

EMBARGOED UNTIL: 12.01am Tuesday 23rd November 2021

POLINATIONS

**A MAJOR NEW CULTURAL EVENT CELEBRATING
DIVERSITY & MIGRATION THROUGH THE
UK'S PEOPLE & PLANTS**

**77% of plants found in the UK's city gardens
originated overseas**



An artist's render of PoliNations. Courtesy of/Credit - Trigger, THISS, Carl Robertshaw, Bronia Housman

[PRESS IMAGES](#)

Victoria Square, Birmingham, 2-18 September 2022

with a special preview: George Street, Edinburgh, 6-14 August 2022

FREE

EMBARGOED UNTIL: 12.01am Tuesday 23rd November 2021: 77% of plants found in the UK's city gardens originated overseas according to a forthcoming major study by Professor Jane Memmott, Professor of Ecology at Bristol University and President of the British Ecological Society, and colleagues.*

Taking this remarkable statistic as inspiration, **Trigger Collective** has created the major cultural event and installation **PoliNations**, which has been commissioned as part of UNBOXED: Creativity in the UK, as a way to reflect on the UK's

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complex histories surrounding migration and diversity whilst celebrating our differences, our roots, and our future, and emphasising the importance of access to green spaces and a healthy planet for all.

Taking the form of an epic forest-garden bursting with living plant life and sheltered by 40-foot tall architectural ‘supertrees’ taking over Birmingham’s 1300m² Victoria Square, **PoliNations** uncovers the origin stories of many mainstays of traditional UK gardens, including the ‘Hybrid Tea Rose’ (hybridised China and Asian forms), classic ‘Weeping Willows’ (introduced from China and the Middle East), lavender (brought over from countries around the Mediterranean), productive apple trees (imported from Kazakhstan) and tulips (Central Asia). Together they paint a picture of the journeys, migration, dispersal of plants we now consider to be part of our shared ecological identity.

PoliNations will be a vibrant living oasis in Birmingham’s city centre filled with thousands of plants that have been co-grown and co-planted with local schools and community groups. It will be brought to life each day through forest tours, audio baths, light shows, talks and performances while the towering ‘supertrees’ will capture rainwater and create electricity through wind power to deliver a low carbon event.

PoliNations is produced by **Trigger Collective**, which is led by Bristol-based arts organisation **Trigger**, whose Artistic Director Angie Bual is working with multi-disciplinary designer **Carl Robertshaw**, set and costume designer **Bronia Housman**, events specialist **Dock Street Events**, architectural studio **THISS**, and horticulturalists **Arbor-Nova**. For the project, Trigger has brought together experts in the fields of horticulture, science, architecture, and the arts from the likes of **Chelsea Flower Show** to **Notting Hill Carnival** and **London 2012** to **RuPaul’s Drag Race (UK)**.

Each evening, under the canopy of the ‘supertrees’ (fabricated by [Format Engineers](#)), visitors will experience an incredible light show designed by Matt Daw - the light designer behind international theatre and concert events including opera, film, exhibitions and large events with the likes of **The XX**, **Sigur Rós**, **Björk** and **The Royal Shakespeare Company’s** production of *Troilus and Cressida*.

Throughout **PoliNations**, all are invited to visit the ‘Glam Dome’ - home to a working costume studio where expert designers **Joey A Frenette**, aka **Bourgeoisie** (RuPaul’s Drag Race, The Hatchling) and **Clary Salandy** from **Mahogany Carnival** are on hand to help the public make their own creations. Meanwhile, the ‘Creation Dome’ will be a place to learn about the diversity of plants and explore some of the meanings, histories and significance that have been attached to them through talks, workshops and tours.

Angie Bual, Creative Director of PoliNations and Co-Director of Trigger, said: “2020 was a tumultuous year. We saw the global rediscovery of how vital green spaces are for our individual and collective mental wellbeing and experienced a long-awaited reckoning of the impacts of slavery, empire and colonialism through the Black Lives Matter movement protests. We felt inspired by these events to create a place that brought these topics together – harnessing the metaphor of seed dispersal to create a conversation about the importance of biodiversity and living in a bio, diverse city.

