

## Press Release

Embargoed until 12.00pm, Thursday 29 Sept 2022

## FACTORY INTERNATIONAL – OPENING PLANS ANNOUNCED FOR MANCHESTER’S LANDMARK NEW CULTURAL SPACE

**YAYOI KUSAMA, DANNY BOYLE, ES DEVLIN, KENRICK ‘H2O’ SANDY,  
MICHAEL ‘MIKEY J’ ASANTE, SABRINA MAHFOUZ AND HUNDREDS OF  
LOCAL RESIDENTS IN OPENING PROGRAMME**

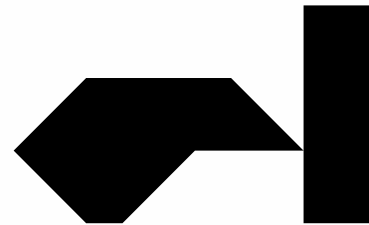
**5,000 TICKETS AVAILABLE FOR £10 OR LESS FOR OPENING SHOW**

Press kit and visual materials are [available to download here](#):

The opening plans were announced today for **Factory International**, Manchester’s new landmark cultural space which will welcome its first visitors in June 2023. Programmed and operated by the team behind the world-famous Manchester International Festival (MIF), Factory International will be a global destination for arts, music and culture, commissioning and presenting a year-round programme by leading artists from across the world. It is the largest investment in a national cultural project since the opening of Tate Modern in 2000, thanks to initial HM Government investment and backing from Manchester City Council and Arts Council England.

The official opening production will be *Free Your Mind*, a large-scale immersive performance based on The Matrix films presented across the building’s ultra-flexible spaces. This dramatic retelling through dance, music and visual effects will bring together the visceral movement of choreographer **Kenrick ‘H2O’ Sandy MBE** with a powerful score from renowned composer **Michael ‘Mikey J’ Asante MBE** (co-founders and artistic directors of the Olivier award-winning Boy Blue), world-leading designer **Es Devlin**’s large-scale stage sculptures and the work of the acclaimed writer **Sabrina Mahfouz** – directed by **Danny Boyle**. Using spectacular visual effects, a cast of professional dancers and hundreds of Manchester participants will recreate some of the film’s most iconic scenes, provoking visions of an alternative future. (18 October -5 November 2023)

Before the official opening, the new venue will form the centrepiece of the 2023 Manchester International Festival (which will return across the city from 29 June to 16 July) with a major exhibition in its main warehouse space. *You, Me and the Balloons* celebrates three decades of **Yayoi Kusama**’s spectacular inflatable sculptures, shown together for the first time. Created specially for Factory International, this will be the renowned Japanese contemporary artist’s largest ever immersive environment, featuring works that are over ten metres tall - including giant dolls, spectacular tendrilled landscapes and a vast constellation of polka-dot spheres. (29 June – 28 August 2023)



## Press Release

Following *Free Your Mind*, a wide range of music, circus, art and fashion will fill the building and its outdoor spaces during *The Welcome*, a nine-day programme developed by Greater Manchester residents. Building on Manchester International Festival's strong history of working with local people to choose and programme artists and events, *The Welcome* is an invitation from Greater Manchester residents to their neighbours - to meet, learn, and play in the extraordinary new cultural space opening in the heart of their city. (11-19 November 2023)

Reflecting Factory International's commitment to ensuring access to the widest possible audiences, 5,000 tickets will be available for *Free Your Mind* at £10 or less as part of an affordable pricing strategy that will see discounted tickets for Manchester communities across its year-round programme.

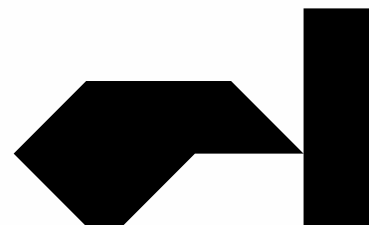
Designed by the world-leading Office for Metropolitan Architecture (OMA), with OMA Partner, Ellen van Loon as lead architect, Factory International is the practice's first major public project in the UK. Spanning 13,350 square metres, the ultra-flexible building will offer multiple configurations, enabling large-scale artistic work of invention and ambition that is not made anywhere else. Audiences will be able to enjoy year-round, in a new world class facility, the broadest range of art forms from major exhibitions and concerts to intimate performances and immersive experiences. Outside, its public areas will come alive with pop-up performances, events and markets, creating a thriving riverside destination for audiences to enjoy.

