

NEWS RELEASE:

V&A announces national tour of highlights from David Bowie's archive – travelling across the UK from November 2026

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- Over **100 highlights from the V&A's David Bowie's archive** to go on show in **Dundee, Blackpool, Hull, County Durham, Bristol** and beyond
- Outside of London's V&A East Storehouse, ***David Bowie: On Tour* is the only opportunity to see such a range of items from Bowie's personal archive up-close**
- Tour gives **rare glimpse into David Bowie's creative process** and how he shaped his **iconic image, music, video, TV and film work**
- Highlights include **legendary costumes, musical instruments** + career-spanning **photography**, plus **never-before-seen items** including **Polaroids for make-up and costume fittings**, a **Ziggy Stardust-era acoustic guitar**, **unrealised projects, handwritten lyrics, performance notes** and **costumes** from Bowie's **final albums, *The Next Day* and *★ (Blackstar)***



Today, the V&A and partner venues across the UK announce a landmark national tour celebrating the creativity and enduring cultural impact of **David Bowie**. Bringing together **100 highlights from the V&A's David Bowie archive** – many that have never been on public display before – ***David Bowie: On Tour*** will travel to venues across the UK across multiple years, kicking-off at **V&A Dundee** (November 2026 – February 2027).

Following its **debut in Scotland**, the tour continues to **Showtown** in Blackpool (June–September 2027), the **Bowes Museum** in **County Durham** (October 2027–January 2028), the **Ferens Art Gallery** in **Hull** (February–May 2028), and **Bristol Museum and Art Gallery** (June–September 2028), with further venues to be announced in due course.

David Bowie: On Tour marks the first time highlights from David Bowie's archive have been shared on this scale across the UK, outside of London, bringing Bowie's story and creative imagination to new audiences across the country. This touring programme is part of the V&A's commitment to widening access to its collections, ensuring audiences across the UK can experience their national collections where they live.

Across four sections, ***David Bowie: On Tour*** takes audiences behind the scenes into Bowie's creative process, exploring how he created his ever-evolving image, music and screen work.



Sir Tristram Hunt, Director of the V&A, said: “*David Bowie: On Tour* is a landmark national partnership for the V&A, bringing highlights from David Bowie’s extraordinary archive to audiences across the UK for the first time. Working with our colleagues in museums and venues nationwide, we’re opening up Bowie’s story in the places connected to his life and legacy, ensuring people across the country can experience these remarkable objects where they live, and be inspired by his enduring creativity.”

Harriet Reed, Curator of Contemporary Performance at the V&A, said: “*David Bowie’s* archive reveals an artist in constant motion – a restless, forward-looking mind at work beyond the music and images we know. From fan art and his first instrument to unrealised projects, handwritten notes and unseen sketches, *David Bowie: On Tour* brings visitors up close to the ideas behind his work – including items from *The Next Day* and ★ (*Blackstar*) never shown before – offering new insight into how his creativity took shape. It’s a rare chance to step inside Bowie’s imagination and experience the curiosity and daring that defined his life’s work.”

About *David Bowie: On Tour*

David Bowie: On Tour unfolds across four sections, each offering a different lens on Bowie’s creative life.

The opening section, ‘**Bowie Through a Lens**’, explores how photography shaped Bowie’s image and identity, featuring work by **Terry O’Neill, Mick Rock, Sukita, Brian Ward** and more.

The second section, ‘**All the Somebody People**’ focuses on Bowie onstage and in the studio across four defining eras, revealing how he continually reinvented his sound and personas:

- ***Ziggy Stardust*** offers a case study in Bowie’s songwriting prowess and how he crafted his iconic persona, from **Freddie Burretti** and **Kansai Yamamoto costumes** to **Bowie’s handwritten notes and cut-ups** plotting the album, **sketches for the tour**, and a **seminal acoustic guitar** from the era – on display for the first time.
- **Bowie’s Berlin years** highlight his **pioneering use of techniques and recording equipment** in the studio with Tony Visconti and Brian Eno for albums ***Low*** (1977), ***“Heroes”*** (1977), and ***Lodger*** (1979). From **Bowie’s keys to his apartment at Hauptstraße 155, Berlin**, to his **unseen sketches and concept art for the cover of *Low***, **handwritten lyrics for *Lodger*’s ‘Look Back in Anger’**, and the **koto**, the Japanese musical instrument, **used by Bowie on ‘Moss Garden’ from “Heroes”**.
- ***Let’s Dance*** reveals how **Bowie created the blueprint for major stadium tours**, with a series of **unseen lyrics** and a **set design** for the ***Serious Moonlight* tour** on show for the first time, alongside **photography of studio recording sessions** and the **album’s cover shoot**.

- **★ (Blackstar)** explores **Bowie's symbolism** in recalling previous eras through his final recording, with items including **Bowie's handwritten lyrics for the song ★ (Blackstar)**, and **hand-painted costume** for the **'Lazarus' music video**, alongside **performance notes** and **props**, giving never-before-seen insight into the album's creation.