“PoliNations takes its inspiration from the fundamental truth that the very landscape and plant life that surrounds us each day is multicultural. It celebrates the colour and vibrancy that plants and flowers have brought to the UK and invites us to reimagine our societies as more diverse, greener and wilder places to be. Combining engineering, horticulture, theatre and music from around the world, PoliNations is a spectacular co-grown forest garden that will ignite the senses and deepen understanding of our shared history, bringing people together from all walks of life with an utterly unforgettable finale.”

Martin Green CBE, Chief Creative Officer, UNBOXED: Creativity in the UK and the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games’, said: “PoliNations is one of ten incredible projects taking place in 2022 as part of UNBOXED:

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Creativity in the UK, which bring together the talents of hundreds of creatives from across science, technology, engineering, arts and maths.

"It promises to be a dazzling mix of music, performance and sensational design, with something for people of all ages and backgrounds. PoliNations is also a timely opportunity to bring people together and celebrate diversity of all kinds through creativity as Birmingham welcomes visitors from across the world for the 2022 Commonwealth Games."

Jane Memmot, President of the British Ecological Society said: *"More than 77% of the plant species in the UK's city gardens come from plants that are not native to the UK. These plants – from China, North America, South America, the Mediterranean, Australia, South Africa and many, many other countries – provide great joy to gardeners and most of the food available to urban pollinators".*

Key dates for PoliNations:

Opening Weekend: 2-4 September 2022

PoliNations opens its doors to the public! Hundreds of plants will be co-planted by local communities and schools in a mass participation event within the forest garden.

Spoken Word Weekend: 10-11 September 2022

In addition to the regular daily programming, PoliNations will present a weekend of spoken word events featuring performances from regional, national and international poets.

The Grand Finale: 15-18 September 2022

Programming for the grand finale starts on Thursday 15 September with artists beginning to create a massive **Rangoli artwork** that will gradually sprawl out into the forest while **henna** artists offer intricate designs.

On Saturday 17 September, the canopies of the supertrees will burst into a joyful cloud of confetti and colour for the **Ballistic Seed Party**. This is Pride, Carnival and Holi combined in one brilliant, messy, playful all-day-all-night party and everyone is invited. Attendees can enjoy epic performances exploring ball culture, take part in **Holi** celebrations, and enjoy live music showcasing the best up-and-coming talent.

Sunday 18 September is the final day of *PoliNations* and dedicated to self-care with chilled out acoustic music, spoken word events, poetry and storytelling sessions for all to enjoy in the blissful oasis. Once *PoliNations* ends, the plants and saplings will be shared with local communities, public institutions and private homes and contribute to the growth of Birmingham's green spaces.

PoliNations in Birmingham will be preceded by a special nine-day preview in **Edinburgh**: a single 40-foot 'supertree' will take root outside of the Assembly Rooms on George Street – creating a space for relaxation and creative collaboration with a jam-packed programme presented in partnership with **Assembly Festival**.

PoliNations is one of 10 major creative projects commissioned as part of **UNBOXED: Creativity in the UK**, with events taking place throughout England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, as well as online. ***PoliNations*** is presented as part of **Birmingham 2022 Festival** in collaboration with **Birmingham City Council** and **Assembly Festival** at the **Edinburgh Festival Fringe**.

UNBOXED: Creativity in the UK is a celebration of creativity taking place across the UK in 2022, designed to reach millions and bring people together. It features free large-scale events, installations and globally accessible digital experiences in the UK's most ambitious showcase of creative collaboration. UNBOXED: Creativity in the UK is funded and supported by the four governments of the UK and is commissioned and delivered in partnership with Belfast City Council, Creative Wales and EventScotland.

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* From “Turnover in floral composition explains species diversity and temporal stability in the nectar supply of urban residential gardens” by Tew et al. In press, Journal of Applied Ecology – due for publication early 2022.

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PRESS ENQUIRIES

For all press enquiries relating to PoliNations or Trigger, please contact Midas:

Francesca Whitting francesca.whitting@midaspr.co.uk | 07799094184

For UNBOXED media enquiries:

Jeanette Ward Jeanette.ward@unboxed2022.uk | 07729 930 812

LISTINGS INFORMATION

POLINATIONS

George Street, Edinburgh 4-16 August
Victoria Square, Birmingham, 2-18 September
<https://polinations.com/>

UNBOXED: Creativity in the UK

1 March – 2 October 2022
Unboxed2022.uk

ABOUT TRIGGER COLLECTIVE

PoliNations is produced by Trigger Collective and led by Bristol-based arts organisation Trigger who have brought together multi-disciplinary independent arts organisations and companies collaborating to make bold, inclusive and cross disciplinary work.

