



## ***Unlocked***

### **A new series of short films exploring what it means to be free**

- **Sky Arts joins with Coventry City of Culture to support the region's up and coming talent**
  - **Coventry artists bring their stories to national audiences**
  - **Films screened on Sky Arts (Freeview Channel 11) on 16<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> May at 11pm**

**11/05/22**-- On consecutive Monday evenings later this month, Sky Arts will screen ***Unlocked***, a new series of ten short films, featuring Coventry's brightest talents.

Late last year, following a tumultuous time of lockdowns and reduced experiences, **Sky Arts** awarded commissions to ten artists, to create a new series of short films on the subject of freedom. Now, the ten new films, encompassing drama, dance, poetry, love, despair, imprisonment, freedom and celebration are to be seen on screen for the first time.



In a unique collaboration, and in recognition of Coventry's year as the UK's City of Culture, Sky Arts partnered with **Arts Council England, Coventry City of Culture Trust, The Space** and the city's emerging artist platform, **Shoot Festival**, to discover and unlock the potential of ten diverse Coventry artists, providing them with an opportunity to tell, to national audiences, new, insightful stories about the world in which we live.

'Unlocked' brings the observations and preoccupations of a wide range of Coventry artists to our homes. The concept of 'freedom' being one of the City of Culture's main themes, each artist was invited to submit their ideas for short films responding to the question 'what does it mean to be free?' Chosen from an open-call, each successful artist received bespoke mentoring and support from industry professionals, helping them to create new digital broadcast content.

Phil Edgar-Jones, Director of Sky Arts said: "We really have been impressed by the films, they're all so rich in narrative and diverse in nature. From spoken word that examines masculinity and self-

expression to poignant dramas that move between despair, humour and love, the films truly have unlocked an enormous amount of creative talent from across the Coventry region. I'm delighted that Sky Arts is able to provide a platform on which we can showcase and celebrate their stories."

Chenine Bhatena, Creative Director of the Coventry City of Culture Trust said: "This selection of new short films represent many different voices and views of the world, from a range of Coventry based creatives - stories that are local but global in their resonance. Full of heart, they reveal the soul of our city. I am thrilled to have collaborated with Sky Arts, Shoot and The Space as we continue to test the future of storytelling for TV in Coventry and unlock so much rich talent from our city."

Shoot Festival Co-Artistic Directors Jen Davis and Paul O'Donnell said: "We have always proudly championed the artists who call Coventry and Warwickshire home and it is enormously exciting to be supporting these creatives as they showcase their extraordinary talents on an incredible national platform."

**To be screened on 16 May at 11pm:**

**Volume 1**

Irish, Blacks & Dogs - 8 mins 28

Unrestrained - 6 mins 56

Other (Please Specify) - 8 mins 57

Devi - 6 mins 44

Birds - 9 mins 24

**To be screened on 23 May at 11pm:**

**Volume 2**

Widow's Might - 9 mins 49

Out Out - 9 mins 26

On These Streets We Shine - 6 mins 20

It Starts With Me - 6 mins 37

Sent to Cov - 7 mins 50

- **Irish, Blacks & Dogs by Jack Norris:** An ageing Irish immigrant with prejudiced views suffers a fall. When a young black paramedic comes to his aide; he is forced to confront his worldview.
- **Unrestrained by Ascension Dance (Choreographed by Ashley Jordan / Performed by Jess Dowdeswell & Ben Morley):** UNRESTRAINED combines movement from dance and parkour in an inclusive manner to demonstrate the strength we have as humans and the beauty in creating space

for bodies of all types. UNRESTRAINED embellishes on a love for movement to create a duet with that has 2 people swinging, climbing and catching, demonstrating a joy from freedom of movement, and showing that with thought, nothing is impossible.

