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# FACTORY INTERNATIONAL

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## ABOUT FACTORY INTERNATIONAL

Factory International is the organisation behind both Manchester International Festival (MIF), and Aviva Studios, the landmark new cultural space in the heart of Manchester, creating a global destination for arts, music and culture.

### **Our programme**

Factory International commissions, produces and presents an ambitious year-round programme of original creative work, music and special events at its new venue, online, and internationally. It also stages the city-wide Festival every other year.

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

In the digital realm, Factory International offers a lab for experimentation. Pushing the possibilities of technology, audiences can experience works created within the virtual world, as well as livestreamed and hybrid events.

At home in Manchester, Factory International plays an important role in the lives of Greater Manchester residents, bringing jobs, skills, training and creative opportunities for local people and artists. Its pioneering creative engagement and artist development programmes creates year-round opportunities for local people to get involved, from participating in flagship commissions, co-designing programmes of activity, to shaping the organisation through involvement in its public forums.

Through Factory Academy, Factory International is training the creative workforce of the future, providing opportunities for careers in Manchester's ever-growing creative industries, while talent development programmes such as Factory Fellowships see emerging artists placed alongside international creatives.

### **Manchester International Festival**

Factory International builds on the legacy of Manchester International Festival, one of the world's leading arts festivals, and the first to be entirely focused on the commissioning and producing of ambitious new work. Staged every two years in Manchester since 2007, MIF has commissioned, produced and presented world premieres by artists including Marina Abramović, Damon Albarn, Laurie Anderson, Björk, Boris Charmatz, Jeremy Deller, Idris Elba and Kwame Kwei-Armah, Elbow, Tracey Emin, Akram Khan, David Lynch, Ibrahim Mahama, Wayne McGregor, Steve McQueen, Marta Minujín, Cillian Murphy, Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy, Yoko Ono, Thomas Ostermeier, Maxine Peake, Punchdrunk, Skepta, Christine Sun Kim, The xx, and Robert Wilson.

These and other world-renowned artists from different art forms and backgrounds create dynamic, innovative and forward-thinking new work reflecting the spectrum of performing arts, visual arts and popular culture, staged across Greater Manchester – from theatres, galleries and concert halls to railway depots, churches and car parks. Working closely with cultural organisations globally, whose

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financial and creative input helps to make many of these projects possible, much of the work made at MIF also goes on to travel the world, reaching an audience of 1.8 million people in more than 30 countries to date.

## **Aviva Studios**

A space for invention and discovery, the design of Factory International's new home is led by Ellen van Loon of the world-leading practice Office for Metropolitan Architecture (OMA) – their first major public building in the UK. Its development has been led by Manchester City Council, with backing from HM Government and Arts Council England.

Built with flexibility in mind, the building is based around large, open, adaptable spaces that can be constantly reconfigured, enabling artists to develop and create large-scale work of invention and ambition, of a kind not seen anywhere else in the world. Matching Manchester's ethos as an ever-evolving city, this dynamic space invites artists to create bold new work by providing a canvas to make, explore and experiment.

The 13,350 square metre building includes the 21 metre high Warehouse with capacity for up to 5,000 people standing, which can also be divided by a movable, full-height acoustic wall, and the Hall with a flexible stage which can house an audience of up to 1,603 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.

Audiences can enjoy the broadest range of art forms from major exhibitions and concerts to intimate performances and immersive experiences, while its public spaces, from the foyers to the outdoor areas, 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.

This new cultural landmark, programmed and operated by Factory International, strengthens the city's status as a national and international centre for culture, creativity and innovation, as well as a major visitor destination attracting international visitors, benefiting both the visitor economy and tourism to the city. Its economic impact 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 St John's neighbourhood next to the River Irwell, Aviva Studios is at the heart of a burgeoning city centre hub for culture, creativity and digital innovation and makes a major contribution to the ongoing regeneration of this part of the city centre.

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## QUOTES

**Peter Saville**, Co-founder of Factory Records and Creative Adviser to Factory International

*'I see Factory International, and its new home, as a two-way portal between Manchester and the world, through the broadest medium of the arts. The world comes in through it and Manchester goes out through it. It is itself a signifier of intent and ambition, so it's inspiring.'*

**Nazma Noor**, People's Forum Member, Factory International

*'I think it offers a really great opportunity for local people to upskill, to develop their own skills and to see the scope of things that they could be creating. I'm really excited that Factory International is doing this for the Manchester community.'*

**Danny Boyle**, Director

*'I'm delighted to be part of Factory International's opening programme as a starting point for a kind of identity that the 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