The third section, **'Hooked to the Silver Screen'**, reveals Bowie's groundbreaking performances on screen, from him pushing the boundaries with his approach to music videos to his iconic film and TV roles and unexpected cameos. Highlights include:

- Bowie's **storyboard sketches** and the **Natasha Korniloff-designed costume** for his **'Ashes to Ashes' music video** (1980) to his collaborations with **Flora Sigismondi** for the **'Little Wonder' music video** (1997) and **unseen video treatments, scripts** and **props** for **'The Stars are Out Tonight' video** for **The Next Day** album (2013).
- **Contact sheets** from Bowie's first ever film set, **The Image** (1967), the clapperboard used for **The Man Who Fell to Earth** (1975), his unseen prep-notes for **Merry Christmas, Mr Lawrence** (1983) and **his script, character notes** and **Polaroids** of costume fittings for his character **Jareth** in the 1986 fantasy film, **Labyrinth** – along with other Polaroids of make-up tests.
- **Bowie's further onscreen moments** including his role as narrator for **The Snowman** (1982) and his star turn as Lord Royal Highness in **2006's SpongeBob SquarePants movie**, alongside a **script for an episode of The Simpsons** that Bowie politely declined.

The final section, **'I Can't Give Everything Away'**, explores Bowie's interest in time, documenting his process and legacy. The items and personal possessions that Bowie chose to keep in his archive are revealing, showing a creative mind constantly thinking about the next project. Highlights include:

- **Musical instruments and equipment**, including **Bowie's first instrument**, the Grafton Alto saxophone bought for him by his father in 1961 and the **harmonica microphone** used on his **last live tour (A Reality Tour, 2003 – 2004)**.
- **Personal items**, such as **fan art**, the **stopwatch he used when songwriting**, his **1988 British passport** and **his advance copy of The Velvet Underground's 1967 'I'm Waiting for the Man' record**. Other items include a **handwritten to-do list** with the workshops, interviews and museum visits Bowie had planned, **charts revealing the projects he wanted to achieve – and those that went unrealised**, such as Bowie's handwritten synopsis for a proposed TV film called **The Catastrophy Cabinet** dating to around 1974 – 1975.
- **Items revealing Bowie organising his thoughts and planning for the future** span his **1977 inventory of costumes** to documents revealing his thought process and how he saw the music industry evolving, the **song chart he used during the Earthling tour** (1997) and **post-it note conversations** with his archive team about items he chose to hold onto.



David Bowie: On Tour has been developed by V&A Touring and V&A National Programmes, in collaboration with partner venues across the UK, and is curated by Harriet Reed, Curator of Contemporary Performance at the V&A.

The David Bowie archive was acquired by the V&A in 2024 through the generosity of the David Bowie Estate, the Blavatnik Family Foundation and Warner Music Group. It comprises more than **90,000 items spanning Bowie's extraordinary career**, from iconic costumes and musical instruments to handwritten lyrics, photography, stage designs and personal papers. Visitors can book free one-to-one appointments with items from David Bowie's archive through the **V&A's Order an Object and Archives Appointment** services and also visit **the David Bowie Centre** – the archive's permanent home – at **V&A East Storehouse** as part of East Bank in Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park.

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For further PRESS information about *David Bowie: On Tour* and the David Bowie archive, please contact Laura Mitchell: l.mitchell@vam.ac.uk / 020 7942 2502 (not for publication).

A selection of press images is available to download free of charge from here:
<https://vam.box.com/s/jr0ak7qghox2r3k14fm2qmcwqaqd2sn2>

Notes to Editors

Additional Quotes:

Leonie Bell, Director, V&A Dundee, said: *"We couldn't be happier about David Bowie: On Tour opening at V&A Dundee in Scotland as the first location in the UK. David Bowie left an indelible impression on Dundee, having brought the Ziggy Stardust Tour to the city's iconic music venue, Caird Hall, in 1973. This is a thrilling opportunity for fans to get up close with never-before-seen objects from Bowie's personal archive and to celebrate his remarkable story and extraordinary creative imagination."*

Chairman of the Blackpool Heritage and Museum Trust, which operates Showtown, Spencer Phillips, said: *"This is a hugely significant announcement for Showtown and for Blackpool as we celebrate the 60th anniversary of David Bowie's live performance in the resort. This exciting new collaboration with the V&A demonstrates a national confidence in our award-winning museum and offers North West visitors an extraordinary chance to experience the genius of Bowie and his incredible creative legacy."*

Vicky Sturrs, Director of Programmes and Collections at The Bowes Museum, said: *"We're excited to bring Bowie at The Bowes as part of the national David Bowie: On Tour. Presenting 100 extraordinary highlights from the V&A's David Bowie archive is a major*



cultural moment for the North of England, giving audiences unprecedented access to one of the world's most iconic creative legacies and revealing the remarkable imagination behind Bowie's enduring influence."