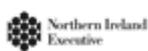
Drawing on experts in horticulture, arts, science and architecture, Trigger has brought together an expert team to form Trigger Collective. In addition to the award-winning team at Trigger (The Hatchling, WithYou, Curio), this includes: designer and artist **Carl Robertshaw** (Björk, Ellie Goulding, London 2012 Opening & Closing Ceremonies), set and costume designer **Bronia Housman** (Bristol Old Vic, Take That, Sadler’s Wells), events specialist **Dock Street Events** (MIF, Hull UK City of Culture, London 2012 Opening & Closing Ceremonies), architectural studio **THISS** (The Bartlett, UCL, London Met), and horticulturalists **Arbor-Nova** (RHS Chelsea Flower Show medal-winners, Hauser & Wirth Somerset, Maggies, Royal Marsden Hospital).

ABOUT UNBOXED: Creativity in the UK

UNBOXED: Creativity in the UK is a once-in-a-lifetime celebration of creativity, taking place across England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales and online from March to October 2022.

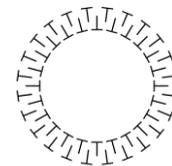
We’re lifting the lid on 10 awe-inspiring new ideas, shaped across science, technology, engineering, the arts and mathematics by brilliant minds working in unexpected collaborations. Unmissable events and unforgettable experiences are coming to places and spaces right across the UK: from coastal towns and city centres to breathtaking areas of natural beauty.

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You'll be able to enjoy UNBOXED in person, on TV, on radio and online – entirely for free. And we want you to get involved in every part of this extraordinary year: diving into our UK-wide learning programmes, taking part in workshops and special events, even playing a central role in bringing one or more of these 10 astonishing projects to life.

Take a thrilling multimedia ride through 13.8 billion years of history in About Us, and get planting as Dandelion – reinvents the harvest festival for the 21st century. Unleash the limitless potential of the mind in Dreamachine, fast-forward three decades with GALWAD: a story from our future, and become one of 20,000 'Lumenators' lighting up our wild and beautiful places in Green Space Dark Skies. You can explore the solar system right here on Earth in Our Place in Space, tour a magical forest garden in the heart of the city with PoliNations, and climb aboard a repurposed North Sea offshore platform in SEE MONSTER. StoryTrails is animating and amplifying the hidden histories of our towns and cities – while Tour de Moon is a major festival created in collaboration with our lunar satellite.

UNBOXED: Creativity in the UK is the biggest and most ambitious creative programme ever presented on these shores. It's funded and supported by the four governments of the UK, and is co-commissioned with Belfast City Council, EventScotland and Creative Wales. Join millions for this landmark exploration of how creativity – our creativity – has the power to change the world.

For more details about the ten UNBOXED projects, please visit the website: Unboxed2022.uk

ABOUT TRIGGER

Trigger creates and produces surprising live and digital projects that interrupt daily life, reimagine and revive public spaces, and put audiences at the centre of the action. Trigger's programme aims to create accessible, inclusive and boundary pushing work which is often large scale and site-specific.

Their work is brought to life by a team of cross-disciplinary artists and creatives, regularly involves work within local communities, and is dedicated to showcasing new, emerging, inspiring and under-represented talent.

Trigger was founded in 2011 by Artistic Director Angie Bual with the aim of creating experiences that bring intrigue to the everyday. Alongside their work on PoliNations, Trigger's giant dragon puppet, The Hatchling, will lead the Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations following an epic first outing in Plymouth in September 2021 where she wowed crowds of over 30,000 people. Trigger are also continuing the development of their free innovative digital service, WithYou, which helps to connect isolated hospital patients and care home residents to their loved ones by bringing sharable voice messages and music playlists together for them in one playable audio track. WithYou was a HTN Award Finalist in 2021 for most promising pilot and is already live in 14 wards across the UK with new partners set to join in 2022. Trigger is based in Bristol.

