



PRESS RELEASE - Wednesday 20 March 2024

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WOW - WOMEN OF THE WORLD AND FACTORY INTERNATIONAL ANNOUNCE FURTHER LINE-UP FOR FIRST EVER WOW FESTIVAL IN MANCHESTER

- **JORDAN STEPHENS, SANDI TOKSVIG AND MEL B TO HEADLINE WOW MANCHESTER WITH JULIA GILLARD, MAXINE PEAKE, ZAWE ASHTON, NAZANIN ZAGHARI-RATCLIFFE, DJ PAULETTE AND CHIMENE SULEYMAN JOINING THE DAY PROGRAMME.**
- **WORLD-CLASS THINKERS ACTIVISTS AND SPEAKERS WILL EXPLORE TOPICS INCLUDING GENTRIFICATION, MENOPAUSE MYTHS, REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE, MASCULINITY, BEING A BASIC WITCH, FOOTBALL'S ABILITY TO TRANSCEND BOUNDARIES, MANCHESTER'S THRIVING MUSIC SCENE AND MUCH MORE.**
- **WOMEN OF THE WORLD WILL TAKE OVER AVIVA STUDIOS FROM 24 - 26 MAY 2024 FOR FIRST EVER MANCHESTER FESTIVAL IN PARTNERSHIP WITH FACTORY INTERNATIONAL.**
- **EVENING EVENTS AND DAY TICKETS NOW ON SALE.**

WOW - Women of the World and Factory International have today announced further line-up for WOW Manchester, which will take place at the city's landmark new cultural space Aviva Studios from 24-26 May. Evening events and Day tickets are now on sale.

Over two days and three evenings the world's biggest, most comprehensive festival celebrating women, girls and non-binary people will bring together inspiring speakers, including Australia's first woman Prime Minister **Julia Gillard**, actors **Maxine Peake** and **Zawe Ashton**, Manchester legend **DJ Paulette**, author **Chimene Suleyman**, and activist **Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe** to find solutions to the pressing issues of gender inequality and celebrate the achievements of women, girls and non-binary people both in the Northwest and globally.

Three headline evening events will take place across the weekend. On Saturday evening, long-time friends and co-conspirators **Sandi Toksvig** and **Jude Kelly CBE** will discuss their years of friendship, during which they have witnessed and been a part of huge global change and experienced personal triumphs as well as devastating setbacks. Sandi and Jude will take

an uplifting look at how their personal lives have affected the work that they do and the power and importance of female friendship.

On Sunday evening musician, broadcaster and actor **Jordan Stephens** will take part in a rare in-conversation drawing on his own experiences of finding fame as a teenager in Rizzle Kicks, navigating success, heartbreak, hedonism, addiction and what happens when it all comes crashing down. Jordan and a special guest host will explore how his relationship with women, men and masculinity has changed and how he's learnt to love himself again.

As previously announced, artist and author, **Melanie Brown** will be joined by journalist and co-author **Louise Gannon** on the Friday evening to celebrate the launch of her critically acclaimed memoir, *Brutally Honest*, sharing an unfiltered discussion on Mel's journey from being a Spice Girl and global icon, to Women's Aid patron and champion for survivors of abuse.

New sessions and speakers have also been announced as part of the daytime programme. Featuring a different line-up each day, audiences will be provided with the opportunity to choose from a wide variety of events and discussions housed within a huge central marketplace as well as taking place throughout Aviva Studios' many different spaces. Household names, local activists and artists will present their big ideas to change the world, whilst inspiring thinkers, activists and world-class speakers will hold frank and lively sessions on everything from the murky history of the fashion industry to urgent conversations around women and conflict with accounts from first hand survivors. Further speakers and sessions to be announced.

Jude Kelly will open the Saturday programme with **Julia Gillard** as they explore the world women, girls and non-binary people face today and look to the future with optimism and hope. Conversations will follow throughout the day spanning a huge range of topics from menopause myths to football, and reproductive justice to being a basic witch.

DJ Paulette, the Hacienda's only woman DJ, will explore the rich tapestry of Manchester music venues from the city's iconic past, many of which have been lost due to gentrification. The session will look at the impact of absent women from these venues, how buildings shape our cultural landscapes and how we can build inclusive spaces that embody local histories, people and surroundings whilst honouring the shape of their futures.

