



## Press Release

6 February 2026

### **FACTORY INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATES WITH PARTNERS ACROSS THE GLOBE TO OFFER INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR ARTISTS AND CREATIVE PROFESSIONALS**

- A new partnership between Factory International and Sacatar Institute offers multi-disciplinary artist Omid Asadi a transformational artist residency in Bahia, Brazil
- The Factory International x EUNIC Creative Producers Programme in collaboration with the EU National Institutes of Culture Network welcomes creative producers from regions across Europe to Manchester for creative development and cultural exchange
- Factory International and British Council's Global Creative Producer Programme welcomes the Cohort's next visit to Manchester in June-July 2026 for collaborative knowledge sharing and networking

As part of **Factory International's** commitment to supporting artists and arts professionals at different stages of their careers, the organisation is working in partnership with international institutions and networks to create and build international opportunities for development and connection.

**John McGrath, Artistic Director and Chief Executive at Factory International, said:** *"Factory International is one of the UK's largest cultural exporters, with our projects having been presented in over 35 countries and on every continent except Antarctica. Our international development opportunities go hand-in-hand with this; supporting artists to think about their work and creative practices on an international scale, and supporting the development and connection of producers and creative leaders from across the globe. We're thrilled to work with partners at Sacatar, EUNIC and British Council to enable these opportunities to share knowledge, create networks and build skills."*

In 2025, Factory International partnered with **Sacatar Institute** to offer nine-week transformational artist residencies in Bahia, Brazil. **Omid Asadi**, the inaugural artist selected as part of the partnership, completed his residency in January. He was selected following an open call out for North West artists.

Omid is a British-Iranian multidisciplinary artist based in Manchester whose work revolves around the concept of contrast. He creates thought-provoking installations examining poignant issues such as immigration, identity, environment and memory. During his residency in Brazil he used place-based methodology to explore connections between his hometown of Abadan, Iran and Bahia.

**Omid Asadi said:** *“At this stage in my career, the residency has been particularly significant. Being in Brazil, within a rich cultural context, has allowed me to engage deeply with and learn from local culture while expanding my professional network. The resources and critical framework of the programme have supported the development of my practice and positioned it within broader cultural and institutional dialogues. I hope this kind of relationship between Manchester and strong international art organisations continues, fostering ongoing exchange and collaboration. Once again, I would like to thank Factory International and the Sacatar Institute for selecting me for this residency.*

The Sacatar Institute is Brazil's oldest continuously operating artist residency, having hosted over 500 artists from 70+ countries across diverse disciplines and generations since 2001. Distinguished by its inter-disciplinary, open-ended approach, Sacatar emphasizes cultural immersion and creative exploration in Bahia, allowing artists to shape their own experience.

**Felix Toro, Executive Director at Sacatar Institute said:** *“Sacatar and Factory International are both deeply rooted in their territories (Bahia and Manchester, respectively), each located outside their countries' main economic centers, yet with extraordinary international presences. Their roles are complementary: Factory International supports artists in realizing projects and productions, while Sacatar operates earlier in the artistic process, as a space for research, inspiration, experimentation, and the emergence of new ideas and collaborations.*

*The partnership also resonates historically and politically. Manchester and Bahia sit at opposite (but often complementary) points of the colonial trade routes, yet share striking parallels across modern history. As a result, artists working in both contexts are often responding to overlapping urgencies, such as migration, climate, identity, resistance, future and tradition, and more.*

*Hosting Omid Asadi as the first Factory International artist at Sacatar has highlighted the potential of this collaboration. Shaped by experiences in Iran and the UK, Omid immersed himself fully in Bahia, bringing new perspectives to themes deeply rooted in the region. His research here has drawn unexpected connections between religious expressions in Bahia and Iran, and established striking parallels between two products of Empire, sugar and oil.*

*We are excited to see how the work he has begun at Sacatar will continue to evolve. This residency marks the beginning of what we hope will become a broader and sustained partnership between our organizations; and, by extension, a closer relationship between our territories.”*

Factory International is also committed to supporting the next generation of arts professionals both in the UK and internationally by inviting creative producers to Manchester for unique development and networking opportunities through their Creative Producer Development Programmes.

In collaboration with **EUNIC London**, the **Factory International x EUNIC Creative Producer's Programme** invites up to 14 creative producers to attend networking, performance and learning events at Factory International's home in Aviva Studios, and surrounding venues. The programme is intended to enhance cultural dialogue and artistic collaboration between EU and the UK and is currently open to applications from Creative Producers in Austria, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Lithuania, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal and Sweden. Applications close on 9 February 2026 at 12noon.

