



Press Release
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INTERNATIONAL FOOTBALLERS AND ARTISTS COME TOGETHER FOR MANCHESTER INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL

Eric Cantona, Edgar Davids and Ella Toone among footballers creating work for exhibition *Football City, Art United*.

Artists include Alvaro Barrington, Stefano Boeri, Ryan Gander, Suzanne Lacy, Philippe Parreno and Rose Wylie

Football City, Art United. features newly created artworks by 11 pairings of internationally renowned artists and footballers for an ambitious exhibition as part of Manchester International Festival 2025 (MIF25). Together, they step into each other's creative fields to explore what art and football can learn from each other. The exhibition will be at Aviva Studios until 24 August 2025.

From interactive play arenas and sound installations to manga and sculpture, *Football City, Art United*. expands the worlds of art and football and the cultural contributions both make to our daily lives. A wall of vertical video screens will showcase the journeys that the artists and footballers have been on to create the work, offering audiences a behind-the-scenes look into the making of the exhibition.

The project is co-curated by World Cup and Champions League winner Juan Mata, renowned curator and Serpentine Artistic Director Hans Ulrich Obrist and curator, filmmaker and writer Josh Willdigg, and co-developed with Holly Shuttleworth.

The artists and footballers are:

Alvaro Barrington and Raí

Raí (2025) and The Field (after Raí) (2025)

London-based artist Alvaro Barrington and Brazilian footballer Raí come together to explore their shared experiences of community in sport and the multi-faceted purposes it can serve. *Raí* is a large green felt banner that stretches between goalposts high in the gallery space, creating a sense of movement that celebrates the dynamism of football and its rituals. *The Field (after Raí)* is a painting by Barrington that highlights the energy of the game.

Stefano Boeri, Sandro Mazzola and Eduardo Terrazas

The Playmaker (2025)

Architect and urbanist Stefano Boeri, of Italian practice Stefano Boeri Architetti, and Italian footballer Sandro Mazzola invite visitors to take on the role of the footballer in *The*

Playmaker. The duo is joined by multidisciplinary Mexican artist and architect Eduardo Terrazas, who collaborates by designing a new work for the floor of the installation. The interactive playground is made up of a constellation of pods, tunnels and holes inspired by Mazzola's most iconic moves. Visitors are invited to take a shot to re-enact Mazzola's career-defining goals or invent new ones - passing, shooting and weaving through the space as they choose.

Ryan Gander and Eric Cantona

Privileges of Hindsight (2025)

British conceptual artist Ryan Gander and the French footballer, actor, musician and Manchester United icon Eric Cantona explore the effects of fame on players. Their work *Privileges of Hindsight* is comprised of three distinct parts; an automated spotlight that will randomly select and follow an audience member as they make their way through the exhibition, casting them in the isolating glare of celebrity; *Le Temps Passe*, a song written by Cantona and translated into English from French, will play at set intervals performed by Lady Sir; and a limited number of match tickets from Cantona's final Premier League appearance for Manchester United at Old Trafford in 1997 will be handed out to every 100th visitor, each inscribed with a message written by Cantona.

Keiken and Ella Toone

The Divine Puppeteer (2025)

The Berlin and London-based artist collective Keiken team up with Manchester United and England star Ella Toone to explore what football means to her. Visitors are invited to step onto a podium and 'wear' a large hanging mask inspired by Toone's spirit animal, the Shetland pony. When wearing the mask they will hear Toone discussing life on and off the pitch, including her thoughts on fate, connection, routine and the importance of introspection during transitions in life. The work also includes her late father's favourite song *Sweet Caroline* by Neil Diamond, which is softly hummed within the soundscape.

