well as handwritten lyrics and word collages inspired by William Burroughs' 'cut up' method of writing that have never previously been publicly displayed.

David Bowie is chronicles his innovative approach to creating albums and touring shows around fictionalised stage personas and narratives. 1972 marked the birth of his most famous creation; *Ziggy Stardust*, a human manifestation of an alien being. Ziggy's daringly androgynous and otherworldly appearance has had a powerful and continuous influence on pop culture, signalling a challenge of social traditions and inspiring people to shape their own identities. On display is the original multi-coloured suit worn for the pivotal performance of *Starman* on *Top of the Pops* in July 1972, as well as outfits designed for stage characters *Aladdin Sane* and *The Thin White Duke*. Costumes from *The 1980 Floor Show* (1973), album cover sleeves for *The Man Who Sold the World* (1970) and *Hunky Dory* (1971), alongside press cuttings and fan

material, highlight Bowie's fluid stylistic transformations and his impact on social mobility and gay liberation.

The final section celebrates David Bowie as a pioneering performer both on stage and in film, concentrating on key performances throughout his career. An immersive audio-visual space presents dramatic projections of some of Bowie's most ambitious music videos including *DJ* (1979) and *The Hearts Filthy Lesson* (1995), as well as recently uncovered footage of Bowie performing *Jean Genie* on *Top of the Pops* in 1973 and D.A. Pennebaker's film *Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars: The Motion Picture* (1973). A separate screening room shows excerpts and props from Bowie's feature films such as *Labyrinth* (1986) and *Basquiat* (1996).

In addition, this gallery traces the evolution of the lavishly produced *Diamond Dogs* tour (1974), the design of which was inspired by Fritz Lang's film *Metropolis* (1927) and George Orwell's novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949). The tour combined exuberant choreography and a colossal set design, taking the combination of rock music and theatre to new heights. On display are previously unseen storyboards and tour footage for the proposed musical that Bowie would eventually transform into the *Diamond Dogs* album and touring show. An area has been dedicated to the monochrome theatricality of Bowie's Berlin period and the creation of the stylish *Thin White Duke* persona identified with the *Station to Station* album and tour (1976). It also investigates the series of experimental and pioneering records he produced between 1977 and 1979 whilst living in Germany, known as the *Berlin Trilogy*.

David Bowie is concludes with a display of striking performance and fashion photography taken by photographers including Helmut Newton, Herb Ritts and John Rowlands. These professional portraits are juxtaposed with a collage of visual projections illustrating Bowie's immense creative influence and ubiquitous presence in music, fashion and contemporary visual and virtual culture.

To complement the exhibition, the V&A has collaborated with the BBC for a feature length profile of David Bowie to be broadcast on BBC Two in May 2013. Sharing unprecedented access to the David Bowie Archive, *David Bowie – Five Years* (working title) will focus on five critical years of his career – 1971, 1975, 1977, 1980 and 1983 bringing his work up to date with his latest album.

- ENDS -

Notes to Editors

- *David Bowie is* has been curated solely by the V&A and it is the V&A's interpretation of the material presented in the exhibition. It is the first time a Museum has been given access to the David Bowie Archive. Victoria Broackes and Geoffrey Marsh from the V&A's Department of Theatre and Performance are responsible for the choice of objects and areas of focus in the exhibition.
- The exhibition takes place at the V&A from 23 March – 11 August 2013.
- The Museum is open daily 10:00 – 17:45 and until 22:00 every Friday.
- The V&A holds the national collection of material for live performance in the UK. The Theatre and Performance collection spans opera, drama, ballet, dance, rock and pop.
- A specially made film for the *David Bowie is* exhibition, including exclusive interviews with Thurston Moore, Daphne Guinness and Jeremy Deller, can be viewed on the V&A Channel www.vam.ac.uk/channel
- After the V&A, *David Bowie is* will tour to Art Gallery of Ontario, Canada from 25 September - 27 November 2013 followed by the Museum of Image and Sound, Sao Paulo from 28 January – 21 April 2014

Ticket Information

Tickets: £14 (concessions available)

V&A Members go free

Advance booking advised, visit www.vam.ac.uk/davidbowieis or call 020 7907 7073 (booking fee applies)

David Bowie Archive

Costumes, materials and objects courtesy of the David Bowie Archive, with thanks to Archivist Sandy Hirshkowitz.

