



Press Release

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MANCHESTER'S LANDMARK NEW CULTURAL SPACE AVIVA STUDIOS CELEBRATES FIRST ANNIVERSARY

Manchester's landmark new cultural space, Aviva Studios, home of Factory International, celebrates its first year of opening on **Friday 18 October 2024**.

With more than **700,000 visitors** welcomed through its doors and thousands of people from the region benefitting from its award-winning training and artist development opportunities, the opening year has seen the OMA-designed, ultra-flexible venue wow audiences and critics alike - culminating in TIME magazine's naming of Aviva Studios this summer as one of the **100 best places to visit** in the world.

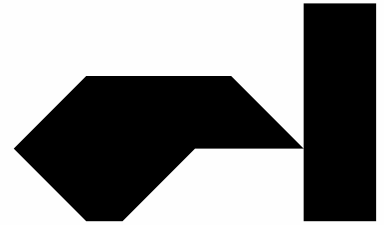
The official opening production – the Matrix-inspired *Free Your Mind* created by **Danny Boyle, Es Devlin, Boy Blue co-founders Kenrick 'H2O' Sandy and Michael 'Mikey J' Asante and Sabrina Mahfouz** - garnered attention globally and headlines across the world. Alongside other programme highlights such as the spectacular summer curtain raiser, **Yayoi Kusama's** *You Me and the Balloons*, a three-day residency from cultural icon and pop superstar and **Janelle Monáe**, the opening year has firmly established the venue's reputation for producing work of a unique scale and ambition, and further cemented Manchester's position as a global leader for arts and culture. Alongside, the public programme has seen the ground floor Social become a hub for a host of activities - many of them free - such as family-friendly workshops, music and more.

With nearly two thirds of audiences from Greater Manchester, Aviva Studios has been warmly embraced locally, while the programme has also attracted significant audiences from across the UK - demonstrating that its reach and reputation goes far beyond Manchester alone. In the opening year **81% of audiences** from outside the area specifically visited Manchester to come to Aviva Studios.

Factory International has also been delivering on its ambitions to reach as wide a range of audiences as possible, particularly those underrepresented in traditional arts audiences, through its network of partners and neighbourhood organisers. **One in five** audience members surveyed in the opening year identified as being from a **global majority**, and over **21,000 Aviva £10 tickets** have been accessed as part of the organisation's affordable ticket strategy, helping to ensure that high-quality cultural experiences are accessible to everyone, regardless of their economic circumstances.

A key focus for Factory International is training the creative workforce of the future through the Factory Academy, ensuring a pipeline of talent into the arts for generations to come. **1000 Greater Manchester** residents have graduated from Factory Academy courses to date, with **100 Factory Academy alumni** taking on roles at Factory International. Delivering on the organisation's ambitions

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to diversify the future of the sector, **80% of Factory Academy graduates** declared a characteristic that was underrepresented in the industry. This success has been recognised nationally with Factory Academy awarded Training Initiative of the Year and Large Employer of the Year at the 2024 British Training Awards.

Central to Factory International's mission is empowering local residents through co-curation and skills development. Over **13,000 Greater Manchester residents** took part in public engagement events since opening, including over 100 people from across the region who participated in *Free Your Mind*. As part of the opening celebrations, *The Welcome* – a co-curated programme of work developed with Greater Manchester residents aged 17 to 70 welcomed over **11,000 visitors** during its nine-day run.

Another ambition is ensuring that Aviva Studios is a space where creativity is nurtured at all ages. Factory International has worked with over **25,000 children and young people** through family-friendly events and activities at Aviva Studios including free workshops as part of the public programme, as well as through relationships with early years centres, schools, colleges, the city's universities, youth zones and community hubs. Highlights have included a creative fashion project responding to the iconic style of **Yayoi Kusama** culminating in a **fashion show** on Festival Square, and a week-long takeover of the building by **young people** from five partner schools, alongside a programme of workshops, performances and exhibits co-curated by a **collective of 20 young people**.

