

The Fitzrovia Chapel is proud to present an exhibition to celebrate the life and work of renowned performance artist Leigh Bowery. The chapel is the only remaining building of the Middlesex Hospital, where Leigh died from AIDS on New Year's Eve 1994.

Leigh is a legendary figure who spans the worlds of art, fashion, dance, club and music. Essentially he himself was the living breathing work of art, his now iconic designs and costumes were ubiquitous and meant for Leigh, as he pushed his body through ever more extreme creations, designed to shock and thrill onlookers from dance floor to gallery.

He was also known as one of Lucian Freud's most famous models, sitting for the renowned painter for several years and becoming close friends, his large naked bald form becoming almost as recognisable as when wearing his own outlandish and ornately decorated costumes and creations.

Leigh died of AIDS on New Year's Eve 1994, shortly after his last performance at the Freedom Cafe, Soho in November, where people saw for the last time his legendary 'Birth' performance where he gave birth to his assistant and close friend Nicola Bateman live on stage, with Freud, Alexander McQueen and his other close friend Sue Tilley all on the front row. But he never told anyone he was ill, apart from Sue, instead instructing her that when he died: 'Tell them I've gone to Papua New Guinea'.

The Fitzrovia Chapel have worked with the Leigh Bowery Estate and in particular Nicola, whom he married shortly before his death, to create a stunning but poignant exhibition of Leigh's costumes, presenting several of his iconic 'looks' against the backdrop of the gold mosaic ceiling and marble walls of the chapel.

There is also a specially produced short film with interviews with some of Leigh's closest friends and collaborators: Nicola Bateman, Sue Tilley, Boy George, Les Child, Richard Torry, David Holah and Lee Benjamin. Dr Rob Miller, who looked after Leigh when he was the Middlesex, and who is now a trustee of the chapel, is also interviewed.

*Due to the delicate nature of the costumes we ask that you please do not touch and take care during your visit.*

*Photography is permitted.*

*COVID safety: A one way system is employed in the exhibition with a maximum capacity and masks must be worn.*

#### *About The Fitzrovia Chapel*

Following the closure and demolition of the Middlesex Hospital in 2005, The Fitzrovia Chapel reopened in 2016 within a new development, and is now a secular charity whose remit is for the preservation of the building, public access for the local community and the education and appreciation of culture and our local history and heritage. It is a Grade II\* listed building designed by John Loughborough Pearson and his son Frank. Begun in 1891 and completed in the 1930s it is inspired by San Marco Basilica in Venice with an ornate gold mosaic ceiling.

## LEIGH BOWERY LIST OF WORKS

### *Ombre, 1988*

Silver, brown, pink, light pink, red sequins, rigiline hoop skirt, salmon pink lining. Later works such as 'Ombre' had much smaller sequins and took many hours of work by Nicola Bateman.

### *Flower, 1987*

Woven blue and white fabric with satin flowers, aubergine trim, 22mm silver disc sequins, Stayflex lining. Made for his weekly *Take The Blame* tv appearances in 1987 with a new look each week. Leigh's earlier works had larger sequins, which got smaller as the years progressed.

### *Leigh Bowery - Tell Them I've Gone To Papua New Guinea*

Film, 2022

Duration 37 minutes

### *Fraggle Rock, 1992*

Velveteen, leather soles

Leigh's later works showed his new interest in shape and structure, with large foam legs and feet incorporated from previous looks.

### *Ostrich, 1990*

ostrich feathers, satin, corset back, calico and padding, bugle beads on calico base

One of the first examples of Leigh using flesh as his favourite fabric, and worn with a merkin.

### *Crewel work, 1988*

Liberty crewel work fabric, leaf sequins, disc sequins, pink lining, orange large sequin hoop skirt

Worn at the Le Privilege club, Paris

### *Dalmation, 1988*

Fun fur, salmon pink lining

One of two made, Leigh wore as part of his week long performance at the Anthony D'Offay gallery in 1988

### *Angel, 1986*

Wool mix with padding, detachable wings

Worn on his appearance on *The Clothes Show* in 1986

in organ loft