Exhibition Designers

The innovative design and film production company 59 Productions are leading the exhibition design in collaboration with Real Studios. Previous 59 Productions commissions include the video design for the London 2012 Olympic Opening Ceremony as well as for the world-wide theatre production *War Horse*, productions for the Metropolitan Opera New York (*Enchanted Island* and *Dr Atomic*), The National Theatre (*Waves* and *...some trace of her*), the Royal Opera House (*The Minotaur* and *Salome*) and English National Opera (*Dr Dee* and *Satyagraha*). The company were also behind the design of Sigur Rós singer Jónsi's critically acclaimed world tour. Real Studios have designed more than 40 exhibitions including work for the Imperial War Museum North, the National Maritime Museum and the Natural History Museum.

Graphic Designers

The publicity, graphic identity and accompanying catalogue have been created by Barnbrook, one of Britain's leading graphic design studios. Barnbrook have previously collaborated with David Bowie on the cover designs for the latest album *The Next Day* (2013), *Reality* (2003) and *Heathen* (2002).

The V&A would also like to acknowledge the support, advice and ideas from Kevin Cann, Sir Christopher Frayling, Howard Goodall, Paul Morley and Jon Savage.

Exhibition Publication

To coincide with the exhibition the V&A has published *DAVID BOWIE IS* (edited by Victoria Broackes and Geoffrey Marsh) with essays by Jon Savage, Camille Paglia, Howard Goodall and Christopher Frayling. It is published in paperback at £25 and as a deluxe hardback at £35 and a 'Special Collector's Edition' at £395 exclusive to the V&A. For PRESS information on the book contact Julie Chan on 020 7942 2701 or email j.chan@vam.ac.uk

Exhibition Merchandise

The V&A Shop is offering an exclusive product range to complement the exhibition featuring limited edition range of prints, books, fashion accessories, and T-Shirts. For press information on the merchandise contact Lee Kendall on 020 7942 2681 or email l.kendall@vam.ac.uk

Exhibition Sponsors

About Gucci

Founded in Florence in 1921, Gucci is one of the world's leading luxury fashion brands. With a renowned reputation for quality and Italian craftsmanship, Gucci designs, manufactures and distributes highly desirable products. Throughout its 92 year history, the House has counted among its most loyal clientele many iconic musical artists, who have been an inspiration for Gucci's commitment to the preservation and promotion of the arts. In keeping with Gucci's longstanding relationship with Martin Scorsese's non-profit organisation, The Film Foundation, which has resulted in the restoration of nine landmark films to date, Gucci also supports the programs of the GRAMMY Museum® to preserve historically significant moments and recordings of musical heritage. As a fashion house with a rich cultural history, Gucci is proud to be at the forefront of such preservation initiatives.

About Sennheiser

The Sennheiser Group, with its headquarters in Wedemark near Hanover, Germany, is one of the world's leading manufacturers of microphones, headphones and wireless transmission systems. The family-owned company, which was established in 1945, employs more than 2,100 people worldwide, and has manufacturing plants in Germany, Ireland and the USA. Sennheiser is represented by subsidiaries and partners worldwide. Also part of the Sennheiser Group are Georg Neumann GmbH, Berlin (studio microphones and monitor loudspeakers), and the joint venture Sennheiser Communications A/S (headsets for PCs, offices and call centres).

Corporate support for the V&A is more vital than ever. Please help us by acknowledging the exhibition sponsors Gucci and Sennheiser.

BBC Two: *David Bowie – Five Years* (working title)

In May 2013 for the first time on British television, BBC Two will broadcast a feature length profile of the legendary David Bowie.

David Bowie – Five Years (working title) will focus on five critical years of his career – 1971, 1975, 1977, 1980 and 1983 before bringing the legend up to date with his latest album. The film will include an extraordinary wealth of unseen archive footage of Bowie and include interviews with some of his closest collaborators, including the six key musicians who played on the latest album. It will shine a light on his music, his characters and his unique approach to his work. The programme will be an in depth and revealing take on this notoriously private artist, who has prided himself on his constant reinvention. It will also feature rare audio recordings of Bowie at his most intimate and revealing. For further information contact Andrew Francis andrew.francis@bbc.co.uk or call 07834 845 545

For further PRESS information about the V&A exhibition *David Bowie is* please contact Alice Evans in the V&A press office on 020 7942 2508 or email a.evans@vam.ac.uk

A selection of press images are available to download free of charge from pressimages.vam.ac.uk

Video footage of the exhibition galleries can be downloaded free of charge from <http://panther3.dmsukltd.com/signin> please contact the V&A Press Office for login details

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