Factory International will add to the city's thriving music scene, presenting over 80 gigs a year, including in-house concerts and collaborations with local and national promoters. A highlight of the opening programme will be a series of special music events in the warehouse - with details to be announced. There will also be a focus on developing the profile of music creatives in the region, building on the success of MIF Sounds, which provided financial support and development opportunities to musicians, producers and record labels in the pandemic.

Ahead of opening, artist **Luke Jerram** will celebrate the births of hundreds of babies born locally with a spectacular installation outside the building which will cast beams of light into the sky to represent new births. Each of the families with babies born in January will receive lifetime membership to Factory International – providing priority booking, discounted tickets and exclusive invitations. The online Virtual Factory project (which has featured artists such as Tai Shani, Robert Yang and LaTurbo Avedon), will conclude with a new film by **Jenn Nkiru** to be released in 2023 exploring the resonances of the building's historic site.

Factory International will also be home to **Factory Academy**, a major training centre for local people, which will help people from all backgrounds to start new careers in the creative industries. Working in partnership with cultural organisations and employers across the city, Factory Academy is already delivering a range of training opportunities including paid internships, training academies and work experience programmes. Upcoming initiatives include courses to develop skills in Live Events, Social Media, and Broadcast & Film Production including filming, editing and visual effects (VFX).

The development of Factory International is being led by Manchester City Council, with backing from HM Government and Arts Council England. A major capital gift of £2m has been secured from The



## Press Release

Law Family Charitable Foundation and will be recognised through the naming of the hall. In addition, the Foundation has pledged £888k to support the Factory Academy.

Factory International is located in the new St John's neighbourhood which is being developed on the site of the former Granada Studios next to the River Irwell and will make a major contribution to the ongoing regeneration of this part of the city centre.

**John McGrath**, Artistic Director & Chief Executive of Factory International, said: *"We're delighted to be able to share our opening plans for Factory International. At every stage in imagining and building this extraordinary space we have focussed on creating new possibilities - for artists to let their imaginations fly, for citizens of Manchester and the world to meet and dream, and for people of all ages and backgrounds to build skills and gain experience. Factory International is truly a place where we can invent tomorrow together."*

**Stuart Andrew**, Arts Minister said: *"Thanks to almost £100 million of Government funding, Factory International will further increase access to world-class arts and culture in Manchester when it opens its doors for the first time in summer 2023. This represents a great example of the Government's commitment to distribute arts funding right across the country."*

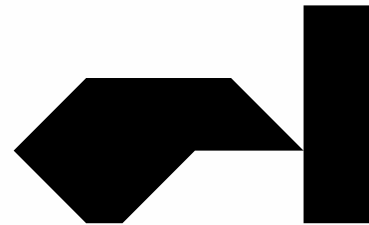
*"It is fantastic to see such an exciting programme of events being put together for its opening and I look forward to seeing the positive impact the venue has on the city."*

**Councillor Bev Craig**, Leader of Manchester City Council, said: *"This remarkable new space, rooted in Manchester, will be a significant addition to the national and international arts landscape and a major visitor destination. Factory International will further strengthen the city's role as a centre for culture, creativity and innovation. It is already creating jobs and apprenticeships for people who live here and will be an important training centre for an array of creative careers. As well as changing lives directly, Factory International will provide a huge economic boost to Manchester, creating or supporting up to 1,500 jobs and adding £1.1 billion to the city's economy over a decade. This is, in more ways than one, a landmark moment."*

**Ellen van Loon**, OMA Partner and Lead Architect, said: *"Factory International will be a new type of performance space – a unique crossover between a fixed theatre and flexible warehouse. Super-sized moveable walls enable endless configurations within a large space, allowing audiences unexpected vistas of performers. I hope that whenever people come to Factory International they always experience something different, as if with each visit they encounter a different building."*

**Danny Boyle**, director, said: *"I'm delighted to be part of Factory International as a starting point for a kind of identity that this extraordinary new building is going to have. It's a space that gives you an enormous amount of potential. It's wildly ambitious in terms of its scale. In my lifetime, to see a new space like this open is hugely empowering, and I hope the new generation of artists feel that power."*

**Es Devlin**, artist and designer, said: *"Since its inception in 2007 Manchester International Festival has produced some of the most innovative and urgent works I've been fortunate enough to witness, which have had an immense impact on my practice including such pioneers as Steve McQueen, Adam Curtis, Marina Abramović, Björk, Akram Khan, Yoko Ono and more. Factory International will*



## Press Release

*continue to cultivate these world-class collaborations, with each project rooted on this specific site and within the community in Manchester. It's a profound privilege to be invited to take part in its inception. Like a new musical instrument, a new building needs to be 'tuned in,' and it's immensely energising to be present when it starts to sing."*