Author **Chimene Suleyman**, whose new memoir *The Chain* starts in an abortion clinic and ends in finding community and sisterhood, will look at how relationships can quickly turn sour and why society allows persistent misogyny to thrive.

Sunday at WOW Manchester will explore topics such as menstrual mapping, gentrification, age, sex, and comedy. Acclaimed actor **Maxine Peake** joins **Jude Kelly** to open the Sunday programme with a session about Manchester, the arts, and what the future looks like for the creative industries.

What a bloody mess! Menstrual mood mapping will offer a fun, calming and creative workshop that explores the different phases and moods of menstrual cycles using collage techniques to chart hormone highs and lows, challenge myths and misogyny, and delve into the depiction of periods in popular culture.

WOW's Marketplace filled with over 50 pop-up stores, experiences, happenings to explore will feature talks, workshops and more led by Greater Manchester's rich and diverse talent.

There will be a showcase of artworks, film, craft and more from across South Asia in partnership with the British Council, and Namibian artist and activist **Ina-Maria Shikongo** will exhibit a specially commissioned new installation commissioned by The Commonwealth Foundation, linking the stories of women and children in the fight for climate justice globally.

Tania Kovats will be creating a new commission curated by Invisible Dust, working in collaboration with Dr Jenna Ashton, Heritage Studies, University of Manchester, her students and Jeanne Robinson, Curator of Entomology at the Hunterian Museum, Glasgow. In dialogue with the natural history collections at the Manchester Museum, Kovats will engage with the legacy of the visionary seventeenth woman naturalist, Maria Sibylla Merian (1647-1717) to produce a new work that relates to our current biodiversity crisis, supported by the prestigious Simon Industrial and Professional (SIP) Fellowship, University of Manchester.

Alongside the Day ticket programmes, WOW will present free events throughout the weekend. Guided history walks highlighting women confined to the footnotes of history will take place, whilst a WOW Pop-Up will host a range of activities in the Social Space including learning how to make dyes from natural ingredients, poetry and WOW bites sessions. WOW's much-loved Speed Mentoring sessions will take place in the lower foyer offering an opportunity to meet and exchange ideas with people from a huge variety of fields, including theatre directors, journalists, scientists, campaigners, artists and WOW speakers.

Jude Kelly CBE, CEO and Founder of The WOW Foundation said: *"For our first festival in the Northwest we're thrilled to be joined at the iconic Aviva Studios by such an inspirational group of friends - old and new - artists, activists, thinkers, speakers who are doing wonderful things both on the ground in Manchester and right across the globe. Together with our partner, Factory International, WOW Manchester will provide a space for everyone to come together in celebration of the rich diversity of stories across the region, to create community, hold frank and determined conversations, and explore meaningful solutions as we continue to work together to achieve a gender equal world."*

John McGrath, Artistic Director and Chief Executive of Factory International said: *"It's been a joy to collaborate with WOW and people from across Greater Manchester to shape the WOW programme, continuing Factory International's co-curation work with schools and residents. As a long-term admirer of WOW festival, I'm delighted that our different spaces at Aviva Studios will be taken over by the energy, ambition and imagination of this extraordinary event. I look forward to many moments of inspiration as some of the most dynamic speakers from the region and across the globe, share their wisdom, experience and vision."*

Run by UK charity The WOW Foundation, 2024 will be the 14th WOW Festival in the UK and the first to be held in Manchester. In 2018, WOW Founder Jude Kelly built on the success of the festival to create UK-based charity The WOW Foundation to run the global WOW movement that believes a gender equal world is urgently needed, possible and desirable. Since the inaugural London Festival in 2010, launched by Kelly at the Southbank Centre, WOW and its partners across the world have reached more than five million people in more than 45 locations across the globe on six continents. Alongside Manchester WOW Festivals

have also taken place this year in locations including Pakistan and Istanbul, with Athens and Kathmandu coming up later this year.

The WOW Foundation is proudly supported by its Global Founding Partner Bloomberg.

