

# Biography

## Brian Dawn Chalkley

Brian Dawn Chalkley (b. 1948, London. Lives and works in London) is a visual and performance artist, storyteller and teacher. Formative in the trans community since the early 90's, the artist is known for their performances as Dawn a leading role in London's underground trans clubbing scene in the 1980s and '90s, a time when it was deemed unacceptable and perverse.

Now in their 70s, Brian Dawn Chalkley has been exploring gender, sexuality and identity for more than four decades, first in private and then in their art. Having started their career as a modernist painter, whilst a transvestite in private, in 1996 he embraced "Dawn", his alter ego, into his public art practice, too. Ever since, this movement between "Brian" and "Dawn" has fuelled an odyssey into what it means to perform gender, and to form and reform identities, going far beyond the modernist tendencies of his earlier years, and continuing to build an impressive body of work that uses narrative and costume to construct and deconstruct aspects of their personality and personae.

Brian Dawn is best known for hosting the Salon, an event for performers and performances in which orthodox moral, social, and artistic boundaries are challenged by the representation of unconventional behaviour and the use of experimental forms. The people they meet and the places he goes are the subject of his work, memories from the artist's own life and childhood are present, although laced with violence and horror.

But there is a chasm between the details of the stories, the narrative itself, and the meaning behind both. While we are invited to speculate on, and discover more about, these scenarios, they ultimately refuse to give more than these stark, dream- like symbols, and so refuse any true resolution.

Brian Dawn's past collaborations with artists and academics such as Jack Halberstam, Charles Atlas, Brian Catlin, Dawn Mellor and Tony Gresoni, to name a few, continue to shape the way trans artists working are framed today.