



TRIGGER



CREATIVITY IN THE UK



FLINT

**Press release under embargo until Tuesday 10 May 2pm**

## PoliNations

Birmingham gears up for an epic pop-up garden festival this September as hundreds of locals start growing marigolds



**Image above: placeholder – to be updated Tuesday 10 May**

Today, 10th May 2022, hundreds of children and adults across Birmingham began growing flowers in preparation for the spectacular pop-up garden festival PoliNations taking place from 2–18 September. Produced by **Trigger Collective** as a part of **UNBOXED: Creativity in the UK**, PoliNations will turn Birmingham’s city centre into an urban oasis for a celebration of the cross-pollination that has shaped British culture.

Over the next 4 months, over 1000 people from 60 diverse community groups across the city will be growing calendula flowers, commonly known as marigold. The project will culminate in the co-planting of 600 marigolds in the magical PoliNations pop-up garden. After the two-week festival, all plants will go back out into Birmingham to re-green the city.

Open to all, PoliNations is part of the UK-wide **UNBOXED: Creativity in the UK**, and will bring the cultural programme for the **Birmingham 2022 Festival** to a spectacular close. Through free events, workshops, and performances including live music, dance, spoken word and drag, the festival will celebrate the beauty, colour, and diversity that makes up British horticulture and culture. Up-and-coming and renowned artists from Birmingham and beyond will perform under the shelter of giant architectural trees and surrounded by thousands of colourful plants.

The groups involved in the mass growing project reflect the diversity of Birmingham’s communities, ranging from youth to elderly groups, from expert gardeners to total beginners, including refugee groups, women’s groups, and disability action groups. Among the local communities involved include **Saheli Hub**, a women and girls group focused on community wellbeing; **Kinmos**, a mental health charity; **Women with Hope**, a charity dedicated to improving the lives of women asylum-seekers, refugees and migrants; **Open Theatre**, working with young people with learning disabilities on non-verbal physical theatre; the **Czech and**

**Slovak Club**, which promotes the welfare and culture of the Czech and Slovak community living in UK; the volunteer growing group **Highbury Orchard Community**; and Birmingham Cathedral.

**Amanda Clinton, a youth leader involved in the project with The Factory Young People's Centre, said:** *"It's fantastic to be part of this PoliNations project. Gardening has helped me through difficult times and I want to teach my young people the mental health benefits of gardening, by getting outside with them and growing for PoliNations. We can't wait to see our marigolds flowering in the pop-up garden this autumn."*

**Angie Bual, Creative Director, Trigger said,** *"We are so pleased to be working with such a diverse range of community groups across Birmingham for this co-growing project, which is a key part of the festival and its ethos. PoliNations is about celebrating the beauty, colour, and diversity that make up British horticulture and culture. For this particular project, we chose Marigolds, known as Shakespeare's favourite plant and much-loved around the world. They are used in celebrations from Mexico to India, in food, and in medicine and have equally diverse origins."*

The idea for PoliNations grew from a simple but surprising fact: over **80% of the plants found in UK cities' gardens originate from overseas**. Across the festival programming, visitors will be invited to learn more about the incredible biodiversity of plant-life in the UK, the importance of our green spaces, and celebrate the equally colourful roots, journeys and histories of British people. In addition to live performances and talks, PoliNations will present a programme of events ranging from costume-making workshops with **Joey Frenette** (RuPaul's Drag Race) and **Clary Salandy** (Notting Hill Carnival) to garden tours, story-telling, light shows, and more.

Trigger Collective, a **multidisciplinary creative team** of experts in horticulture, arts, science and architecture will be supported by **local trainees** to develop PoliNations across design, architecture, costume, sound, and production. The team is also collaborating with treasured local and national organisations to help bring the pop-up garden to life, including partnerships with the **Birmingham Botanical Gardens, Birmingham Conservatoire**, the poetry and spoken word festival **BBC Contains Strong Language, Paradise Birmingham**, and the Bombay-inspired restaurant group **Dishoom**.

The festival programme, which will be announced in June, is poised to showcase a stellar mix of talent including Birmingham's much loved drag performer **Ysheel Black**. As part of her role as PoliNations Associate Artist, YShee Black said she plans to bring together *"a group of creatives from the world of Drag, dance and cabaret to celebrate the growth of the city, the people who inhabit the midlands, and personal growth to create a better lasting society for future generations"*.

For those who cannot access the festival, as well as those who can, the PoliNations app, designed by agency Peter & Paul, is set to launch this summer. Audiences will be able to step into a virtual super garden, create flowers that are based on your thoughts and feelings and watch them come to life in augmented reality.

PoliNations is one of 10 major creative projects commissioned as part of UNBOXED: Creativity in the UK, which are the result of collaboration across science, technology, engineering, arts and maths and bringing hundreds of free events and activities across the UK in 2022. PoliNations is presented as part of **Birmingham 2022 Festival** in collaboration with **Birmingham City Council**.

