

TRANSFORMING

NARRATIVES

BANGLADESH | BIRMINGHAM | PAKISTAN

Media Release: Thursday 21 March

Transforming Narratives launches in Birmingham

- **A ground-breaking, three-year programme**
- **Plans to establish Birmingham as a leading international centre for contemporary Pakistan and Bangladeshi arts.**
- **The project links Birmingham with major cities in Pakistan and Bangladesh.**
- **Delivered by 12 diverse Birmingham-based cultural organisations and managed by Culture Central.**

This week sees the official launch of **Transforming Narratives**, a ground-breaking three-year project that will establish Birmingham as a leading international centre for contemporary Pakistan and Bangladeshi arts. **Managed by Culture Central it is supported by Arts Council England and delivered in association with The British Council.**

The formal launch of **Transforming Narratives** took place on Thursday 21 March in an event at Birmingham Repertory Theatre hosted by BBC Asian Network's Nadia Ali and attended by the Lord Mayor of Birmingham, Councillor Yvonne Mosquito, Mr Ahmar Ismail, Consulate General Pakistan and Mr Muhammed Nazmul Hoqu, Assistant High Commissioner Bangladesh.

Delivered by 12 diverse Birmingham-based cultural organisations **Transforming Narratives** links Birmingham with major cities in Pakistan and Bangladesh and will lead to new artistic works, a cultural leadership programme, new audiences, creative exchange and dialogue as well as artistic archiving.

Partners include: Birmingham Contemporary Music Group (BCMG); Birmingham Museums Trust (BMT); Birmingham Repertory Theatre; Fierce Festival; Ikon Gallery; Kalaboration; Legacy West Midlands; Midlands Arts Centre; South Asian Diaspora Arts Archive (SADAA); Sampad; Sonia Sabri Company and Soul City Arts / Mohammed Ali.

One of the biggest British Council projects in a UK city, organisations from Birmingham are travelling to Pakistan and Bangladesh to meet with artists there, to share learning and start to develop artistic projects which will take place during the life of the project. For the launch weekend, the Birmingham team were joined by arts leaders from Bangladesh who are in Birmingham to experience the city's cultural offer.

The project launches with two collaborative events at Birmingham Repertory Theatre signalling the start of the artistic programme. Already sold out, **Sigh of the Musaafir** takes place on Saturday 23 March led by **Artistic Director Mukhtar Dar** is a cutting-edge international collaboration featuring artists from Pakistan and Birmingham.

Bangladesh to Birmingham takes place on **Sunday 24 March at Birmingham Repertory Theatre** and is an immersive dining experience that invites guests to experience the sounds, sights and flavours of Bangladesh as they enjoy an authentic three-course Bangladeshi meal, prepared by award-winning chef Munayam Khan. Guests will be surrounded by film projections from in and around Dhaka created by **artist and curator Mohammed Ali** with music performed live by Bangladeshi artists who are here especially for this event.

Sophina Jagot, Transforming Narratives Project Manager said: “It is fantastic that we are able to launch Transforming Narratives here in Birmingham, for decades people have left their homes to forge a new life in Birmingham, but their stories have rarely been told. Working with partners here in the City as well as in the cities of Bangladesh and Pakistan we are uncovering these stories and look forward to sharing them.

“This project is a real opportunity for us to establish Birmingham as the leader in contemporary Pakistan and Bangladeshi arts both in terms of the artistic programme we will develop but through working with communities, stakeholders and artists to develop skills and encourage debate and knowledge sharing. I hope you will join us on this journey.”

Peter Knott, Area Director, Arts Council England said: “There are strong links between diversity and creativity, and it will be fascinating to see how the different city environments and landscapes involved in Transforming Narratives will inspire artists and inform audiences.

“We are delighted that this National Lottery funding is supporting a project which will celebrate and explore history and tradition, while focusing on creating new stories at an international level, for everyone to share and enjoy.”

Kathy McArdle, Director of England & Cities, British Council said: “Transforming Narratives builds on the vibrant and diverse artistic talent of South Asian communities in Birmingham, Bangladesh and Pakistan for the mutual benefit of all three places, whose histories, heritage and stories are intrinsically interconnected.

“This hugely ambitious three-year programme aims to establish Birmingham as a global leader and pioneer in contemporary South Asian cultural programmes, which is an ambition we fully support. Transforming Narratives is relevant, necessary and important, drawing inspiration from the past, but being resolutely focused on the present.

“As the UK’s organisation for cultural relations between the UK and other countries, we are immensely proud to play a small part in this wonderful project and look forward to the opportunities it brings for artists, curators, programmers, audiences and residents of Birmingham and our partner cities in Bangladesh and Pakistan.”

Find out more about **Transforming Narratives** online at www.transformingnarratives.com or follow us on social media: Twitter - @T_Narratives; Instagram - @transformingnarratives; Facebook – TransformingNarratives.

Tickets are still available for **Bangladesh to Birmingham on Sunday 24 March**. Please book via: <https://www.birmingham-rep.co.uk/whats-on/bangladesh-to-birmingham.html>

Arts Council England is investing £660,000 of National Lottery money in Transforming Narratives, as part of the Ambition for Excellence scheme, an Arts Council fund to develop artistic and cultural talent and leadership and give an international dimension to excellent work.

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For further information contact Helen Annetts, PR on behalf of Transforming Narratives on 07779 026720 or email HelenLAnnetts@hotmail.co.uk

Images available for use here:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/rpt5r2px72pw2yz/AADgZZfdSudCOJpWmLS8qXtWa?dl=0>

Notes to Editors

Transforming Narratives is a project to establish Birmingham as a global centre for contemporary arts from Pakistan and Bangladesh taking place from 2018 – 2021. The project brings together artists and cultural organisations from across artforms, who are located in Birmingham and cities in Pakistan and Bangladesh. Transforming Narratives allows for new ideas and artistic practices to be shared, leading to the creation of new work that will give previously unheard voices an international platform.

Transforming Narratives is managed by Culture Central, and delivered in partnership with The British Council and 12 Birmingham-based cultural partners. Transforming Narratives is funded by Arts Council England's Ambition for Excellence programme with support from the British Council.

www.transformingnarratives.com

Birmingham-based cultural partners include:

- Birmingham Contemporary Music Group (BCMG)
- Birmingham Museums Trust (BMT)
- Birmingham Repertory Theatre
- Fierce Festival
- Ikon Gallery
- Kalaboration
- Legacy West Midlands
- Midlands Arts Centre
- South Asian Diaspora Arts Archive (SADAA)
- Sampad
- Sonia Sabri Company
- Soul City Arts / Mohammed Ali

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The British Council is the UK's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. We work with over 100 countries in the fields of arts and culture, English language, education and civil society. Each year we directly reach over 65 million people and more than 660 million people via broadcasts and publications. We make a positive contribution to the countries we work with – changing lives by creating opportunities, building connections and engendering trust.

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