EUNIC London is the network of the cultural institutes and embassies from the member states of the European Union in London. A branch of EUNIC Global, the London network was established in 2007 and presently has 37 members who share knowledge and resources in order to promote greater cooperation and develop partnerships between European nations and UK organisations.

**Nicolas Ehler, Director of Goethe-Institut London and EUNIC London Co-President said:** *“At a time when sustained cultural dialogue between the European Union and the UK is more vital than ever, this partnership between EUNIC London (European Union National Institutes for Culture) with Factory International exemplifies the power of collaboration to bridge contexts, practices, and perspectives. By bringing together creative producers from across EU countries and the UK, the program creates a shared space for exchange, experimentation, and the building of long-term professional relationships. Working with an ambitious and forward-thinking partner such as Factory International allows us to reimagine how cultural institutions can collectively shape a more connected, resilient, and internationally engaged creative landscape across borders.”*

In partnership with the **British Council**, the **Global Creative Producers Programme** is an international leadership project taking place over two years. Focusing on the development of creative producers who represent the future of global creative sectors and promoting exchange between British and international cultural leaders, creative producers nominated by their regional British Council visit the UK twice over the two-year period to build connections, upskill and understand the structures and functions of creative and cultural industries in the UK.

Last year, the second cohort of 12 creative producers attended **Manchester International Festival** (MIF25), leveraging on Factory International's national and international prominence to tap into an exclusive network of over 150 international artistic directors and presenters, connect with organisations and artists across the North West and meet with artists from a wide variety of artforms. They will return to Manchester for their second visit from 25<sup>th</sup> June – 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2026.

**Vishruti Bindal, co-founder of Linear Festivals, India and cohort member, said:** *“Experiencing the Manchester International Festival as a part of the Creative Producer's programme gave me a deeper appreciation for what it means to build ambitious, community-rooted projects at scale. From learning about Aviva Studios to visiting independent initiatives Manchester, Salford and Bradford, I was inspired by the generosity, trust, and openness shown to us.”*

**Joel Mills, Director Music, British Council said:** *“The Global Creative Producers programme led by Factory International brought together a fantastic cohort of producers from around the world. Michelle Rocha and the Factory International team designed a brilliant programme aimed at building a strong network of producers interested in cross-disciplinary collaboration. The participants were able to experience large scale work, exchange insights and found both inspiration and meaningful new relationships to strengthen the foundations of their own professional practice.”*

**ENDS**

**[DOWNLOAD IMAGES HERE](#)**

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## **NOTES TO EDITORS:**

### **ABOUT SACATAR INSTITUTE**

Founded in 2001, the Sacatar Institute is the oldest continuously operating artist residency in Brazil. Since its creation, Sacatar has hosted more than 500 artists from all artistic disciplines, coming from more than 70 countries.

Sacatar stands out from other residencies for its interdisciplinarity reach – always bringing together artists from various creative disciplines within the same cohort. It also distinguishes itself by welcoming artists not only from around the world but also from different generations.

Another defining feature is its open-ended approach, prioritizing process and immersion in Bahian culture and the local art scene over the production of finished works. For this reason, Sacatar does not require participants to produce any final outcome such as an artwork or exhibition. Instead, artists are free to explore, experiment, and, most importantly, be affected and transformed by their experience in Bahia.

Located on the island of Itaparica, across the bay from Salvador, Sacatar offers a residency experience that offers time in the studio, engagement with the nature, culture and communities of Itaparica, and immersion in Salvador's rich art scene. How artists choose to balance these elements is entirely up to them.

### **ABOUT EUNIC LONDON**

EUNIC London (European Union National Institutes for Culture) is the network of the cultural institutes and embassies from the member states of the European Union in London. A branch of [EUNIC Global](#), the London network was established in 2007 and presently has 37 members who share knowledge and resources in order to promote greater cooperation and develop partnerships between European nations and [UK organisations](#).

### **ABOUT BRITISH COUNCIL**

The British Council is the UK's international culture and education organisation. We support peace and prosperity by building connections, understanding and trust between people in the UK and countries worldwide.

By connecting the UK's expertise in arts and culture, education and the English language to our global presence and unparalleled networks, we unlock potential and transform lives. We help artists to share their distinctive voices. We provide educators with the tools to shape generations. We give young people the confidence to shine.

For almost a century, it's been our mission to build a world where people connect across borders, and where trust is the foundation for lasting change. A world where opportunities are limitless.

### **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.

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.

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.

Ultra-flexible in design, 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.

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.

[factoryinternational.org](http://factoryinternational.org)

PUBLIC SECTOR FUNDERS



Aviva Studios  
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