**Michael 'Mikey J' Asante MBE**, producer, composer and DJ, said: *"The uniqueness and versatility of Factory International allows us to really create something different and be magical, to play with different concepts and open up a whole new way of trying to interact with our creativity. With our production we want to show people what they could possibly do in this space, that they have the opportunity to create something different and get them to envisage how they would use it."*

**Kenrick 'H2O'Sandy MBE**, choreographer and performer, said: *"What excites me is the flexibility of Factory International, exploring how versatile the building can be, how to take the venue to another level. I want us as artistic collaborators to be challenged within the space."*

## NOTES TO EDITORS

### Listings information

### You, Me and the Balloons

Factory International, Water Street, Manchester, M3 4JQ

29 June – 28 August 2023

Full Price £15

Concessions from £7.50

Priority booking for Factory International members from 10am, 4 October

General release 10am, 6 October

Yayoi Kusama's *You, Me and the Balloons* celebrates three decades of Kusama's spectacular inflatable artworks, which are brought together for the first time in this major exhibition. Created especially for Factory International, Yayoi Kusama – *You, Me and the Balloons* has been conceived by the renowned Japanese contemporary artist as her largest ever immersive environment, featuring works that are over 10 metres tall, taking full advantage of the scale of the vast warehouse-space. The exhibition will invite visitors to take an exhilarating journey through Kusama's psychedelic creations including giant dolls, spectacular tendrilled landscapes and a vast constellation of polka-dot spheres.

A global phenomenon, Kusama is adored for her surreal world of dots and pumpkins amongst other artistic motifs. Her hallucinatory paintings, sculptures, and immersive environments, such as her *Infinity Mirror Rooms*, take us beyond ourselves and make us feel part of something greater.

### Free Your Mind

Factory International, Water Street, Manchester, M3 4JQ

18 October - 5 November 2023



## Press Release

Full Price £40

Concessions from £10

Priority booking for Factory International members from 10am, 4 October

General release 10am, 6 October

Based on The Matrix films, *Free Your Mind* is a large-scale immersive performance, specially created for the opening of Factory International. This dramatic retelling through dance, music and visual effects will bring together the visceral movement of choreographer Kenrick 'H2O' Sandy MBE with a powerful score from renowned composer Michael 'Mikey J' Asante MBE (co-founders and artistic directors of the Olivier award-winning Boy Blue), world-leading designer Es Devlin's immense stage sculptures and the work of the acclaimed writer Sabrina Mahfouz – all directed by Danny Boyle.

Working with BAFTA-winning producer Tracey Seaward, this unique cross-art collaboration of world-leading artists, will showcase the breadth and ambition of Factory International's artistic programme and invites audiences into a new realm of possibilities spanning real and imagined worlds. Using spectacular visual effects, a cast of professional dancers and hundreds of Manchester participants will recreate some of the film's most iconic scenes, provoking visions of an alternate future.

Created for Manchester, the birthplace of the world's first industrial revolution, *Free Your Mind* will explore where the digital revolution has the power to take us. From 1999, the year that the first The Matrix film was released and the moment before our lives were irrevocably entwined with technology, *Free Your Mind* journeys to right now - the moment where the Metaverse is about to engulf us. The show will bring the words of The Matrix character Neo to the forefront: "I didn't come here to tell you how this is going to end. I came here to tell you how it's going to begin."

A world premiere commissioned and produced by Factory International.

Based on the Warner Bros films written and directed by the Wachowskis, produced by special arrangement with Warner Bros Theatre Ventures.

## The Welcome

11 – 19 November 2023

Factory International, Water Street, Manchester, M3 4JQ

Booking information announced in 2023

A wide range of music, circus, art and fashion will fill Factory International's indoor and outdoor spaces in a nine-day programme developed by Greater Manchester residents aged 17 to 70 from an array of backgrounds. Building on Manchester International Festival's strong history of working with local people to choose and programme artists and events, *The Welcome* is an invitation from Greater Manchester residents to their neighbours - to meet, learn, and play in the extraordinary new cultural space opening in the heart of their city. With a range of opportunities for local people to take part, perform and learn new skills, *The Welcome* will showcase the full spectrum of creative talent in the city alongside international guests.