- **Other (Please Specify) by Ayesha Jones:** Exploring how the mixed heritage experience can help us break free from otherness and the social constructs of "race", Other (Please Specify) draws on the lived experience of those who have parents that originate from different places.
- **Devi by Hannah Kumari:** A woman stuck in a cycle of addiction finds hope in an unlikely place. Inspired by Hannah's personal story.
- **Birds by Susie Sillett:** Birds takes place in the aftermath of Kediye's unexpected arrest, told from the perspective of his partner Sophia who is suddenly alone with limited contact. An intimate and honest exploration of the impact of prison of both inmates and their loved ones: this is a story of love, resilience and hope.
- **Widow's Might by Alexandra Johnson:** A Coventry woman has given everything up looking after her dying husband of over 40 years. He long ago stopped being the man she married. She loves him absolutely, yet his death unlocks her life.
- **Out Out by Sarah Worth and Highly Sprung:** A bold new dance film that unlocks the voices of Coventry's LGBTQIA+ community. Bringing to the mainstream voices that are often hidden, in a celebration of togetherness and coming out.
- **On These Streets We Shine by Emilie Lauren Jones:** A spoken word celebration focusing on the importance of community groups across the country. This short film shines a light on clubs consisting of drummers, bird-watchers, gaelic footballers and more, and reflects on the positive impact these groups have on the individuals who are part of them.
- **It Starts With Me by Boaz Adelekan:** An exploration of the difficulties of manhood through the spoken word. A young black man reflects on the stabbing of his friend, but can identifying his greatest fears and discovering his 'why' enable him to be free?
- **Sent to Cov by Tom Wright:** A young queer woman nervously brings her loving but boujee partner back to her hometown of Coventry for the very first time.

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**Notes for Editors**

**Sky Arts**

Sky Arts exists to bring more art to more people across the UK. In 2020, with the creative industries under serious threat, we threw open our doors to make the channel free for everyone to watch. We've redoubled our mission to increase access to the arts and we're committed to getting everyone involved as the industry recovers. The fact is, we need the arts now like never before, and Sky Arts brings them straight to your living room.

Collaboration is at the heart of what we do. Sky Arts is the headline sponsor of National Theatre Live in the UK and we work with cultural partners across the country including the English National Opera, Royal Academy of Arts, Tate, Creative Industries Federation and Coventry City of Culture to name but a few.

You can watch Sky Arts for free on Freeview channel 11 and Freesat channel 147. If you've got Sky or a Now TV entertainment pass, you can also watch over 2,000 hours of shows exclusively on demand.

### **Arts Council England**

Arts Council England is the national development agency for creativity and culture. We have set out our strategic vision in *Let's Create* that by 2030 we want England to be a country in which the creativity of each of us is valued and given the chance to flourish and where everyone of us has access to a remarkable range of high quality cultural experiences. We invest public money from Government and The National Lottery to help support the sector and to deliver this vision. [www.artscouncil.org.uk](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk)

Following the Covid-19 crisis, the Arts Council developed a £160 million **Emergency Response Package**, with nearly 90% coming from the National Lottery, for organisations and individuals needing support. We are also one of the bodies administering the Government's unprecedented £1.96 billion **Culture Recovery Funds**. Find out more at [www.artscouncil.org.uk/covid19](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/covid19).

### **Coventry UK City of Culture 2021**

Coventry UK City of Culture 2021 commenced on 15 May 2021, running for 12 months. The 365-day cultural programme reflects Coventry as a diverse, modern city, demonstrating that culture is a force that changes lives. Coventry is the UK's only city of peace and reconciliation, and known internationally as a city of welcome, a city of activists and pioneers, innovation, and invention, and now a City of Culture.

Coventry is the city where movement began, from innovation in the transport industry to a history of welcome, it has moved people for centuries. For a whole year, Coventry is celebrating with events, music, dance, theatre, and large-scale spectacle. As well as the expected celebrations, it is throwing a spotlight onto city voices with a range of hyper local experiences and ways to get involved across every neighbourhood. And it's not just Coventry. This epic celebration also witnesses the entire region getting involved and benefitting from the opportunities that being City of Culture brings.

Our year of culture is co-created with the people of Coventry and is bringing about long-term social, economic, and cultural benefits.

### **Shoot Festival**

Following their own experiences, Festival Directors Jennifer Davis and Paul O'Donnell were inspired to create a platform to support the growth and development of early career artists based in Coventry and Warwickshire. Since it was established in 2014, Shoot Festival has curated five festivals and has a network of over 100 artists and nine assistant producers which they have supported over the past 8 years.

In April 2020, they reacted quickly to the nationwide lockdown by premiering 'Shut Down but Scratching', an online scratch night showcasing 10 local artists in short form, live-streamed works.

Shoot Festival returned to Coventry in April 2022 and welcomed over 2000 audience members across six city centre venues celebrating the plethora of local talent the CV postcode has to offer.

### **The Space**

The Space was founded in 2013 by Arts Council England and the BBC and is an independent Community Interest Company. Our mission is to empower the UK's cultural sector to inspire audiences through digital content and experiences. We support arts, heritage and community organisations, including museums and libraries, to produce digital creative content. We enable them to connect with diverse audiences and visitors, engaging them in digital cultural and creative experiences - whether in person, online or through TV and radio. [thespace.org](https://thespace.org) | [@thespacearts](https://www.instagram.com/thespacearts)