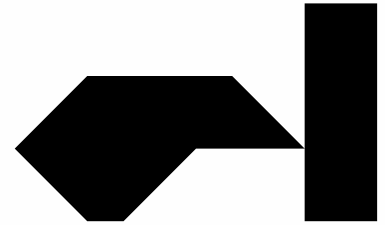
Reflecting its commitment to developing the next generation of creative talent, particularly those most underrepresented in the sector, **over 100 artists** from the region have been given platforms to develop and learn, and hundreds more have benefitted from opportunities to network, share and collaborate. Artist development programmes include the annual **Factory Fellowship** which gives emerging artists the chance to learn alongside international creatives by working on a production; **Artist Takeovers**, which offers the chance to experiment on a large scale in Aviva Studios' flexible spaces; and **Factory Sounds**, which offers music creatives industry insights, peer to peer learning and a paid gig opportunity.

Commercial partnerships with major companies such as **Aviva** - one of the most significant investments from the corporate sector into the arts in the UK – are creating new models for funding the arts and powering the future of the sector. This year also saw major partnerships with the likes of **MUBI** and **adidas** – the latter of which brought young people from across Manchester to the venue's public spaces through the creation of a skate park, including a launch event featuring internationally-renowned skateboarders.

Aviva Studios has also been welcomed as a major addition to the city's thriving music scene - with its uniquely flexible space home to the largest permanently installed D&B Soundscape system in the North. Since opening, Aviva Studios has played host to the likes of **Johnny Marr**, who presented two nights of music with an orchestra of northern musicians; **Underworld**, which saw the electronic

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pioneers close up their European tour with two nights in Manchester and **Angélique Kidjo's** first show in the city for a decade. Alongside upcoming highlights such as **Romy's** celebratory dancefloor show *Club Mid Air* (13 Dec) and **Fontaines D.C.**, who play a sold out three-night run in support of their fourth album *Romance* (29, 30 November, 1 December), the venue is also playing a crucial role in a number of high profile music events for the city including *Womex 24*, and an exhibition as part of *MTV Music* week, having successfully hosted music conference *Beyond the Music* last week.

Factory International's impact also continues to expand internationally with many productions created in Manchester going on to be showcased around the world – this year saw the number of people who have now seen Factory International productions **overseas reach 1.8 million**, with productions in every continent except Antarctica.

Innovation in digital output has also generated significant online audiences. This year saw the launch of *Factory+*, an online platform for digital content, artworks, games and more. From visiting artists in their studio to going behind the scenes of a huge production, its content gives audiences an insight into life in the creative industries. Since opening there have been **over 3m visits** to Factory International's website, and **7m video views** across all channels.

Headline results include:

- Since it opened, Aviva Studios has attracted **703,735** visitors to Aviva Studios.
- Over **21,000 AVIVA £10 tickets** have been issued since launching the affordable ticket scheme, helping to ensure that the programme is accessible to all.
- **1000 people** from Greater Manchester have been trained to take up jobs in the creative industries having graduated from Factory Academy's free courses with **100 alumni** going on to paid roles at Factory International and many more taking up employment at the likes of Studio Lambert, Rochdale Development agency, Science and Industry Museum, Rio Ferdinand Foundation, Manchester Youth Zone, Odd Arts and more.
- Delivering on the organisation's ambitions to diversify the future of the sector, **80% of Factory Academy graduates** declared a characteristic that was underrepresented in the industry.
- **102 artists from the North of England** have benefitted from development opportunities including Factory Fellows, Artist Takeovers and Factory Sounds, networking opportunities and more.
- **13,174 people** from Greater Manchester have taken part in Factory International engagement events and programme including over 100 Greater Manchester residents who participated in the Aviva Studios official opening production, *Free Your Mind* in October 2023.
- The Welcome– a co-curated programme of work developed over two years with Greater Manchester residents welcomed over **11,000 visitors** over nine days.
- Factory International has worked with over **25,000 children and young people** through family-friendly events and activities as part of the public programme, as well as through

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relationships with early years centres, schools, colleges, the city's universities, youth zones and community hubs.

- For *You Me and the Balloons*, **12,500 children** accessed free workshops, and over **6,500** children participated in schools activities in the community.
- As part of Luke Jerram's major new artwork *First Breath*, which saw bright pulsing beams of light mark the births of hundreds of babies across Greater Manchester, **177 babies** born in January 2023 and their families have received lifetime membership to Factory International as part of long-term programme of free activities and opportunities exploring how art can be woven into daily family life.
- **549 volunteers** from across the region helped make Factory International's opening year a success, getting involved in everything from supporting shows behind the scenes, to being the face of the venue.