LISTINGS

WOW Manchester 2024

24-26 May, Aviva Studios, Water Street, Manchester, M3 4JQ

Day Tickets available for Saturday 25th and Sunday 26th May

All evening events £10-£25

Day Ticket price £15, limited £10 Aviva concession tickets available

FRIDAY 24 MAY

Brutally Honest - An Evening with Mel B

Friday 24 May / 7:30pm, £25 full price; 50% concessions; £10 Aviva tickets

Aviva Studios

BSL Interpreted and Captioned

SATURDAY 25 MAY

Saturday WOW Festival Day Ticket

Saturday 25 May / 10:30am-6pm, £15 Full Price; limited £10 Aviva concession tickets available

Aviva Studios (Many events will be BSL Interpreted and/or Captioned)

An evening with Sandi Toksvig

Saturday 25 May / 6pm, £25 full price; 50% concessions; £10 Aviva tickets

Aviva Studios

BSL Interpreted and Captioned

SUNDAY 26 MAY

Sunday WOW Festival Day Ticket

Sunday 26 May / 10:30am-6pm, £15 Full Price; limited £10 Aviva concession tickets available

Aviva Studios (Many events will be BSL Interpreted and/or Captioned)

Avoidance, Drugs, Heartbreak and Dogs - An Evening with Jordan Stephens

Sunday 26 May / 6pm, £22 full price; £11 concessions; £10 Aviva tickets

Aviva Studios

BSL Interpreted and Captioned

IMAGES

Download images [here](#).

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For further information please contact

Kate Hassell kate@breadandbutterpr.uk

Skye Redman skye@breadandbutterpr.uk

@breadandbutterpr

NOTES TO EDITORS

About

The WOW Foundation was created by Jude Kelly CBE in 2018 to run the global movement that is WOW - Women of the World Festivals. The Festivals began in the UK in 2010, launched by Kelly at the Southbank Centre London, where she was Artistic Director, to celebrate women and girls, taking a frank look at what prevents them from achieving their potential, raising awareness globally of the issues they face, and discussing solutions together.

To date, WOW has reached five million people in 45 locations on six continents, in locations including Australia, Brazil, China, Egypt, Finland, Greece, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Somaliland, the UK and the USA.

Over the last 13 years the Festivals have developed a reputation as a space for world renowned artists, activists, thinkers and performers including Angela Davis, Malala Yousafzai, Annie Lennox, Patrick Stewart, Baroness Doreen Lawrence and Salma Hayek, to come and participate, alongside thousands of women and girls who don't have public profiles but are doing amazing things. WOW provides platforms for people of all kinds, changes attitudes, brings communities together and provides a unique space for people to work together towards gender equity in their own communities. One example of the Festival's impact came in 2015, with the founding of the Women's Equality Party by Sandi Toksvig and Catherine Mayer.

In 2018 Kelly left the Southbank Centre to run The WOW Foundation full time as a charity working to build, convene and sustain a global movement that believes a gender equal world is possible and desirable through festivals and empowering women and girls. The unique festival model creates numerous pathways for participants to take part in WOW projects, amplify their own causes, or start new initiatives which have a wide impact on communities. It is the biggest, most comprehensive and most significant festival dedicated to presenting work by women and promoting equity for women and girls.

WOW Festival was originally produced and presented by Southbank Centre.

The President of WOW - Women of the World is Her Majesty The Queen.

WOW Festivals will be taking place around the world in the next 12 months:

- WOW Athens: 6-8 April 2024
- WOW Rotherham: 11 May 2024
- WOW Australia: October 2024
- WOW Kathmandu: November 2024 tbc
- WOW Baltimore: April 2025 tbc

About Factory International

Factory International commissions, produces and presents a year-round programme of original creative work and special events at Aviva Studios, its landmark new home in Manchester, online, and internationally through its network of co-commissioners and partners. It also stages the city-wide Manchester International Festival every other year.

The design of Aviva Studios is led by Ellen van Loon of the world-leading practice Office for Metropolitan Architecture (OMA). 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.

A unique canvas to make, explore and experiment, audiences can enjoy the broadest range of art forms from major exhibitions and concerts to intimate performances and immersive experiences. The venue's

development is led by Manchester City Council, with backing of £99.05m from HM Government and £7m National Lottery funding from Arts Council England.

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, world-renowned artists from different art forms and backgrounds create dynamic, innovative and forward-thinking new work in venues and spaces across Greater Manchester.

Factory International plays an important role in the lives of Greater Manchester residents, bringing jobs, skills, training and creative opportunities. Through the Factory Academy, Factory International is training the creative workforce of the future, while its pioneering creative engagement and artist development programmes create year-round opportunities for local people to get involved, from participating in flagship commissions to shaping the organisation through involvement in its public forums.

Factory International is an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation.