# Exhibition revisits London’s 1980s fashion rebellion: Taboo



*“It was a really revolutionary time. It felt like you had this naïve idea that you could change things just by wearing something.”* BOY GEORGE

The upcoming exhibition, "Outlaws: Fashion Renegades of 80s London," will transport visitors to the vibrant and avant-garde world of 1985, the year the legendary nightclub Taboo opened its doors. Founded by the enigmatic designer and performance artist Leigh Bowery, Taboo was a small venue in Leicester Square that, despite only operating for a brief period, ignited a phenomenal burst of creativity among fashion designers, artists, writers, performers, and filmmakers.

Set to run from 4 October 2024 to 9 March 2025, the exhibition will be a treasure trove of original garments, accessories, photographs, films, and artworks. Over thirty designers' works will be showcased, featuring unique pieces from private collections. Highlights include a graphic jacket donned by Boy George, designed by Dean Bright, a carpet coat fashioned by Mark and Syrie, a yellow shower curtain cape worn by Nicola Bowery, and a gold suit by Stephen Linard. These items epitomise the bold, experimental spirit that defined the Taboo era.

The downstairs galleries will recreate the atmosphere of 1980s London, capturing the essence of squat living, market scenes, and the pulsating energy of the Taboo dance floor. Meanwhile, the upstairs galleries will highlight the role of style media, boutique owners, and pop stars who played a crucial part in bringing these cutting-edge designers to an international stage.

This exhibition marks the first dedicated exploration of the designers and creatives affiliated with Taboo, many of whom have been overlooked or passed away prematurely. Even though Taboo was short-lived, its influence on British popular culture in the mid-1980s was profound. The exhibition aims to honour this creative community, providing recognition to designers whose innovative work is yet to be fully appreciated by future generations.

Many designers linked to Taboo skyrocketed to prominence straight out of college, with boutiques like Browns snapping up the graduate collections of talents such as John Galliano and Dean Bright. However, many others from the Taboo scene did not reach wider audiences. This exhibition seeks to unearth these hidden gems, allowing them to speak to a new generation about a time when fashion was a vehicle for change.

The Taboo aesthetic, characterised by its progressive, gender-queer nightclub look, continues to impact contemporary fashion. Influences from Taboo can still be seen in streetwear and in the works of contemporary designers such as Charles Jeffrey, Matty Bovan, and Gareth Pugh.

**"Outlaws: Fashion Renegades of Leigh Bowery’s 1980s London"**

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