

Press release

UNBOXED: Creativity in the UK 1 March to 2 October 2022
About Us, Paisley Abbey 1 to 6 March 2022

THE UK'S MOST AMBITIOUS CELEBRATION OF CREATIVITY OPENS TODAY WITH A THRILLING RIDE THROUGH 13.8 BILLION YEARS OF HISTORY

UNBOXED: Creativity in the UK, a once-in-a-lifetime celebration of creativity taking place across the UK in 2022, launches today, 1 March, with *About Us*, a spectacular, free open-air event created by 59 Productions, The Poetry Society and Stemettes exploring 13.8 billion years of history through the infinite ways in which humans are connected to the cosmos, nature, and one another.

Opening at Paisley Abbey, Scotland, *About Us* will also be presented in Derry-Londonderry, Caernarfon, Luton and Hull and combines multimedia installations and live performance to immerse audiences in the history of the universe, from the Big Bang to the present day. At dusk, local landmarks are transformed into vast canvases combining awe-inspiring live projection-mapped animation with poetry, music, and live choirs, including a new score by Nitin Sawhney CBE and poetry by Llŷr Gwyn Lewis, Jen Hadfield, Jason Allen-Paisant, Khairani Barokka, Grug Muse and Stephen Sexton.

By day, LED video installations will showcase the creativity of children and young people from schools across England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales through poems and Scratch animations. In Scotland, audiences will congregate in the open air at Paisley Abbey with the 25-minute show presented through the evening from 7pm to 9.15pm until 6 March.

About Us is the first of 10 major multi-site and digital creative projects commissioned as part of UNBOXED, an entirely free UK-wide programme, with events and activities stretching from the Outer Hebrides to Southampton, from Omagh to Swansea, and across traditional and online media until October. Each of the UNBOXED projects share new ideas and possibilities for the future and are the result of collaboration across science, technology, engineering, arts and maths. Arts organisations and designers, scientists and international research projects, tech companies and universities are amongst contributors forming new partnerships to develop and realise each project – hundreds of people have been employed as a result, including freelance creatives in addition to skills development opportunities and bursaries offered by the projects.

Martin Green CBE, Chief Creative Officer of UNBOXED: Creativity in the UK, said:

“About Us is the first of UNBOXED’s ten awe-inspiring major projects given life through creative collaboration across all sectors. As a result, they have created truly extraordinary audience experiences that will demonstrate the power of creativity and how important it will be to the way we work, live, learn and play in the future.”

“About Us dramatically touches on themes seen across all the UNBOXED projects, from mankind’s relationship with nature, responsibility for the environment and future possibilities for planet Earth to how people understand and interact with each other as individuals and communities. Everyone involved in making UNBOXED happen has been compelled to think about what is most important to all our futures and manifest this in projects designed to be fun and exciting, that will bring people together across the UK this year and provide inspiration for many years to come.”

Funded by

Delivered in partnership with

About Us has been created by the award-winning 59 Productions, one of the creative and technological forces behind the London 2012 Olympic Games Opening Ceremony; Stemettes, an award-winning social enterprise working to inspire and support young women and non-binary people into science, technology, engineering and maths careers; and The Poetry Society, one of the UK's most dynamic arts organisations.

Lysander Ashton, Director of 59 Productions and Creative Director for *About Us*, said:

"About Us has been a unique collaborative process bringing together poets, scientists, musicians, visual artists and school children from across England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. All of these unique voices have contributed to create a dazzlingly rich composite view of the extraordinary universe we all share. About Us is an invitation to experience a world where you are made of stars, you're built from a trillion intricate cells working in harmony, you are related to dinosaurs and you can make a connection to a billion people with the press of a button; it's a celebration of some of the incredible things that make us, us, and I can't wait for audiences to come and see it".

