

LARGEST UK EXHIBITION BY SOUTH AFRICAN ARTIST KEMANG WA LEHULERE

South African artist Kemang Wa Lehulere presents *I Love You Too* at this year’s Manchester International Festival (1-18 July 2021), his largest UK exhibition to date presented alongside the publication of a new book of love letters.

Wa Lehulere spent MIF19 in residence in Manchester’s network of libraries and has created new work inspired by the time he spent in the city. Over 300 items will be installed in the grand Reading Room at Manchester Central Library. Wa Lehulere is known for the use of found materials in his work, referring to his experiences growing up in apartheid South Africa. The sculptures created for Manchester include tyres, shoelaces and wood salvaged from school desks.

At the start of 2021, Wa Lehulere invited more than 100 people from across Manchester to share their love stories: to people, to places, even to possessions. Through a series of online and in-person meetings, a group of 11 Manchester writers put their words on to the page. The result is *I* *Love You Too*, a powerful and personal book of love letters rooted in the city.This compilation will be launched during MIF21 and the book will become a permanent part of Manchester Libraries’ collection.

Manchester International Festival Artistic Director & Chief Executive, John McGrath said:

*"Kemang is first and foremost an activist artist and thinker, deeply embedded in the narratives of his homeland and wide-ranging in his practice across performance, film and installation. It felt important, therefore, for him to engage in a dialogue with the locality of Manchester.*

*Kemang has a longstanding interest in the history of community libraries in South Africa and the meaning of library systems, and access to ideas and writing, in differing societies. It was during his MIF19 residency that he articulated the initial idea for I Love You Too: a project from a visual artist focused on the writing of letters, shifting the focus from how a community uses a library to how it creates one. And now here it is: with Manchester the first, we hope, in a series of books emerging from cities across the world under Kemang’s guidance.”*

Commissioned and produced by Manchester International Festival in partnership with Library Live and Creative Spaces, Manchester Libraries cultural programmes and supported by Arts Council England, Lottery funding.

**Listings information:**

Date: 2-10 July 2021

Manchester Central Library

Free but ticketed

The book is available to buy throughout the Festival from Manchester Central Library and online via www.mif.co.uk

Commissioned by Manchester International Festival and premiering at MIF21, which runs from 1–18 July 2021.

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

**ENDS**

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Download high resolution images [here](https://press.mif.co.uk/)

**NOTES TO EDITORS**

**Kemang Wa Lehulere** (b.1984, Cape Town, South Africa) was Deutsche Bank’s Artist of the Year 2017, with a solo exhibition travelling from the Deutsche Bank KunstHalle, Berlin, to MAXXI, Rome, and Pasquart Art Centre, Biel. Other solo shows have taken place at the Art Institute of Chicago (2016) and Gasworks, London (2015). Recently, Wa Lehulere has featured in the 14th Sharjah Biennale (2019); the 11th Mercosul Biennial (2018); Performa 17, New York (2017); the 15th Istanbul Biennial (2017); and Art/Afrique, le nouvel atelier, Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris (2017). Wa Lehulere was one of two young artists awarded the 15th Baloise Art Prize at Art Basel in 2013; he won the first International Tiberius Art Award Dresden in 2014, the Standard Bank Young Artist award in 2015 and the fourth Malcolm McLaren Award, presented by Performa, in 2017.

**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, 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](https://mif.co.uk)