*'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 by such pioneers as Steve McQueen, Adam Curtis, Marina Abramović, Björk, Akram Khan, Yoko Ono and more. Factory International will 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 the inception of its new space in the city. 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**, Producer, Composer and DJ

*'The uniqueness and versatility of the space 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**, Choreographer and Performer

*'What excites me is the flexibility, 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.'*

**Will Brenton**, writer, producer and director

*'Together with Factory International, bringing this show to their new venue is very exciting. I remember working in the old Granada offices when I was a director on Coronation Street, and to be a part of the re-invention of this site and at the beginning of what I know will be a thrilling new journey is a genuine honour.'*

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**Maria Balshaw**, Director of Tate

*'What's so amazing about this space is its scale and its flexibility – an artist could walk into the Warehouse and they could dream really big. And it's been made with the audiences of the future, as well as the art of the future in mind. I think art that none of us have ever encountered before is going to be made here in Manchester so people will be coming in to have a genuinely unique experience.'*

**Jeanette Winterson**, Writer

*'One of the fantastic things about Manchester is that it's always been an innovative city, ahead of itself ahead of the time, and this space entirely fits within the ethos of what the city is. I think this is going to work for every kind of audience, every kind of artist. It's going to become one of Manchester's fantastic landmarks and a national landmark - London's going to have to work to catch up.'*

**Ivan Blackstock**, Artistic Director of CRXSS PLATFXRM

*'A venue like this gives young creatives and established and mid-career artists somewhere they can create, the opportunity to be part of a community and to reimagine something on scale. It's incredible to see this venue and how many things can be done with it.'*

**Gary Neville**, Footballer & Businessman

*'This project is a once in a lifetime for this city. The great thing about this project for me is it does what Manchester does best, which is capture the spirit of local passion, energy and hospitality and welcome, but brings in an international star feel to it. This will be looked back upon in three or four hundred years' time as basically a wonder of that day.'*

**Andy Burnham**, Mayor of Greater Manchester

*"As the new home of Factory International, Aviva Studios will cement Manchester and Greater Manchester's place on the global cultural stage. In fact, I believe that it could help shift the UK's cultural gravity.*

*"Not only will it host world class artists, and ground-breaking work enabled by its ultra-flexible space, it will also inspire a new generation of talent and train people here for a wide range of careers in the creative industries.*

*"It has already acted as a catalyst to the regeneration of the St John's area where impressive growth and job creation is taking place. As a major attraction, it will also help support and stimulate thousands of jobs in Greater Manchester's visitor economy."*

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## INTERNATIONAL AND TOURING

Factory International builds on Manchester International Festival's touring record, taking work created in Manchester to the world. Working with local, national and international partners and co-producers, Factory International produces and premieres major new work, before it travels globally, and shares ideas, projects and training with peers worldwide. Since 2007, the organisation has collaborated with over 66 commissioning partners on more than 50 different shows. Its productions have been seen by 1.8 million people overseas, in 33 countries across six continents.

Factory International shares ideas, projects and training with peers worldwide, offering bespoke training programmes for international arts organisations, venues and festivals on producing and touring interdisciplinary projects and work of scale.

Factory International is part of an Arts Council England initiative with Public Theater in New York – to promote artists and companies based in England to a global audience. *Radar* (fka Under the Radar) supports artists who are at the vanguard of theatre and performance practice, redefining and refreshing it. As an internationally significant festival, it has become an important meeting place for presenters and curators from across the world and an important platform for artists seeking touring opportunities. The programme has supported artists including Inua Ellams, Javaad Alipoor, Lucy McCormick, Jess Thom, Selina Thompson, Rachel Mars and Jasmine Lee-Jones to take and present work at the US festival.

## DIGITAL

The possibilities of digital technology lie at the heart of the vision for Factory International, driving experimentation and innovation in its physical productions and enabling the creation of new experiences for audiences through works created within the virtual world. The *Virtual Factory* series commissioned artists including the avatar LaTurbo Avedon, visual artist Tai Shani, games developer Robert Yang and filmmaker Jenn Nkiru to create online and digital work responding to the architecture of the building. LaTurbo Avedon's installation of Factory International in Fortnite has already welcomed more than 1.5m visitors.

Factory Settings is a digital creative platform launching this year that allows audiences to experience a new virtual version of Factory International's new space using augmented reality. Fashion designer and *Free Your Mind* costume designer Gareth Pugh, and 3D artist and illustrator Jack Sachs will be the first artists to use the platform, each creating interactive digital experiences accessed via a free augmented reality app. Building on previous creations in virtual realms, artist and game designer Danielle Brathwaite-Shirley is exploring the idea of a Black Trans revolution in a new free-to-play browser-based video game launching 31 October.