The UNBOXED projects open throughout the year with activity taking place across the UK until October 2022. They also include:

- ***Dandelion***, commissioned by EventScotland, a Scotland-wide project inspired by the global 'grow-your-own' movement, featuring Unexpected Gardens, vertical farms, free music festivals and plant giveaways that reimagines the harvest festival for the 21st century;
- ***Dreamachine***, presented in the UK's capital cities, an artwork experienced with your eyes closed that unlocks the power of the human mind;
- ***GALWAD: A Story from our Future***, a transmedia experience that sees Wales propelled thirty years into the future, commissioned by CreativeWales;
- ***Green Space Dark Skies***, with 20,000 'Lumenators' creating outdoor artworks in 20 of the UK's National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty;
- ***Our Place in Space***, a 10km sculpture trail scale model of the solar system designed by artist Oliver Jeffers including an interactive augmented reality app, commissioned by Belfast City Council;
- ***PoliNations*** will see giant fabricated trees and thousands of plants take over the centre of Birmingham, creating a colourful canopy for a festival of live performance including spoken word, music and drag;
- ***SEE MONSTER***, a decommissioned North Sea offshore platform in Weston-super-Mare transformed into one of the UK's largest public artworks;
- ***StoryTrails***, which uses new developments in 3D internet technology and augmented and virtual reality to reveal the hidden and forgotten histories across 15 UK towns and cities; and
- ***Tour de Moon***, a festival of nightlife and countercultures inspired by and created in collaboration with the Moon is travelling in convoy around England

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.

About Us opens the UNBOXED programme across the UK and is also the first of six events to be presented in Scotland in partnership with EventScotland including, *Dandelion*, which has been commissioned by EventScotland.

Minister for Arts (HM government), Lord Parkinson, said:

"I'm delighted this fantastic series of events is kicking off today in the historic town of Paisley. This opening performance will take people through an awe-inspiring trip through world history.

"UNBOXED is about bringing people from across the UK together, and forms part of a fantastic year of creativity, renewal and excitement alongside Her Majesty The Queen's Platinum Jubilee and the Birmingham Commonwealth Games."

Permanent Secretary in the Department for Communities (Northern Ireland), Tracy Meharg, said:

"I am delighted to see UNBOXED open in Scotland today. About Us kicks off the festival with a celebration of our creativity and talents, and the incredible world we live in. I have no doubt that the rest of the events will have a similar impact, and I look forward to experiencing the variety of programming taking place in Northern Ireland later this year, showcasing local creativity on a grand scale.

"Science, technology and the arts, which unite across the UNBOXED programme, all depend upon creativity and the ability to see the world in new and different ways. This is a fantastic opportunity for our communities to come together, learn from each other and inspire each other for the future."

Culture Minister (Scotland), Neil Gray, said:

"Scotland is a destination for world class cultural events and it is great that the Unboxed celebration of creativity is launching its programme at Paisley Abbey with the multi-media spectacular, About Us.

The Scottish commission, Dandelion, will begin in April with a series of activities rolled out across the country as community groups come together to showcase the best of Scottish music and innovation."

Deputy Minister for the Arts and Sport (Wales), Dawn Bowden, said:

"This year promises to be a celebration of creativity, based on co-creating, and involving communities right across Wales, and I'm delighted that the UNBOXED programme of events is starting on St David's Day.

"It's exciting to see some of the projects come to fruition and we look forward to welcoming the first of the UK commissions, About Us, to Caernarfon later this month. I'd encourage people to take a look at what's going on their area and get involved in these inspirational projects.

"We're also looking forward to Wales' lead commission, GALWAD, which will be the finale of the whole UNBOXED programme in October."

Central to UNBOXED are extensive learning and public participation opportunities, reaching hundreds of thousands of schoolchildren, young people and communities. These opportunities include invitations to be a part of UNBOXED through school trips, lessons, competitions, community workshops and citizen science projects. There is a full suite of resources for teachers and continuing professional development as well as new employment and skills development opportunities for diverse young creatives and freelancers. UNBOXED is working with partners, including international partner the British Council, The RSA (The royal society for arts, manufactures and commerce) and the BBC, to further global conversations about the importance of creativity and collaboration to shape better futures for people and planet.

Projects presented in Scotland are About Us (Paisley), Dandelion (Scotland-wide), Dreamachine (Edinburgh), Green Space Dark Skies (Scotland-wide), PoliNations (Edinburgh) and StoryTrails (Dundee and Dumfries).

Projects in Northern Ireland include About Us (Derry-Londonderry), Dreamachine (Belfast), Green Space Dark Skies (Various locations), Our Place in Space (Derry-Londonderry and Belfast) and StoryTrails (Omagh).

Projects in Wales include About Us (Caernarfon), Dreamachine (Cardiff), GALWAD: A Story from our Future (Blaenau Ffestiniog, Merthyr Tydfil, Swansea), Green Space Dark Skies and StoryTrails (Swansea, Newport).

