

PRESS RELEASE

**COVENT GARDEN UNVEILS LANDMARK AERIAL INSTALLATION *A CENTURY OF BECOMING*,
CELEBRATING 100 YEARS OF THE ROYAL BALLET SCHOOL**



- Covent Garden unveils a major new aerial installation celebrating 100 years of The Royal Ballet School
- Commissioned by Covent Garden, *A Century of Becoming* is a large-scale installation by sculptural artist Pauline Loctin, inspired by the grace and movement of ballet and celebrating the enduring legacy of The Royal Ballet School
- Floating throughout Central Avenue from 22nd June for 3 months, the aerial installation will feature 25 two-metre-long hand-crafted paper folded sculptures, spanning the full 50m length of the central promenade that runs directly through the Market Building
- The scale of the installation reflects the dedication embedded within both artistic creation and ballet training; over 200 sheets of hand folded paper, resulting in more than 26,000 individual folds meticulously crafted to create the 25 suspended sculptures
- The installation also draws inspiration from the architecture of The Royal Ballet School and the geometric lines of the *Bridge of Aspiration*, the celebrated pedestrian bridge designed by WilkinsonEyre to connect the School with the Royal Opera House. Named for the ambitions of the young dancers who cross it, the bridge has become a powerful symbol of the journey from training to professional performance
- The commission forms a key part of Covent Garden's summer programme, alongside a six-day programme transforming the Piazza into a vibrant hub of dance, creativity and culture, with free public screenings of full-length Royal Ballet School classes, dance-inspired films, student choreography showcases and interactive experiences starting 22nd June

For Release: 10th June 2026

In celebration of The Royal Ballet School's centenary, Covent Garden has commissioned sculptural paper artist Pauline Loctin to create a new landmark aerial installation inspired by 100 years of The Royal Ballet School. Launching on 22nd June and on view until mid-September, the large-scale artwork will be suspended within the historic Market Building, transforming the iconic Central Avenue into an immersive celebration of movement, grace and artistic expression. Drawing on the beauty and fluidity of dance, the installation will invite visitors to look skyward and experience ballet reimagined through sculpture in the heart of London's West End.

A New Aerial Installation in Covent Garden

Drawing inspiration from the enduring legacy of ballet in Covent Garden, and The Royal Ballet School's contribution to the art form over the last century, the installation celebrates the beauty of movement through 25 hand-crafted paper sculptural elements suspended in the air. Designed to capture the fluidity, precision and grace of dancers in motion, the artwork, spanning 50 metres, will transform the space with a striking visual display that reveals new perspectives from every vantage point, creating an immersive experience for visitors.

Crafted using GF Smith Colorplan paper, the colour palette of the installation unfolds through a subtle gradient of purple, red and blue, with each colour blending into the next, expressing the continuous transmission of knowledge across generations, tracing the journey of growth and transformation at the School and creating a visual journey through a century of artistic excellence. Alongside the coloured paper, selected sculptural elements incorporate hand-painted surfaces created with water and ink, introducing subtle variations in tone and texture.

Artist Pauline Loctin commented: *"For a century, The Royal Ballet School has shaped bodies into instruments of precision, discipline, and grace where repetition becomes mastery, and movement becomes language. This installation extends my exploration of the paper tutu, reimagined as a suspended choreography of folds each pli   a gesture, both precise and alive. Like paper, the body remembers. Through sculpted folds, I give form to what is usually unseen: the imprint of movement, the rigour of training, the transmission of excellence across generations. Colour and rhythm unfold in space like a silent ballet, echoing the diversity and vitality of the dancers it celebrates. A century of becoming held in every fold."*

The sculptures are created using tessellation, a highly intricate folding technique inspired by origami and rooted in sacred geometry, repetition and rhythm. Much like the discipline of ballet itself, tessellation relies on precision, patience and the mastery of repeated gestures. The resulting patterns echo the pleating techniques found in haute couture and ballet costume design, creating a dialogue between paper, textile craftsmanship and performance.

The installation also draws inspiration from the architecture of The Royal Ballet School and the geometric lines of the *Bridge of Aspiration*, the celebrated pedestrian bridge designed by WilkinsonEyre to connect the School with the Royal Opera House. Through its sculptural language of folds, colour and movement, the work brings together architecture, dance and heritage craftsmanship into a suspended choreography that unfolds above visitors.

The scale of the installation reflects the dedication embedded within both artistic creation and ballet training: over 200 sheets of paper were folded by hand, resulting in more than 26,000 individual folds meticulously crafted to create the 25 suspended sculptures.