Following the success of the programme to date, upcoming highlights include **Laurie's Anderson's** *ARK: United States Part 5* will see the pioneering artist bring together new music and her uniquely visual storytelling to create a darkly comic ode to the end of the world (12-24 Nov 2024), and Lightroom's **David Hockney** blockbuster immersive retrospective *Bigger & Closer (not smaller & further away)* (10 Dec 2024 – 25 Jan 2025).

Ahead of the anniversary, Factory International also announced details of its 2025 season including: *Hamlet Hail to the Thief*, which will see Shakespeare's words illuminated by **Radiohead's** seminal album *Hail to the Thief* re-worked by **Thom Yorke** and performed live by a cast of musicians and actors (27 April – 18 May 2025); the world premiere of *Figures in Extinction* (18-22 Feb 2025), the final instalment of **Simon McBurney and Crystal Pite's** award-winning dance trilogy presented by Nederlands Dans Theater (NDT) and Complicité; the return of Manchester International Festival across the city (3-20 July 2025) and the world premiere of a daring large-scale performance by world-renowned artist **Marina Abramović** (autumn 2025).

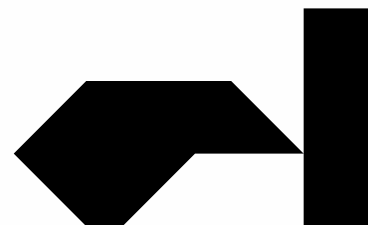
John McGrath, Artistic Director & Chief Executive, Factory International said: "*We are immensely proud of everything that has been achieved in our first year at Aviva Studios. At every stage we have focused on creating new possibilities - from our mind-blowing opening production *Free Your Mind*, to the creation of a pipeline of diverse talent into the arts for generations to come, to new partnerships that have introduced new audiences and new revenue streams. We can't wait to build on that success over the coming months and years as we continue to invite artists, audiences and communities to explore their most exciting ambitions.*"

Councillor Bev Craig, Leader of Manchester City Council, said: "*In its first year of opening Aviva Studios has changed the cultural landscape of Manchester and the North forever with a venue that is a match and more for cultural venues anywhere in the world.*"

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"It is also leading the way in terms of the demonstrable impact it's having on providing jobs, training and other opportunities for people of all ages and backgrounds to get involved, and is fast proving itself to be a game-changing asset both culturally and economically to the city."

Darren Henley, Chief Executive, Arts Council England *"The first 12 months of Aviva Studios' life have been marked by a level of creativity, flair and ambition that's been noticed not only here in Manchester, but also on the national and international stage. Factory International is one of our biggest National Portfolio investments and I know that we can look forward to another year of brilliant work at Aviva Studios, including Manchester International Festival next summer."*

Phoebe Barter, Group Brand Director at Aviva, said: *"It's been brilliant to see how big a success Aviva Studios has been in its first year, delivering on the promise to be a world-class venue whilst also serving the local community. We are all incredibly proud of our partnership with Factory International and Manchester City Council and look forward to many more milestones together for this great building."*

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 of £99.05m from HM Government and £7m National Lottery funding from Arts Council England. It is supported by Aviva, the UK's leading Insurance, Wealth and Retirement business, as principal partner to the venue. Factory International is an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation.

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NOTES TO EDITORS:

ABOUT FACTORY INTERNATIONAL

Factory International is the organisation behind Manchester International Festival (MIF) and the city's landmark new cultural space, Aviva Studios.

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Factory International commissions, produces and presents a year-round programme of original creative work and special events at Aviva Studios, its landmark new home in Manchester, online, and internationally through its network of co-commissioners and partners. It also stages the city-wide Manchester International Festival 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.

A space for invention and discovery, 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 of £99.05m from HM Government and £7m 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.

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ABOUT ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

Arts Council England is the national development agency for creativity and culture. We have set out our strategic vision in Let's Create that by 2030 we want England to be a country in which the creativity of each of us is valued and given the chance to flourish and where every one of us has access to a remarkable range of high-quality cultural experiences. From 2023 to 2026 we will invest over £467 million of public money from Government and an estimated £250 million from The National Lottery each year to help support the sector and to deliver this vision. This year the National Lottery will celebrate 30 years of supporting good causes in the United Kingdom through raising £49 billion and awarding over 690,000 individual grants since the first draw was held in 1994.

www.artscouncil.org.uk

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