ANGIE BUAL – TRIGGER ARTISTIC DIRECTOR AND JOINT CEO

Angie is the artistic director and founder of Trigger, an independent arts organisation based in Bristol. She is the Creative Director of The Hatchling – the world's first flying puppet in the form of a dragon which premiered in Plymouth in August 2021 to over 30,000 spectators and is set to lead the Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations in June 2022. Angie is also the Creative Director for the WithYou, a free innovative digital service created in response to the Covid-19 pandemic that helps to connect isolated hospital patients and care home residents to their loved ones by bringing shareable voice messages and music playlists together for them in one playable audio track. WithYou was shortlisted for the HTN Award for most promising pilot in 2021 and is currently live in 14 wards across the UK.

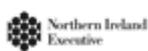
Angie is a Clore Fellow (Theatre), and has produced for organisations including Fuel, National Theatre of Scotland, Edinburgh Art Festival and the Science Museum. She is also on the board for the London Area Council for Arts Council England. Angie won the Creative Producer Arts Foundation Award.

NATALIE ADAMS – TRIGGER EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND JOINT CEO

Natalie is the Executive Director of Trigger. She was the Executive Producer on The Hatchling – the world's first flying puppet in the form of a dragon which premiered in Plymouth in August 2021 to an audience of over 30,000 people and is set to lead the Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations in June 2022. Natalie leads on the programming and delivery of Trigger's core artistic programme and the company's strategic and financial management. Natalie is a member of the South West Area Council of Arts Council England and is on the Board of the Independent Theatre Council. Previously, Natalie has worked for organisations

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including Paines Plough, Coney and nabokov and has produced experiences for the Imperial War Museums, National Trust, Chester Zoo and Museum of London. She is an alumni artist of The Point Theatre and Creative Access alumni.

CARL ROBERTSHAW – DESIGNER AND ARTIST

Carl Robertshaw is a unique multidisciplinary designer and artist, working with an inclusive approach at the intersection of performance, engineering and fine art. Over the past 25 years Carl has enjoyed collaborating with artists such as Bjork, Kylie Minogue, Hussein Chalayan, Take That, Peter Gabriel, Anohni, Coldplay, Editors and Ellie Goulding. Carl's work has been celebrated on world stages such as The Super Bowl 50 Halftime Show, New York's Radio City Music Hall, Manchester International Festival and the 2012 London Olympic opening and closing ceremonies.

Carl is a Graduate of Central St Martins School of Art and Design with a Degree in Graphic Design. He is also 5-times World Sport Kite Champion. Carl's passion for kites and for science, art and nature feed directly into his work. He has made installations for The Hayward Gallery, ArtEvento Italy and The London Design Biennale that explore fluid dynamics and wave patterns in light and air. Carl enjoys an ongoing relationship with Oxford Space Systems developing deployable satellites with designs currently operating in Low Earth Orbit.

BRONIA HOUSMAN – SET AND COSTUME DESIGN

Bronia trained in Set and Costume design on the Motley Theatre Design Course after studying theatre at Kent University.

Design includes: Hedda (Bristol Old Vic, BOVTS), The Snow Queen, Mrs Beeton Says & The Railway Children (Redgrave Theatre, BOVTS), Table & The Kitchen Sink (Stoke New Vic Theatre), The Little Match Girl & The Bird Show (The Last Baguette), Luna (Roustabout Theatre), Remarkable Invisible (Theatre by the Lake), Rubenstein Kiss, Amy's View & After Miss Julie (Nottingham Playhouse), Strange Blooms (Shobana Jeyasingh Dance) Imago (Glyndebourne) The Rodin Project (Sadler's Wells and touring), A Real Humane Person Who Cares and All That (Arcola Theatre), Sports et Divertissements/ Babar (la Carrière de Normandoux) Precious Bane, Sexual Neuroses of Our Parents, Shoot, Get Treasure, Repeat, Don Juan Comes Back From The War, The Laramie Project & Loveplay (Arts Educational School) The Execution of Damians & Three short plays from Africa (Momentum Festival, Nottingham), The Promise (New Wimbledon Studio), Così Fan Tutte (Classical Opera Company), For One Night Only (Pleasance Theatre, London), Henhouse (Arcola Theatre).