Cllr Jackie Dad, deputy leader of Hull City Council and portfolio holder for culture, said: *"It is incredibly exciting to announce that in 2028, the Ferens Art Gallery will host David Bowie: On Tour in partnership with the V&A. Hull has a legendary connection to David Bowie through the incomparable Mick Ronson and the Spiders from Mars, and the mark they left on music history. It is a brilliant way to build on the momentum of our Ferens centenary celebrations in 2027, proving once again that Hull is a world-class cultural destination that belongs on the global stage."*

Philip Walker, Head of Culture and Creative Industries, Bristol Museums, said: *"We're incredibly excited to bring David Bowie: On Tour to Bristol. As a true cultural icon, Bowie's work continues to inspire and captivate the next generation. It's a proud moment for us at Bristol Museums to bring the city another big blockbuster name during the summer holidays for everyone to enjoy. His spirit of creativity makes Bristol a perfect stop for this tour of highlights. We can't wait for a rock and roll summer in 2028."*

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About the V&A

The V&A is a family of museums dedicated to the power of creativity. Our mission is to champion design and creativity in all its forms, advance cultural knowledge, and inspire makers, creators and innovators everywhere. We share a 5,000-year-old story of creativity through exhibitions, events, educational programmes, digital experiences, conservation, research, and an ever-evolving national collection of over 2.8m objects spanning every creative discipline.

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About V&A Dundee

V&A Dundee is Scotland's design museum. Designed for everyone – firing imaginations and sparking curiosity in design in Scotland and around the world, from the heart of Dundee's reimagined waterfront.

Conceived as a 21st century museum and designed by Kengo Kuma, V&A Dundee is a place of activity and energy, presenting spectacular exhibitions and a range of vibrant design experiences across our building, plaza and city. V&A Dundee brings design from all over the world to Scotland and gives a new voice and platform to Scottish design and designers.



V&A Dundee is part of the V&A family of museums, supported by the Scottish Government and our founding partnership of V&A, Dundee City Council, the University of Dundee, Abertay University and Scottish Enterprise.

vam.ac.uk/dundee/david-bowie-on-tour

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About Showtown

Showtown is Blackpool's award-winning museum of fun and entertainment, which opened in 2024 to celebrate the town's rich heritage of showbusiness, circus, magic, dance and seaside culture, and tell the story of how Blackpool became Britain's entertainment capital. Through immersive exhibits, interactive displays and nationally significant collections; visitors can explore the performers, personalities and experiences that shaped the resort's unique cultural history. www.showtownblackpool.co.uk

About The Bowes Museum

The Bowes Museum is a charity managing a Grade 1 listed accredited museum and Grade 2 listed parkland in Barnard Castle. Founded by Joséphine and John Bowes more than 150 years ago, this purpose-built museum brings together an extraordinary, designated collection of European fine and decorative art. Together with changing exhibitions, the museum is a cultural resource for the people of Northern England, where today we celebrate artists, designers and makers.

About Ferens Art Gallery

As Ferens Art Gallery approaches its centenary in November 2027, a programme of activity spanning 2027 and 2028 will celebrate nearly 100 years of one of Hull's most important cultural institutions. Since opening in 1927, the gallery has played a central role in the city's cultural life, housing nationally significant collections and providing free access to art for generations of residents and visitors. The centenary programme will reflect on this rich history while setting out a bold and inclusive vision for the future, strengthening Ferens' role as a dynamic, accessible and forward-looking gallery at the heart of Hull's cultural and civic identity.

About Bristol Museum & Art Gallery

Bristol Museum & Art Gallery is a large free-to-enter museum standing in the heart of Bristol's vibrant city. The museum holds a collection that includes art, archaeology, history, industry, and the natural world.

The collection is amongst the UK's finest. Highlights include Banksy's Paint Pot Angel, a Temnodontosaurus fossil found by Mary Anning and a stunning array of ceramics, carvings and glass from China and Japan.

Bristol Museum & Art Gallery is part of Bristol Museums, which includes M Shed, The Georgian House Museum, The Red Lodge Museum, Blaise Museum and Bristol Archives.



About the Blavatnik Family Foundation

Led by Sir Leonard Blavatnik, founder of Access Industries, the Blavatnik Family Foundation promotes innovation, discovery, and creativity to benefit the whole of society. Through the Foundation, the Blavatnik family has contributed over \$1.3 billion globally to advance science, education, arts and culture, and social justice.

www.blavatnikfoundation.org

About Warner Music Group

Warner Music Group (WMG) brings together artists, songwriters, entrepreneurs, and technology that are moving entertainment culture across the globe. WMG's Recorded Music division includes renowned labels such as 10K Projects, 300 Entertainment, Asylum, Atlantic, Big Beat, EastWest, Elektra, Erato, Fueled By Ramen, Nonesuch, Parlophone, Reprise, Rhino, Roadrunner, Sire, Spinnin', Warner Records, Warner Classics, and Warner Records Nashville. WMG's music publishing arm, Warner Chappell Music, has a catalog of over one million copyrights spanning every musical genre, from the standards of the Great American Songbook to the biggest hits of the 21st century. Warner Music Group is also home to ADA, which supports the independent community, as well as artist services division WMX. Follow WMG on [Instagram](#), [X](#), [TikTok](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [Facebook](#).