

Manchester  
International  
Festival  
2021 1–18 July  
mif.co.uk

## Press Release

Embargoed until 00.01am, Wednesday 1 July 2021

# LARGEST EVER PORTRAIT OF BLACK BRITAIN TO LAUNCH AT MANCHESTER INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL

**Artist, photographer, speaker and activist Cephias Williams will present the first phase of Portrait of Black Britain at this year's Manchester International Festival, a project to create the largest ever collection of photographic portraits of Black people living in the UK.**

The first set of portraits of the ongoing series have been commissioned by MIF and will be installed throughout the Manchester Arndale shopping centre during the festival (1-18 July). Following MIF21, Cephias Williams will continue the project to achieve his goal of 1,000 portraits.

Through *Portrait of Black Britain*, Cephias Williams aims to crystallize and amplify the contributions made by Black people living in the UK, not only to make more Black people visible but to give the next generation and the wider society a holistic picture of Black achievements in the UK in the 21st century. *Portrait of Black Britain* is one strand of the Black British Network, launched by Cephias Williams in 2020 as an alliance of business leaders and organisations to dismantle systemic racism and contribute to improving the economic prospects of the Black British community.

*Portrait of Black Britain* follows on from the success of his 2019 portrait series *56 Black Men*.

Cephias Williams said:

*"With the world watching and on a stage such as the Manchester International Festival, I do not only aim to introduce my ambition to create the largest portrait series of Black people in Britain ever taken before, but I will be asking a very important question to the world and leaving a very rich and diverse answer for generations to come, that is, 'What does it actually mean to be Black?'. This is Portrait of Black Britain; this is me taking control of my narrative and asking other Black people to join me in the re-introduction of our presence and stories in the 21st century."*

Commissioned by Manchester International Festival. Produced by Manchester International Festival and The Cephias Williams Company.

MIF21 runs from 1–18 July 2021.

For more details about this year's programme, please visit [mif.co.uk](http://mif.co.uk)

### Listings Information

Date: 1-18 July 2021

Manchester Arndale

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**ENDS**

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**Lauren Butcher**

Download high resolution images [here](#)

## **NOTES TO EDITORS**

### **About Cephias Williams**

Cephias Williams is the photographer and creator behind the ground-breaking 56 Black Men campaign and the founder of The Black British Network. Since launching the campaign on the 23rd of December 2018, it has had both a local and global impact, and has since been featured in The Guardian, The Metro, The Independent, on Channel 5, Sky News, BBC and Aljazeera amongst others, creating both a local and global impact.

In recent years Cephias has been successful in galvanising support for his businesses from key partners and industry leaders including companies such as Accenture, EY, O2 Telefonica and Clear Channel as well as leaders such as, Paul Polman (Ex CEO of Unilever), Simon Pegg and others.

At this time Cephias is focused on a new message towards a wider Black British conversation through The [Black British Network](#). In his recent public letter to his son titled [Letter to Zion](#), Cephias explores a heart-felt message and his thoughts around the much needed change we need to see in the world, with specific reference to the Black community and the need for us to come together to see long lasting change.

### **About Manchester International Festival**

Manchester International Festival (MIF) is an artist-led festival of original, new work and special events reflecting the spectrum of performing arts, visual arts and popular culture. MIF21 takes place from 1 - 18 July 2021.

Staged every two years in Manchester, 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, Philip Glass and Phelim McDermott, David Lynch,

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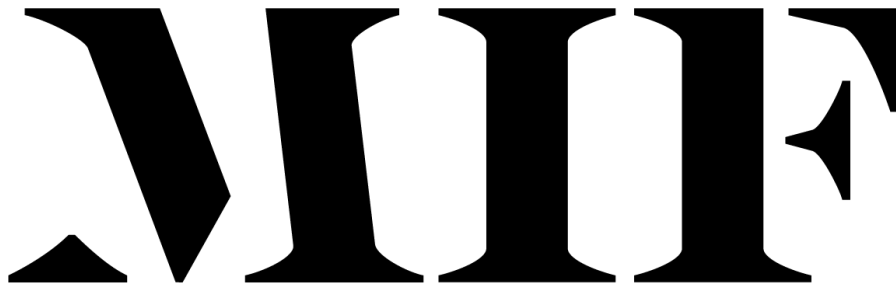
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Wayne McGregor, Steve McQueen, Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy, Yoko Ono, Thomas Ostermeier, Maxine Peake, Punchdrunk, Skepta, The xx, Robert Wilson and Zaha Hadid Architects.

These and other world-renowned artists from different art forms and backgrounds create dynamic, innovative and forward-thinking new work, staged in venues across Greater Manchester – from theatres, galleries and concert halls to railway depots, churches and car parks. MIF works closely with venues, festivals and other cultural organisations globally, whose financial and creative input helps to make many of these projects possible and ensures that work made at MIF goes on to be seen around the world.

MIF supports a year-round Creative Engagement programme, bringing opportunities for people from all backgrounds, ages and from all corners of the city to get involved during the Festival and year-round, as volunteers, as participants in shows, through skills development and a host of creative activities, such as Festival in My House.

MIF will also run The Factory, the new landmark cultural space currently being built in the heart of Manchester and designed by the internationally-renowned architect Ellen van Loon of Rem Koolhaas' OMA. The Factory will commission, present and produce one of Europe's most ambitious and adventurous year-round creative programmes, featuring bold new work from the world's greatest artists and offering a space to create, invent and play.

Attracting up to 850,000 visitors annually, The Factory will add up to £1.1 billion to the economy over a decade and create up to 1,500 direct and indirect jobs. Its pioneering programme of skills, training and engagement will benefit local people and the next generation of creative talent from across the city, whilst apprenticeships and trainee schemes are already underway during the construction phase.

MIF's Artistic Director and Chief Executive is John McGrath.

[mif.co.uk](http://mif.co.uk)

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