Suzanne Lacy, Vivianne Miedema and Ali Riley

What do women (footballers) want? (2025)

American artist and educator Suzanne Lacy, Manchester City and Netherlands star Vivianne Miedema and Angel City Football Club and New Zealand captain Ali Riley have created a new short film exploring football's complex relationship with gender. Taking a question-driven approach, Lacy filmed conversations with professional players and grassroots women's teams in Manchester and Los Angeles, creating space for players to collectively reflect on their experiences – from workplace dynamics to relationships with fans, and the complicated visibility of women's football within a male-dominated industry.

Jill Mulleady, inspired by Diego Maradona

La Mano de Dios (2025) and Diego (2025)

Mulleady's installation features a holographic illusion of Maradona singing Rodrigo's iconic homage, "La Mano de Dios", alongside a painting that depicts a portrait of the footballer in her signature dreamlike pictorial style. To create the holographic illusion, Mulleady first emulated the gestures of Diego Maradona. Her performance was then transformed through postproduction to embody the digitally generated body of Maradona. This seamless fusion of movement and technology has created a captivating tribute, capturing not exactly Maradona himself but a portrait of the legendary player as he exists in the popular unconscious.

Chikyuu no Osakana Ponchan and Shinji Kagawa
Intangibles – Running Through Time (2025)

Japanese manga artist Chikyuu no Osakana Ponchan and former Manchester United and Japan player Shinji Kagawa collaborate on a manga. It blends real moments from Kagawa's life and career with moments of fantasy and shared history, exploring the mythology of the beautiful game.

Philippe Parreno, Marco Perego and Zoe Saldaña
Forget the Ball and Keep Playing (2025)

Philippe Parreno and Marco Perego collaborate on a video game project titled *Forget the Ball and Keep Playing* inviting guest performers worldwide to sketch floor plans of the homes and neighbourhoods where they grew up. These sketches form a collective, fragmented archive from which seemingly incoherent words and narratives emerge. Video game players navigate these spaces through unexpected sequences of words, experiencing them as echoes of previously played worlds.

As the project grows, contributions from different guests around the world will enrich this fragmented archive, enabling gamers to journey through layers of memory and imagination. In Manchester, Parreno and Perego feature the personal geography of Zoe Saldaña.

Paul Pfeiffer and Edgar Davids
Crowds and Power (2025)

American sculptor and video artist Paul Pfeiffer collaborates with Dutch ex-footballer and photographic artist Edgar Davids to create an installation that serves as the immersive entrance to the exhibition. The installation takes the form of a tunnel where sound, vibration and light transport visitors to the world between the locker room and the pitch. The sound is drawn from a mix of recordings from the players' point of view, including the roar of the crowd and different football chants. The installation takes inspiration from iconic stadiums like San Siro (Milan) and explores the anticipation and adrenaline-rush of stepping onto the pitch, as well as the mental and emotional journey of individual football players.

Bárbara Sánchez-Kane and Jorge Campos
Brody (2025)

Mexican sculptor and fashion designer Bárbara Sánchez-Kane and Mexican goalkeeper Jorge Campos have created a flamboyant mascot named *Brody*. Drawing from Campos' acrobatic playing style, self-designed neon kits, and off-field passion for surfing, *Brody* is both a tribute to and a celebration of the irreverent spirit and visual flamboyance of 1990s Mexican football. Every detail of the sculpture, from the oversized jerseys to good-luck charms, goalkeeper gloves to Acapulco huaraches, becomes part of a visual spell, echoing the way Campos transformed the football pitch into a stage of self-expression.

Rose Wylie and Lotte Wubben-Moy
Lotte (2025) and Woman Footballer (2019)

British artist Rose Wylie collaborates with Arsenal and England defender Lotte Wubben-Moy in a creative relay between the football pitch and the studio. Wubben-Moy shared an image diary and behind-the-scenes photos from training, match days and daily life with Wylie, which are transformed into a series of vibrant drawings and a painting. The show also includes the coloured pencil and collage on paper *Woman Footballer (2019)*, which can be seen as a series of billboards on Water Street during *Football City, Art United*. as a dedication to the on-going support and visibility of women's football.