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## FACTORY ACADEMY

Through Factory Academy, Factory International is training the creative workforce of the future, providing local people with opportunities to develop careers in the creative industries without having to leave the region. Since launching in 2018, Factory Academy has delivered hundreds of training and employment opportunities including paid internships, apprenticeships, work experience programmes, and routes to full-time and part-time roles. The opening of the world class cultural venue provides an unparalleled learning environment for local people to develop skills and experience alongside professionals at the top of their field.

From the outset Factory Academy has been pioneering in its approach, working with a consortium of cultural and creative organisations to create opportunities and employer-led curriculums. Courses are bespoke and developed with industry experts with specialist knowledge and experience from a range of sectors, from event managers, musicians, and teachers to production managers and technicians. To date, over 700 Greater Manchester residents have graduated from Factory Academy courses, with 44 Factory Academy alumni currently in roles at Factory International.

A core aim of the Factory Academy is to diversify the workforce in an increasingly important sector for the region – annually, the creative industries are worth more than £100 billion to the economy.

Courses are fully funded, with expenses such as food and travel covered, and recruitment is targeted at those who are not in education or employment or are on Universal Credit. To date 75% of Factory Academy participants, who provided diversity and inclusion data, report a characteristic that is under-represented and/or being from a low socio-economic background.

Factory Academy is also responding to industry-wide needs such as workforce shortages in technical roles as a result of the pandemic. This year, a Technical Trainer will be employed directly by Factory International to deliver the venue-based training, providing a pipeline for technical roles at a range of levels at Aviva Studios and across the region.

Many of the programmes lead to accredited qualifications such as BTECs, or guaranteed interviews with hiring organisations.

**Josh Kelly, Live Event Crew at DNG - Factory Academy Live Events alumnus** said: *“I found Factory Academy at a really important time. I had been through a period of unemployment where I felt lost and unsure what I wanted to do. The Live Events course opened so many doors for me, including working as part of the event crew at this year’s Sounds of the City festival, and helped me rebuild confidence in myself.”*

**Michael Appouh, Social Media Coordinator at Factory International - Factory Academy alumnus** said: *“Factory Academy really helped me to get to that next step in my career. It’s so exciting to now be a part of the team that’s bringing this incredible new cultural space to the city.”*

For additional information on Factory Academy, visit: <https://factoryinternational.org/factory-academy/>

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## ARTIST DEVELOPMENT

A laboratory for experimentation and R&D, Aviva Studios will become a training ground for the next generation of creators. A series of Factory International's talent development programmes are focused on creating opportunities for artists from the North of England, particularly those most underrepresented in the sector.

The annual Factory International Fellowship offers six artists from the north of England with at least two years of professional experience the opportunity to shadow the creation of new Factory International artworks and productions at Aviva Studios, providing financial and dedicated artistic support.

Artist Takeover is a new Factory International programme dedicated to supporting artists from Greater Manchester and the north of England scale up their practice. With financial support and guidance from industry experts, Factory International will encourage artists with a minimum of five years' professional experience in any discipline, to experiment in Aviva Studios' flexible spaces. The first Artist Takeover will take place in Aviva Studios' vast North Warehouse in March 2024.

Building on the success of MIF Sounds, which provided financial support to musicians in the pandemic, Factory Sounds provides financial support, networking opportunities and profile to creatives involved in Greater Manchester's music scene. In 2023 ten Factory Sounds musicians, DJs and label owners were supported to create new projects and invited to perform during MIF23.

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

With community decision-making at its heart, Manchester residents are encouraged to play a key role in the organisation through activities such as participating in flagship commissions, volunteering, co-designing programmes of activity, and shaping the organisation through involvement in the People's Forum and Young People's Forum. Almost 100 Greater Manchester residents are taking part in *Free Your Mind*, the official opening production of Aviva Studios.

*The Welcome*, a series of events chosen and curated by a group of Greater Manchester residents aged 17 to 70, will be presented as part of the opening season at Aviva Studios. A mix of music, circus, public art and fashion will take over the building's spaces, introducing audiences to different parts of the building and providing a space for people to meet, experiment and play.

As part of Luke Jerram's major artwork *First Breath* in January 2023, which saw bright pulsing beams of light mark the births of hundreds of babies across Greater Manchester, Factory International has set in motion a new programme of free activities and opportunities for parents and children, exploring how art can be woven into daily family life from birth. Hundreds of babies that were born in Greater Manchester in January 2023 have received lifetime membership to Factory International – providing priority booking, discounted tickets and exclusive invitations to special events.

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Factory International is committed to ensuring access for the widest possible audiences whatever their budgets. An affordable pricing strategy has been developed which includes Aviva £10 tickets and up to half price discounts across its year round programme.