Bronia was Es Devlin's Associate from 2004 to 2017, work includes: Faith Healer (Donmar Warehouse) The Nether (Royal Court & West End) Don Giovanni (ROH) Les Troyens (ROH) The Master and Margarita (Complicite) London Olympic Closing Ceremony (London Olympic Stadium) Parsifal (DNO), Take That; Progress (Stadium Tour) Lucrezia Borgia (ENO) Pieces of Vincent (Arcola Theatre) Die Tote Stadt (Finnish National Opera) Faust (Dresden SemperOper) Blaze (Touring) Knight Crew (Glyndebourne), Take That; The Circus (UK Stadium Tour), I Puritani (De Nederlandse Opera & Greek National Opera) Pet Shop Boys; Pandemonium (World Tour), Salome (ROH), La Clemenza di Tito (El Liceo Barcelona), Don Giovanni and Flammen (Theater an der Wien).

ABOUT THISS ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN STUDIO

THISS is an RIBA chartered, London based architecture and design studio. They work on commercial, residential and conceptual projects at all scales, across the UK and abroad. Their projects are typically collaborations with clients who share their global, adventurous perspectives and with those who are seeking a taste of the spacious and material experience of nature, woven into their day-to-day environment. They develop and uncover unique and exciting spaces with a strong grounding in context and place, whether it be a residential home, restaurant, retreat, factory, bookshop or collection of beehives Inspired by ancient technologies and engaging in a conscious relationship with the landscape, they use carefully selected materials, low-impact methodologies and digital crafting tools wherever possible.

TAMSIN HANKE

Tamsin is an ARB and RIBA registered Architect with experience in the retail, hospitality, commercial, education and residential sectors. Prior to founding THISS, Tamsin worked for Niall McLaughlin Architects to deliver highly crafted, large scale buildings. Formerly Tamsin worked for Michaelis Boyd Architects gaining experience in the hospitality and retail sectors as well as working to deliver high end residential projects in West London and Southern France. Tamsin previously lived in Iceland working for a local landscape-driven design practice focusing on projects in the tourist and hospitality sectors (when not skiing across frozen Arctic landscapes).

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Tamsin is a Senior Teaching Fellow at the Bartlett School of Architecture where she runs a Design Unit focusing on contemporary making and experimental processes. This context of research and experimentation keeps the studio astride of innovations in design, concepts, critical theory and digital manufacturing.

SASH SCOTT

Sash is a registered ARB Architect and Designer. He has extensive experience in the arts, commercial and private residential sectors. Sash specialises in remote urbanism and landscape. Through extensive exploration and collaboration, Sash has engaged and participated with geographically marginal communities in Japan, Russia and across the Middle East to explore the relationship between nature and the built environment.

Sash has over 15 years of experience leading complex design and building projects. He has worked at various architectural practices including Hawkins Brown and Wiel Arets Architects in Amsterdam and has collaborated with artists Carl Robertshaw and Ivan Morison to create improbable flying kites and sculptures. Sash studied Architecture at The Bartlett. He is a Design Tutor at The London Metropolitan School of Art, Architecture & Design, and is a guest tutor at The Bartlett and The University of Nottingham. Outside of the studio Sash is two-time sport kite world champion and cycled unassisted from London to Delhi in 2011.

ABOUT ARBOR NOVA

ABOUT ARBOR NOVA LTD

Chris and Toby Marchant work through Arbor Nova Ltd as horticultural consultants, drawing on the knowledge, contacts and expertise they developed over 30 years running the highly successful Orchard Dene Nurseries. Supplying an extensive range of 1400 plants, grasses and ferns to some of this country's leading Landscape Designers, they gained an enviable reputation for their creative use of herbaceous plant material.

Toby's early background of Garden Design and Construction followed by 30 years of intensive horticultural practice, allowed him to develop extensive knowledge of plant propagation and commercial cultivation techniques which he now shares through consultancy.

With a background of 3-dimensional design and horticultural focus, Chris works with professional designers to optimize plant selections and compositions on larger schemes. She has been designing, teaching and writing on the broad subject of planting selection and design for the past 25 years. Through Arbor Nova Ltd, their individual skill sets complement to focus on their shared vision and drive for more creative use of perennials in landscapes.