# factory international



## Press Release

### About Factory International

Factory International is a global destination for arts music and culture opening in the heart of Manchester in 2023. The design of the landmark new cultural space is led by Ellen van Loon of the world-leading practice Office for Metropolitan Architecture (OMA). Its development is being led by Manchester City Council, with backing from HM Government and Arts Council England. Programmed and operated by the team behind Manchester International Festival (MIF), Factory International will commission, produce and present an ambitious year-round programme of original creative work, music and special events by leading artists from across the globe. It will also stage the city-wide Festival every other year at Factory International and at venues and spaces across Greater Manchester. Driven by the same interests and ambitions that defines MIF, artists will be encouraged to create work in new ways, to collaborate across disciplines and blur the boundaries between art and popular culture.

The building design is based around large, open, ultra-flexible spaces that can be constantly reconfigured, enabling large-scale artistic work of invention and ambition that isn't made anywhere else in the world. It will offer audiences the opportunity to enjoy year-round, in a new world-class facility, the broadest range of art forms - from major exhibitions and concerts, to intimate performances and immersive experiences – including over 80 gigs a year.

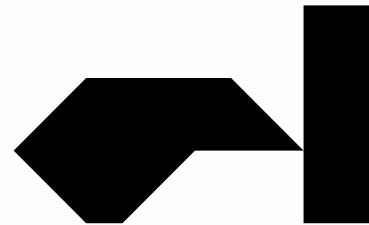
The 13,350 square metre building includes a 21m high warehouse with capacity for up to 5,000 people standing, which can also be divided by a movable, full-height acoustic wall, and a hall with a flexible stage which can house an audience of up to 1,600 seated or 2,000 standing, as well as other spaces inside and out. The warehouse and the hall can also work together, with the proscenium capable of opening fully into the warehouse and allowing the stage to run deeper into the building. Its public spaces, from the foyers to its outdoor areas, will come alive with year-round activities such as family friendly workshops, pop-up food stalls, music, workshops and markets, many of them free, creating a thriving riverside destination for everyone to enjoy.

International in spirit and practice, Factory International will collaborate with venues, festivals and companies across the world to commission artists together. Working with local, national and international partners and co-producers, it will produce and premiere major new work, before it travels globally, and share ideas, projects and training with peers worldwide.

The possibilities of digital technology lies at the heart of the vision for Factory International, driving experimentation and innovation in its physical productions and enabling the creation of entirely new experiences for audiences through digital first works created within the virtual world. It will also engage audiences beyond its physical structures through broadcast and streaming of live and hybrid projects.

A laboratory for experimentation and R&D, Factory International will be a training ground for the next generation of creators. Artists from Manchester and all over the world will be commissioned to make new work in physical and online realms, while talent development programmes such as the Factory Fellowships will see emerging artists placed alongside international creatives.

# factory international



## Press Release

Through the Factory Academy, it will become a major training centre for local people, equipping them with the skills needed for careers in the creative industries and helping to build the technicians, producers and other creative talent that will bring the future alive.

Building on MIF's record of working with communities, as audiences and as participants, Factory International will be a space where local people are actively involved – from participating in flagship commissions, co-designing programmes of activity, to shaping the organisation through involvement in its public forums.

Rooted in Manchester, Factory International will strengthen the city's status as a national and international centre for culture, creativity and innovation, as well as a major visitor destination. The economic impact of Factory International will be considerable, creating or supporting up to 1,500 direct and indirect jobs and adding £1.1 billion to the city's economy over a decade.

Located in the new St John's neighbourhood next to the River Irwell, Factory International will be at the heart of a burgeoning city centre hub for culture, creativity and digital innovation and make a major contribution to the ongoing regeneration of this part of the city centre.

**ENDS.**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, IMAGES, QUOTES AND INTERVIEW REQUESTS PLEASE CONTACT:**

### **Factory International**

**Emma Robertson, Head of Press and PR**, +44 (0)7813 521104,  
emma.robertson@factoryinternational.org

**Jamie-leigh Hargreaves, Press & PR Manager**, +44 (0)7534 492118,  
jamieleigh.hargreaves@factoryinternational.org

**Oscar Lister, Press & PR Manager**, +44 (0)7494 688523,  
oscar.lister@factoryinternational.org

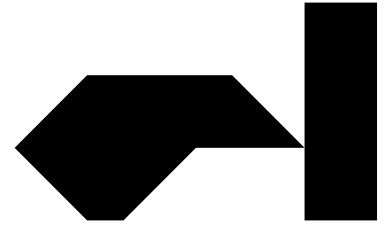
### **Bolton & Quinn**

**Erica Bolton**, +44 (0) 7711 698186  
erica@boltonquinn.com

**Dennis Chang**, +44 (0) 7854 242801  
dennis@boltonquinn.com

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