

**LARGEST EVER PORTRAIT OF BLACK BRITAIN**

**TO LAUNCH AT MIF**

Cephas Williams, founder of the *Black British Network* will present the first phase of *Portrait of Black Britain* at Manchester Arndale, as part of this year's Manchester International Festival (MIF).

The project brings together a large collection of photographic portraits of Black people living in the UK.

MIF have co-commissioned 116 dynamic images that will be on display throughout the month of July. The ongoing series will be exhibited at Manchester Arndale during the festival (1-18 July). Following MIF21, Cephas Williams is looking for more commissioners to continue the work and achieve his goal of 1,000 portraits.

Through *Portrait of Black Britain*, Cephas Williams aims to 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.

Visitors to the Centre can view the portraits in a range of locations, with the display starting outside on the steps opposite Exchange Square, leading inside the Centre to Exchange Court and following with the high-level portraits leading up to the Arndale Market.

Cephas 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.”*

For more information on Cephas Williams and The Black British Network visit [www.cephaswilliams.com](http://www.cephaswilliams.com)

Co-commissioned by Manchester International Festival. Produced by Manchester International Festival and The Cephas Williams Company.

MIF21 runs from 1–18 July 2021.

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

**Listings Information**

Date: 1-18 July 2021

Manchester Arndale

Free

**ENDS**

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

**NOTES TO EDITORS**

**About Cephas Williams**

Cephas Williams is the creator behind the ground-breaking 56 Black Men campaign and the founder of The Black British Network. Since launching the campaign 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 Cephas 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 Cephas is focused on a new message towards a wider Black British conversation through The [Black British Network](http://www.blackbritishnetwork.com/). In his recent public letter to his son titled [Letter to Zion](http://www.lettertozion.com/), Cephas 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, 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)