Press images

A selection of images and filmed assets of **About Us** in Paisley available from 1 March at bit.ly/3hcRqfr
A selection of images from across the UNBOXED programme bit.ly/3HblrXI

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Listings

UNBOXED: Creativity in the UK

1 March to 2 October 2022

unboxed2022.uk

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Notes to Editors

- 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
- About Us**: Paisley (1-6 March, 28 February public preview), Derry–Londonderry (15-21 March), Caernarfon (30 March-5 April), Luton (14-20 April) and Hull (30 April – 6 May); **Dandelion**: Across Scotland (April - September); **Dreamachine**: Belfast, Cardiff, Edinburgh and London (3 May – 2 October); **GALWAD: A story from our future**: TV, online and on location in Blaenau Ffestiniog, Merthyr Tydfil, and Swansea (September – October); **Green Space Dark Skies**: 20 landscape locations across the UK (23 April – 30 September); **Our Place in Space**: River Foyle, Derry-Londonderry (22 April – 4 June), Divas & Black Mountain Belfast (11 June – 10 July), River Cam, Cambridge (30 July – 29 August), Ulster Transport Museum and North Down Coastal Path (17 September – 14 October); **PoliNations**: Victoria Square, Birmingham (2-18 September) and George Street, Edinburgh (6-14 August); **SEE MONSTER**: Weston-super-Mare (7 July – August); **StoryTrails**: Blackpool, Bradford, Bristol, Dumfries, Dundee, London Borough of Lambeth, London Borough of Lewisham, Lincoln, Newport, Omagh, Sheffield, Slough, Swansea, Swindon and Wolverhampton (2 July – 19 September); **Tour de Moon**: Leicester, Newcastle and Southampton, and satellite locations across England (11 May – 21 June)
- Martin Green CBE** is Chief Creative Officer of UNBOXED: Creativity in the UK and the Birmingham Commonwealth Games 2022. Previously, Martin has masterminded some of Britain's most significant major events, including the opening of The O2 in London; the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic opening and closing ceremonies; and the opening ceremony of the 2014 Tour de France Grand Départ in Leeds. Such success has earned Martin an international reputation. As CEO and Director of Hull UK City of Culture 2017, Martin delivered 365 days of transformative culture for the city to huge acclaim. He was an advisor to the Japan 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games and to the Expo 2020 Dubai. In 2018, he was awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of Hull and made CBE in the Queen's New Year's Honours list.

- 59 Productions** is a design studio and production company that specialises in story-driven design. From architectural projection mapping to exhibitions; from Virtual Reality experiences to events; from theatrical design to technical consultancy, 59's company of writers, directors, architects, animators, visual artists and technologists produce artistic work that seeks to amaze audiences of all kinds. Building on more than a decade of experience making theatrical work for some of the world's greatest venues – including Olivier and Tony Award-winning work for the National Theatre, West End and Broadway, and for many of the major cultural organisations of the world – the company has more recently become renowned for creating spectacular public artworks, projection-mapping some of the world's most iconic buildings, including the Sydney Opera House, Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, the Washington Monument in DC and the United Nations Headquarters in New York. 59 Productions is also known for projects such as the *David Bowie Is* exhibition at the V&A Museum, which it designed, and for its own multi award-winning work in Virtual Reality. 59productions.co.uk | Twitter: @59productions | Instagram: @59_productions
- The 10 UNBOXED projects are staggered and each will release new information about events and activities, including dates and locations throughout the year.

About Us: Paisley (1 to 6 March, 7pm – 9.15pm); Derry-Londonderry (15-21 March, 7.30-10pm); Caernarfon (30 March - 5 April, 8.45pm – 10.30pm); Luton (14-20 April, 9pm – 10.30pm); Hull (30 April - 6 May, 9.30pm – 10.30pm)

About Us is a series of large-scale public events that takes audiences on a journey through 13.8 billion years of our history from the Big Bang to the present day. All About Us events are outdoor, free and unticketed, and suitable for audiences of all ages.

Dandelion: Across Scotland: April - September

A Scotland-wide project featuring Unexpected Gardens, vertical farms, free music events and plant giveaways reimagines the harvest festival for the 21st century. *Dandelion* is commissioned by EventScotland and funded by the Scottish Government.

