



PoliNations

Garden opens in Birmingham for spectacular festival celebrating the UK's diversity

2-18 September



To be replaced by photograph

Today (Friday 2 September), a spectacular garden opened in Birmingham's Victoria Square for the festival PoliNations, which will host a 17-day programme of free events suitable for people of all ages exploring the UK's diversity through the lens of its plant life. Commissioned by UNBOXED: Creativity in the UK, PoliNations is part of the Birmingham 2022 Festival and is taking place as the city celebrates hosting a hugely successful Commonwealth Games. It is presented with the support of Birmingham City Council.

The garden is made up of five towering tree installations reaching 40ft high, beds of over 5,000 plants and flowers, and sculptures inspired by 'iconic plants' which despite being non-native have become staples of UK gardens. Over the opening weekend (2-4 September), PoliNations will see hundreds of people from across Birmingham plant marigolds in the garden, which they have been growing in their homes and community spaces across the city over the past four months.

Inspired by new research that almost 80% of plants in gardens across UK cities come from overseas, PoliNations will celebrate how migration and cross-pollination have shaped Britain's gardens and culture. The programme includes daily garden tours led by Birmingham Botanical Gardens, lunchtime talks exploring issues from sustainability to decolonisation, and magical evening light and sound show the Sunset Shift.

Across the second and third weekends, PoliNations will present live performances spanning music, spoken word, dance and drag, spotlighting talent from South Asian and Black communities from Birmingham and beyond. A weekend in collaboration with BBC Contains Strong Language (8-11 September) will see spoken word and poetry by performers including award-winning saxophonist

and poet Soweto Kinch, and multiple slam champion and Birmingham Poet Laureate Finalist Jasmine Gardosi.

During the finale weekend (15–18 September), the Ballistic Seed Party will see the garden explode with colour and confetti, featuring a Caribbean carnival, Holi celebration, Catwalk Extravaganza hosted by actor and director Rikki Beadle–Blair, and Drag Party with Yshee Black. There will also be live music from Balimaya Project, Horse Meat Disco, Kofi Stone and more.

At the end of PoliNations, the garden’s plants and shrubs will be redistributed throughout the city via local community groups and members of the public, who are invited to take a plant home with them during the Plant Giveaway on Sunday 18 September. For those unable to attend the festival in person, the PoliNations app invites everyone, wherever they live, to express themselves by creating a supernatural plant inspired by their emotions, opinions, and desires. Each unique digital seed will grow into a virtual flower, which can be “planted” in their own home, workplace or other space using augmented reality, and added to a virtual super garden.

The team behind PoliNations Trigger Collective is a multi-disciplinary group brought together for their respective expertise across a diverse range of fields including horticulture, arts, science, and architecture. Trigger Collective is formed of: Creative Director Angie Bual (The Hatchling, Trigger), Carl Robertshaw (Björk, Kylie Minogue, and the London 2012 Olympics Ceremonies), architecture and spatial design studio THISS (The Bartlett, UCL, London Met), set and costume designer Bronia Housman (Bristol Old Vic, Take That, Sadler’s Wells), horticulturalists Arbor–Nova (RHS Chelsea Flower Show medal–winners, Hauser & Wirth Somerset) and events specialist Dock Street Events (Manchester International Festival, Hull UK City of Culture, London 2012 Opening & Closing Ceremonies).

Angie Bual, Creative Director of Trigger, said: *“PoliNations opened today as a festival celebrating cultural diversity, individuality, and self-expression. The vibrancy of the PoliNations programme and the abundance of the super garden is the result of collaborations with members of many diverse communities – becoming a living symbol for the beauty and intriguing stories of migration across the UK. Trigger Collective is thrilled to see the festival open to everyone, at no cost, and engage new audiences in conversation on why the UK is multicultural.”*

PoliNations is one of ten major commissioned as part of UNBOXED: Creativity in the UK taking place in 2022 in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

Martin Green, Chief Creative Officer at UNBOXED: Creativity in the UK and the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games, said: *“PoliNations is a fabulous collision of art, design and horticulture and a dazzling start to the final month of the Birmingham 2022 Festival, as the buzz continues around the city following the Commonwealth Games. Like other UNBOXED projects, it shows what can happen when creative minds from different sectors and backgrounds come together. This wonderfully positive technical experience has also involved local people who have helped make it happen and I’m excited to see PoliNations burst into bloom.”*

Arts Minister Lord Parkinson said: *“Continuing the fantastic success of this summer’s Commonwealth Games, Birmingham city centre will now be transformed into an artistic garden celebrating creativity and diversity as part of UNBOXED, the UK-wide celebration of science, technology, engineering and arts.”*

"It's open to all and completely free, so I encourage people to come and enjoy PoliNations and see this beautiful city in bloom."

More information can be found at polinations.com.

The PoliNations app is available now from the [App Store](#) and [Google Play](#).

- ENDS -

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NOTES TO EDITORS

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.

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 30 October 2022 – from the Outer Hebrides to Southampton 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

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.

About BBC Contains Strong Language 2022

BBC Contains Strong Language 2022 is a collaboration between the BBC and Verve Poetry Festival, Birmingham, partnering with PoliNations, Birmingham Commonwealth Games Committee, and is supported by Arts Council England, the British Council and Creative Lives.