

Manchester City of Literature

PRESS RELEASE

For 30th January 2024

UNESCO CITIES OF LITERATURE CELEBRATE INTERNATIONAL MOTHER LANGUAGE DAY 2024 WITH NEW COLLABORATIVE AND MULTILINGUAL EXHIBITION

International Mother Language Day, which takes place on 21st February each year, promotes unity in diversity and international understanding through multilingualism and multiculturalism and has been internationally recognised since 1999.

There are a range of activities taking place across the global Cities of Literature network to celebrate International Mother Language Day including an exhibition in Manchester City of Literature and online featuring ten UNESCO Cities of Literature on the theme of 'Threads'.

The exhibition features creative materials, textiles and writing from Odesa in Ukraine and nine other Cities of Literature, including camouflage nets of the Ukrainian defender created using a technique called "Kikimora". Kikimora is also a character in Slavic fairy tales and can be good or evil depending on whom she is dealing with. To these nets creators tie in symbolic lines of poetry, woven hearts and ribbons before they are sent to be used to protect people and equipment.

Materials also featured in the exhibition include embroidered artwork from Sísí Ingólfssdóttir, a feminist artist in Reykjavík, Iceland; traditional dress from Granada in Spain; handkerchiefs with Frisian poetry woven through them which were used to wave to ships at a major cultural event in Leeuwarden, the Netherlands. Exciting new writing and artwork by Angelika Kukioła on the theme has been commissioned by Wrocław in Poland.

Melbourne in Australia and Exeter, Nottingham and Manchester (where the exhibition is physically hosted) in the UK have also contributed poetry and artwork to the exhibition. A digital version of the exhibition can be found here: <https://www.manchestercityofliterature.com/project/threads/>.

Several Cities of Literature are also taking part in Not Just Words, a communal reading project taking place just after IMLD on 24th February in support of Ukrainian language and literature in a show of solidarity with the Odesa Literature Museum in an initiative led by Milan City of Literature.

In addition to these projects, Barcelona City of Literature is holding a month-long celebration of the fact that up to 300 languages are spoken in the city as they present the results of a new survey on

multiculturalism. Events take place across 8 libraries and will include workshops for children, lectures on the likes of Arabic, Amazic, African, Armenian and Kurdish and Persian languages, plus interpretations by artists and poets on mapping family languages.

Dunedin, New Zealand have shared a waiata (song), HUIA TE AROHA, written in te reo Māori by young musicians Te Atarau Cassidy, Jordyn Katipa-Martin, Chanse Peita and Monique Tahere and performed by He Waka Kōtuia from their album Te Mahi Tamariki (Meetinghouse Records); directed by Mumu Moore, translation to English by Komene Cassidy.

Edinburgh City of Literature is leading Scotland's celebrations by partnering with the Gaelic Books Council for a character-building session and role-playing games with James Gillespie's High School, which will take place on 21st February to celebrate International Mother Language Day 2024.

Manchester is holding 22 events around the city to celebrate including language tours and trails, a three day conference on translation, multilingual storytimes for children, multilingual family spoken word and an online conference 'Towards a Multilingual Utopia' featuring Gothenburg and Leeuwarden UNESCO Cities of Literature.

To find out more about the events mentioned above and how the Cities of Literature network is celebrating International Mother Language Day this year please visit <https://www.citiesoflit.com/> and <https://www.manchestercityofliterature.com/event/international-mother-language-day-2024/>.

ENDS

Additional Information

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Please find all images and relevant logos in the email/folder attached to this press release.

Follow the social media hashtag #MotherLanguageDay.

UNESCO Creative Cities of Literature Network Lead

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Manchester UNESCO City of Literature

Manchester was successful in its bid to join UNESCO's worldwide Creative Cities network as a City of Literature in 2017. Joining 52 other Cities of Literature, a consortium including Manchester City Council, the Universities, Manchester Literature Festival plus a range of the city's writers, publishers and literary organisations formed to enable this to happen. Manchester City of Literature is a charity that manages the UNESCO designation on behalf of over thirty partner organisations. Our vision is to create an innovative, distinctive, equitable, globally connected city of reading and writing. We want Manchester to be a city where diverse voices are celebrated, creative talent and industries are nurtured and where literary activity changes lives.

UNESCO Cities of Literature

UNESCO's City of Literature programme is part of a wider Creative Cities Network which was launched in 2004 and is currently made up of more than 350 UNESCO Creative Cities globally. Members are drawn from more than 100 countries and cover seven creative fields: Crafts & Folk Art, Design, Film, Gastronomy, **Literature**, Music, and Media Arts. The Network was born out of UNESCO's Global Alliance for Cultural Diversity initiative, which was created in 2002. For more information on the UCCN please visit: <https://en.unesco.org/creative-cities/home> and for more information on the 53 Cities of Literature please visit <https://www.citiesoflit.com/>