**Martin Green, Chief Creative Officer at UNBOXED: Creativity in the UK and Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games, said, "PoliNations perfectly embodies the two primary objectives of UNBOXED: to celebrate creativity and to bring people together. Their brilliant work with local communities is only the beginning of what will be a powerful celebration of the many facets of creativity and UK culture, as well as an awe-inspiring and joyous experience for diverse audiences."**

- ENDS -

### **Note to Editors**

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### **About UNBOXED: Creativity in the UK**

**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. Produced by some of the brightest minds in science, technology, engineering, arts and maths, UNBOXED features ten major multi-site and digital creative projects that share new ideas and possibilities for the future. Events and activities take place from 1 March to 2 October 2022 – from the Outer Hebrides to Dover and from Omagh to Swansea, and across traditional and online media. 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. [unboxed2022.uk](http://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: creative director **Angie Bual** (The Hatchling, Trigger) 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 Trigger**

Trigger are shapeshifting creatives who dream-up, create and produce free, bold live and digital events which care for the community. Trigger reimagine and revive public spaces, interrupt daily life, and put audiences and togetherness at the heart of everything they do. Their varied output, ranging from The Hatchling – a groundbreaking puppetry and kite flying experience – to WithYou, a free innovative digital service created in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, is inclusive, accessible and aims to shine a light on the creativity of local communities and underrepresented talent. Trigger is for everyone, and everyone is invited.

### **What's on:**

Trigger are representing the UK in this year's UK/Australia British Council Season. The Hatchling will lead the Queens Platinum Jubilee in June 2022. Trigger are leading on a STEAM project, PoliNations, which will feature at the Edinburgh Festival, and is commissioned by UNBOXED: Creativity in the UK and presented as part of Birmingham 2022 Festival (Commonwealth Games Cultural Programme).

[www.polinations.com](http://www.polinations.com) | [www.thehatchling.co.uk](http://www.thehatchling.co.uk) | [www.triggerstuff.co.uk](http://www.triggerstuff.co.uk)

## **About Birmingham 2022 Festival**

The Birmingham 2022 Festival unites people from around the Commonwealth through a celebration of creativity, in a six-month long programme, shining a spotlight on the West Midlands' culture sector.

Running from March to beyond the conclusion of the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games in September, the festival aims to entertain and engage over 2.5 million people in person and online.

Delivering over 200 projects across the region including art, photography, dance, theatre, digital art and more the festival will embrace local culture and generate lasting change and a creative legacy beyond the games with funding to community led projects from Birmingham City Council's Creative City Grants scheme.

Major support has been dedicated by Arts Council England, The National Lottery Heritage Fund, Birmingham City Council and Spirit of 2012. The Birmingham 2022 Festival is grateful for further support from British Council, Paul Hamlyn Foundation, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, National Lottery Community Fund, Canada Council for the Arts, the High Commission of Canada in the UK, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, Create Central, Creative New Zealand, UK/Australia Season 2021/2022, and Birmingham 2022 Organising Committee.

## **BIOGRAPHIES**

### **Angie Bual (Artistic Director and Joint CEO, Trigger)**

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.

### **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.

### **James Jordan Alexander Bartholomew aka YShee Black (Drag Artist and Associate Artist, PoliNations)**

The self proclaimed Alison Hammond of drag, Yshee Black is loud, bubbly and always up for a laugh. Known for her high energy performances, she is recognised for hosting a lipsync competition in Birmingham called The Church of Yshee that she started in 2017. In addition to hosting and producing events around the UK, she hosts the Popbuzz Year Book that interviews Canada's Drag Race, Drag Race Down Under and Drag Race UK Series 2 & 3 Alum. Currently she is working in London with Tuckshop on various projects such as The Crown drag competition and the West End Drag Panto Dick Whittington.

## **Clary Salandy (Costume Designer)**

Clary Salandy is one of the founders of Mahogany Carnival Design, cofounded with artist Michael Ramdeen in 1989. As the name would suggest, the company designs Carnival costumes, in the art form of "Mas Making" and they are known for their larger than life designs. The pair are both native to Trinidad and are designers in their own right; Clary studied at The Wimbledon School of Art and worked at Central St Martin's in London, whilst Speedy studied Structural Engineering. They set up shop in Harlesden, North West London in 1996 and have been there ever since.

The Mahogany Carnival team's award winning collaborations have been featured around the world and act as a catalyst for bringing together people from culturally diverse backgrounds. Their credits include Notting Hill Carnival (annual), the Millennium Dome Opening Ceremony, Trinidad Carnival, Chingay 2000 and the upcoming Queen's Platinum Jubilee Pageant.

## **Joey Frenette aka Bourgeoisie (Costume Designer)**

Bourgeoisie is an Arts Council certified globally talented artist, and widely experienced costume designer. They've worked across the UK and Europe performing in various queer spaces. They've worked on costumes for various theatre events including The Hatchling and the upcoming PoliNations with Trigger. Their private costume design practice is centred around burlesque, drag and cabaret.