Low Kee Hong, Creative Director of Factory International and MIF, said:

“Football City, Art United. brings together a full team of 11 pairings of footballers and artists. Sometimes playful, sometimes thought-provoking, in this exhibition Juan Mata, Hans Ulrich Obrist and Josh Willdigg have created a space for footballers and artists to get to know each others’ very unique worlds, and in doing so create new works that give audiences insight into both.”

Juan Mata, Footballer and Co-Curator, said:

*“Working with Tino Seghal as part of Manchester International Festival 2023 was an incredible experience, and I wanted more footballers to have the chance to work with artists. The result is the work in this exciting group show. The worlds of football and art can both be beautiful, complicated and powerful; something that is explored through these collaborations. We can’t wait for people to experience *Football Art, City United.* a real collaboration of two worlds.”*

Hans Ulrich Obrist, Serpentine Artistic Director and Co-Curator, said:

“Football City, Art United. is an urgent and global dialogue that has the capacity to reach people that may never step foot in a gallery or a stadium. Football is for everyone. Art is for everyone. We hope to create a bridge full of possibility for Manchester and beyond.”

Josh Willdigg, Filmmaker, Writer and Co-Curator, said:

“At their best, these worlds we are fortunate enough to play within meet in the middle at moments of wondrous epiphany. The greatest difference between the imagination fuel provided by a great painting or goal, song or skill move, film or diving save, are the permissions we give ourselves to prescribe meaning to them. All are sources of endless inspiration. All can change or even save a life. And of course, all are works of art.”

*Football City, Art United. began at MIF23 as *The Trequartista – Art and Football United.* It featured a world premiere of Tino Seghal's playful work *This entry* at the National Football Museum and the Whitworth, made in collaboration with Juan Mata.*

Commissioned by Factory International, TO Live and ARTRA. Produced by Factory International.

Common Goal is a partner for *Football City, Art United.*

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Notes to Editors:

About Factory International

Factory International is the organisation behind Manchester International Festival and the city’s landmark cultural space, Aviva Studios. Factory International commissions, produces and presents a year-round programme of original creative work and special events at Aviva Studios, online, and internationally through its network of co-commissioners and partners. It also stages the city-wide Manchester International Festival (MIF) every other year.

MIF is 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, the festival invites world-renowned artists from different art forms and backgrounds to create dynamic, innovative and forward-thinking new work in venues and

spaces across Greater Manchester. Previous artists include, Björk, Jeremy Deller, Akram Khan, Yayoi Kusama, David Lynch, Wayne McGregor, Steve McQueen, Yoko Ono, Maxine Peake, Skepta, and The xx.

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.

Aviva Studios was designed by the world-leading practice Office for Metropolitan Architecture (OMA), with Ellen van Loon as lead architect – their first major public building in the UK. Its development was led by Manchester City Council, with backing from HM Government and National Lottery funding from Arts Council England.

Factory International is an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation.

factoryinternational.org

About TO Live

TO Live is one of Canada's largest multi-arts organizations, operating three iconic venues: Meridian Hall, St. Lawrence Centre for the Arts, and Meridian Arts Centre. In addition, TO Live presents a full range of performing arts, theatrical, and concert events at these venues in both downtown and uptown Toronto. With these two hubs of creativity and content creation, TO Live has a unique place and perspective to activate creative spaces by inspiring local and international artists, connecting audiences, stimulating new ideas, and elevating artistic potential, becoming a catalyst for creative expression that is reflective of Toronto's diversity.

About Common Goal

Common Goal activates the power of football to bring people together and deliver positive society-wide change. As a football-focused network we work to connect the cultural and financial influence of the football industry with local organisations all around the world that use the beautiful game to dismantle inequalities and build a better future for all. Our network works in more than 200 communities and over 90 countries to deliver change through football to young people. With decades of work in the field of football for good, we have seen that real, transformative impact is possible, through the shared joy that football brings.