Past Projects/Contributions

Supply of plants and planting skills to numerous Gold medal winning gardens at Chelsea Flower Show working with Cleve West, Tom Stuart Smith, Arne Maynard, Dan Pearson, Anthony Paul, HarrisBugg Studio and others.

Growing and layout all planting material for private and public schemes including: Durslade Farm, the Hauser and Wirth Gallery Garden in Somerset designed by Piet Oudolf.

Maggies Garden at Royal Marsden, designed by Piet Oudolf and numerous other private gardens designed by leading Landscape Architects.

Contributions of plants and planting advice to Horatios Gardens in various hospital sites.

ABOUT DOCK STREET EVENTS

CHRIS CLAY

Technical Director and Production Manager Chris has spent nearly 3 decades managing and delivering events, supporting leading names from across the world of theatre, opera, sports and commerce, and working on projects in more than 30 countries.

In addition to time spent working for the Almeida Theatre, English National Opera and the Young Vic Theatre, he's been involved in some flagship sporting occasions, including London 2012, and the 2014 Tour de France Team Presentation and Opening Ceremony.

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Chris was also an integral part of the Hull UK City of Culture 2017 Senior Management Team – as Technical and Operations Director, heading up the technical production and delivery of a comprehensive programme of events.

JENNY HUTT

Arts and Events Manager Jenny's experience of logistical planning and delivery includes artist liaison, back of house management, event control and creating and managing a range of events including exhibition openings, launches, parties and corporate events. Jenny has spent a successful career supporting senior executives in many of the UK's major cultural institutions, including the Young Vic Theatre, English National Opera, the National Theatre and the BBC. In 2012, Jenny worked closely with the artistic and executive teams, on the delivery of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Opening and Closing Ceremonies. Most recently Jenny worked as Head of Artistic Administration and Events for Hull 2017, managing the delivery of flagship events across the City of Culture year.

ABOUT ASSEMBLY FESTIVAL

Established in 1981, Assembly is the longest-running and most popular of the multi-space venues that operate at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe.

In the 40 years since our first festival where we played host to fifty-seven shows, we now present a programme of more than 200 productions to an audience of over half a million in a usual year. Over the years, an extensive list of now household names started their journey to stardom on an Assembly stage, including Eddie Izzard, Jo Brand, Bill Bailey and Sandi Toksvig, to name a few.

As Edinburgh stalwarts, we are known for our reputation for exciting programming and developing creative and sustainable events, which provide a platform for artists, makers, and creators to share what they have to offer.

Beyond our Edinburgh roots, we have an international reputation as a leading production company, most recently with Robert Bathurst's *Love, Loss and Chianti* and Simon Callow's *A Christmas Carol*. We are proud of *Nirbhaya*, a play that tackled the challenging subject of violence against women in India and went on to play to sell-out houses in the UK, US and Canada.

In 2021, we opened a new Festival Garden as the heart of Coventry's UK City of Culture celebrations which played to some of the biggest names in music, comedy, circus and beyond. The Garden proved so popular with Coventrians and visitors alike it's set to return in the spring of 2022 for an encore.

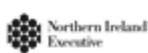
ABOUT BIRMINGHAM 2022 FESTIVAL

Running from March through to beyond the conclusion of the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games in September 2022, the Birmingham 2022 Festival will feature hundreds of creative commissions across the region including art, photography, dance, theatre, digital art and more.

Highlights of the festival announced thus far include *Wondrous Stories*, a spectacular large-scale production by world renowned and Leamington Spa based dance-circus company, Motionhouse. *Generations* by Julian Germain will be a large-scale photographic portraiture exhibition that will appear in public settings across the region and Birmingham's Flatpack Festival will present *Wonderland*, a unique heritage project telling the film-going story of Birmingham. Digbeth-based Eastside Projects will also explore Birmingham's positions, affinities and complicities within the Commonwealth by working with four international artists from Toronto and Johannesburg to create a series of new site-specific projects across the city.

The full programme will be announced in early 2022 – register your interest to be amongst the first to find out Birmingham 2022 Festival's exciting range of events at birmingham2022.com/festival.

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