



FUNKAESTHETICS SPOTLIGHTS LEIGH BOWERY'S OUTRAGEOUS CLUBWEAR.

FUNKAESTHETICS at Justina M. Barnicke Gallery (7 Hart House Circle), to March 23, panel Monday (March 9), 6 pm. 416-978-8398.

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ART REVIEWS

Let's get funky

GROOVE ON AT FABULOUS FUNKAESTHETICS

DAVID JAGER

Funk gets a smart context in Funkaesthetics, curated by **Luis Jacob** and **Pan Wendt**.

Three screens broadcast *Space Is The Place*, a movie about seminal free-jazz prophet **Sun Ra**. In one scene, he materializes in a pool hall wearing his trademark ancient Egyptian space gear, and a crowd of jeering black youths asks if he's for real.

"I'm not real," he answers calmly. "I'm just like you.... You don't exist in this society. If you did, you wouldn't be seeking equal rights. I do not come to you as reality, but as a myth, because that's what black people are."

Funk began with black musicians who, using dance grooves and costumes, invented a mythology influenced by blaxploitation films and Marvel comics. **Parliament-Funkadelic's George Clinton** and **Bootsy Collins** declared themselves Afro-nauts sent to "funkatize" the galaxies.

A rich mix of video, film, graphics, sculpture and photography, rightly dominated by the work of Clinton and Sun Ra, presents funk as an art movement. P-funk's album covers alone confirm funk's irrepressible creativity, sense of humour and often scathing political satire. Blacks proclaiming themselves alien was a loaded political statement in 70s America.

London queer icon **Leigh Bowery** shared their outsider status. He made freakish exaggerations of queer glamour that echoed funk's playful stretching of black identity, crafting something indescribable and arresting in the process.

Adrian Piper's video *Funk Lessons*, in which a mostly white class gets a lesson on how to shoulder-shrug and bump in hilariously dry seminar format, addresses the stereotype of the "un-funky" white person.

Paige Gratland and **Day Milman** try to get Toronto dancing in their video *Free Dance Lessons*, offering tutorials with mixed but often happy results.

Yes, we here in T.O. can get our groove on, too.