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## LEADERSHIP BIOGRAPHIES

### **John E. McGrath: Artistic Director and Chief Executive**

Appointed in 2015 to lead Manchester International Festival (MIF), and the development of its new building, John McGrath has since curated three festivals, as well as leading the vision and strategy for Factory International's new venue, Aviva Studios. Under John, MIF has built on its reputation for commissioning extraordinary work from the world's great artists, while also forming ever-deeper relationships with Manchester's many communities. Artists commissioned by John for the Festival include New Order and Liam Gillick, Yoko Ono, David Lynch, Philip Glass and Phelim McDermott, Laurie Anderson, Maxine Peake and Sarah Frankcom, Idris Elba and Kwame Kwei-Armah, Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy, Ibrahim Mahama, Tania Bruguera and Marta Minujín.

Prior to MIF, John was the founding Artistic Director of National Theatre Wales, commissioning landmark site-specific work such as Michael Sheen's *The Passion of Port Talbot* and Mike Pearson's *The Persians*. Shows directed for National Theatre Wales include the award-winning *The Radicalisation of Bradley Manning*. Previous roles include Artistic Director of Contact, where John led the re-opening of the venue, and its re-focus on young people as decision-makers, and Associate Director at legendary New York experimental company Mabou Mines. Awards include NESTA Cultural Leadership Fellowship, and Honorary Doctorate from the Open University. Publications include 'Loving Big Brother: Performance, Privacy and Surveillance Space' (Routledge 2004).

### **Randel Bryan: Executive Director and Deputy Chief Executive**

Randel Bryan leads the Commercial, Development and Fundraising teams in maximising income and investment to financially support Factory International's programme and social value endeavours.

Randel also oversees the work of Factory Academy, which provides skills and training opportunities to enable more people to enjoy careers in the arts and creative industries – helping to build the new generations of technicians, producers and other creative talent, primarily targeted at local people who traditionally face economic and cultural barriers to employment in the creative industries. In addition, he leads the Internal Operations team and manages Factory International's Environmental Sustainability department.

Through his background in media and technology, Randel Bryan has pioneered commercial, event and content strategies for some of the world's leading studios. These include Universal Pictures, Endemol Shine and most recently Discovery Education, where he led the Global Partnerships team, delivering world-class social responsibility campaigns for the likes of Nike and Rolls-Royce.

### **Sheena Wrigley: Venue Director**

Since starting her role in 2021 Sheena has led on the transition project of Manchester International Festival from a biennial festival to Factory International, a year-round operation. She works closely with the Manchester City Council Capital Project team and leads service procurement and venue readiness planning for Aviva Studios. In her role, Sheena oversees venue management, and the Visitor Experience and Audiences team, as well as Technical Operations, Producing and Access teams.

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Sheena has many years of varied experience in theatre and the cultural sector, in leadership roles and as a producer. From 2017 she was the Director of the Palace Theatre & Opera House, Manchester, part of the Ambassador's Theatre Group. Previous roles have included Chief Executive of West Yorkshire Playhouse (now Leeds Playhouse), Executive Director of HOME where she played a leading role in the successful opening of the new venue and Head of Theatres, Arts & Festivals for Bradford District, leading the city's arts strategy and venues alongside the festival and events programme.

### **Low Kee Hong: Creative Director**

Kee Hong oversees the Curatorial team at Factory International and alongside John McGrath, the organisation's Artistic Director & Chief Executive, develops Factory International's artistic programme and leads on the programme for Manchester International Festival 2025.

Appointed to the role in early 2022, Kee Hong was previously Head of Theatre, Performing Arts at the West Kowloon Cultural District Authority in Hong Kong, responsible for formulating the district's artistic direction and strategies for Contemporary Performance, Dramatic and Theatre Arts. Earlier roles include Artistic Director and General Manager of the Singapore Arts Festival, Founding Director and General Manager of the Singapore Biennale and Associate Artistic Director of TheatreWorks (Singapore).

Kee Hong oversees the work of the Creative Engagement programme which brings opportunities for people from all backgrounds, ages and from all corners of the city year-round; the international department collaborating with venues, festivals and other cultural organisations globally, whose financial and creative input helps to make MIF and Factory International projects possible and ensures that work made in Manchester goes on to be seen around the world.

### **Hannah Cork: Director of Finance and Resources**

Hannah leads the Finance and Procurement departments using her expertise in acquisition onboarding and governance. As well as overseeing HR she is also the Executive lead on Factory International's Equalities work.

Hannah has a successful career across a range of financial roles within PLC and Private Equity back businesses, and has a proven track record in risk management, business process management, strategic planning, commercial finance and financial governance.

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