Dreamachine: Belfast, Cardiff, Edinburgh and London: 3 May – 2 October

Audiences in the UK's four capital cities are immersed in sound and light in an artwork experienced with closed eyes that explores the limitless potential of the human mind.

GALWAD: A story from our future: TV, online and on location in Blaenau Ffestiniog, Merthyr Tydfil, and Swansea: September – October

Wales' boldest talent in screen, performance and creative technology are creating a multi-platform story, GALWAD: A story from our future, with participants across Wales, to unfold in real-time over a week - exploring a possible future in 30 years time.

Green Space Dark Skies: England: Peak District National Park (23 April); Dartmoor National Park (May); Exmoor National Park (28 May); Dorset AONB (11 June); Broads National Park (June); North York Moors National Park (date tbc); and The Chilterns AONB (date tbc). **Northern Ireland:** Lagan Valley AONB (30 April); Sperrin AONB (June) and Causeway Coast (date tbc). **Scotland:** Cairngorms National Park (August) with more locations to be announced soon. **Wales:** Gower AONB (13 May); Brecon Beacons National Park (July) and Anglesey (date tbc). 23 April – 30 September

20,000 people, from the Cairngorms to The Chilterns, Gower to North York Moors and Dartmoor to the Causeway Coast of Northern Ireland, are being recruited to create large-scale outdoor artworks in 20 of the UK's most outstanding landscapes.

Our Place in Space: River Foyle, Derry-Londonderry: 22 April – 22 May; **Divis & the Black Mountain Belfast:**

11 June – 10 July; **River Cam, Cambridge:** 30 July – 29 August; **Ulster Transport Museum and North Down Coastal Path:**

17 September – 16 October

An epic scale model of the solar system designed by artist Oliver Jeffers, combining a 10km sculpture trail in Northern Ireland and Cambridge and an interactive augmented reality app, invites us to consider our relationships with each other from the perspective of our place in space.

PoliNations: Victoria Square, Birmingham: 2-18 September and **George Street, Edinburgh:** 6-14 August

PoliNations will see giant fabricated trees and thousands of plants take over the centre of Birmingham, creating a colourful canopy for a festival of live performance including spoken word, music and drag.

SEE MONSTER: The Tropicana, Weston-super-Mare: 7 July to August

A decommissioned North Sea offshore platform is transformed into an immersive public art installation and celebration of British weather in the coastal town of Weston-super-Mare, suggesting new possibilities for retired structures

StoryTrails: Blackpool, Bradford, Bristol, Dumfries, Dundee, London Borough of Lambeth, London Borough of Lewisham, Lincoln, Newport, Omagh, Sheffield, Slough, Swansea, Swindon and Wolverhampton:

2 July to 19 September

StoryTrails brings together augmented reality, new developments in 3D internet technology and the next generation of creative voices to shape one of the UK's most ambitious living history and archive projects.

Tour de Moon: Leicester, Newcastle and Southampton + locations across England: 11 May to 21 June

A festival of nightlife and countercultures inspired by and created in collaboration with the Moon is travelling in convoy around England with a mission to imagine multiple better futures for, and with, young people.

6. UNBOXED has a Learning Programme specifically for teachers and educators in a variety of settings. Young people aged between 4 and 19 are invited to take part in workshops, learn in the classroom and play a role in bringing the projects to life. The Learning Programme has been designed by educators, teachers, technicians and artists with a wealth of experience in science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics (STEAM) to meet the needs of the learner in the curricula of all four UK nations. The lesson plans, opportunities and immersive experiences can be used flexibly to align with year group and subject specific objectives. They also offer insight into career pathways and develop the creative and collaborative skills that define the future of work.
7. The **British Council** is the UK's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. It builds connections, understanding and trust between people in the UK and other countries through arts and culture, education and the English language. In 2019-2020 we reached over 75 million people directly and 758 million people overall including online, broadcasts and publications. Founded in 1934 we are a UK charity governed by Royal Charter and a UK public body. We receive a 14.5 per cent core funding grant from the UK government. As international partner for UNBOXED: Creativity in the UK, the British Council will support the festival's international engagement programme, using its extensive overseas networks to help creative teams access new international opportunities, partnerships and audiences. The UNBOXED objectives, to bring people together and showcase UK creativity and innovation internationally, align closely with the British Council's mission. Together, UNBOXED and the British Council will drive a global conversation about the importance of creativity, and its vital contribution to social and economic development. www.britishcouncil.org