Born and based in France, Pauline Loctin is a multidisciplinary artist and creative director renowned for her contemporary sculptural practice, transforming paper and fabric into immersive installations through intricate folding techniques. Exploring the interplay between material, movement and narrative, her work creates sensory experiences that encourage audiences to engage with space in unexpected ways. Loctin crafts rhythmic, three-dimensional forms that evolve with light, movement and perspective, bringing a sense of fluidity and wonder to each installation.

The commission holds particular significance for Loctin, whose artistic journey began in the world of performance. Trained as a classical violinist, she performed with symphony orchestras and regularly played for ballet rehearsals, fostering an early appreciation for the rhythm, discipline and artistry of dance that continues to inform her work today.

Celebrating 100 Years of The Royal Ballet School in Covent Garden

A Century of Becoming serves as the centrepiece of Covent Garden's wider celebrations of The Royal Ballet School's centenary. From 22nd June, a six-day programme will transform the Piazza into a vibrant hub of dance, creativity and cultural discovery, with free public screenings of ballet classes and performances, including, for the first time, full-length Royal Ballet School classes open to public viewing on-screen, alongside dance-inspired films, student choreography showcases and interactive experiences. Visitors will also be able to discover *Ballet in Bloom*, a floral installation by Covent Garden's Head Horticulturalist, alongside a sculpture by former English National Ballet dancer and artist Amber Hunt, bringing an additional artistic dimension to the celebrations.

As part of the wider Piazza experience, running from 20th to 28th June, **Chapel Down** will partner with Covent Garden, offering a picnic-style setting for guests to stay, sip and enjoy the programme of Royal Ballet School activities. Coinciding with **English Wine Week**, drinks will be available alongside a curated menu from **Courtyard Wine Cellars**, featuring a selection of afternoon tea treats and charcuterie.

Spanning the Piazza, the celebration will also feature a line-up of food, drink and lifestyle pop-ups. Highlights include matcha from **TOKKIA**, cookies from **Blondies Kitchen** and visitors will also be able to shop official Royal Ballet School merchandise.

The programme reflects Covent Garden's enduring connection to ballet and performance. Home to The Royal Ballet School's Upper School and neighbouring the Royal Opera House, the destination has played an integral role in the School's story for more than two decades, making it a fitting setting in which to celebrate 100 years of artistic excellence and innovation.

Bringing together performance, storytelling and immersive public experiences, Covent Garden's and The Royal Ballet School's centenary programme honours 100 years of dance excellence while inviting visitors to experience ballet in a new and accessible way in the heart of London.

Now Playing in Covent Garden

The centenary celebrations form part of *Now Playing in Covent Garden*, the destinations summer-long programme of screenings, sport, performance and cultural experiences taking place throughout the neighbourhood. Alongside The Royal Ballet School takeover, visitors can enjoy live screenings of West End LIVE and Wimbledon on the Piazza, alongside food and drink pop-ups, immersive activations and alfresco experiences open to all, making Covent Garden one of London's and the West End's most vibrant destinations throughout the summer season.

For more information on Covent Garden & The Royal Ballet School's programme of events, Pauline Loctin or Covent Garden's summer programme of events, visit the official Covent Garden website or email coventgarden@thebeaconuk.com

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Notes to Editors

About Shaftesbury Capital

Shaftesbury Capital PLC ("Shaftesbury Capital") is the leading central London mixed-use REIT and is a constituent of the FTSE-250 Index. Our property portfolio under management, valued at £5.4 billion, extends to 2.8 million square feet of lettable space across the most vibrant areas of London's West End. With a diverse mix of shops, restaurants, cafés, bars, residential apartments and offices, our destinations include the high footfall, thriving neighbourhoods of Covent Garden, Carnaby, Soho and Chinatown. Our properties are close to the main West End Underground stations and transport hubs for the Elizabeth Line.

In April 2025, Shaftesbury Capital and Norges Bank Investment Management ("NBIM") formed a long-term partnership, in respect of the Covent Garden estate. Shaftesbury Capital retains 75 per cent ownership and

management control over the estate. The partnership brings together two long-term investors with a shared confidence in and ambitions for the growth prospects of the Covent Garden estate and the West End. Shaftesbury Capital shares are listed on the London Stock Exchange ("LSE") (primary) and the Johannesburg Stock Exchange ("JSE") (secondary) and the A2X (secondary).

Our purpose

Investing to create thriving destinations in London's West End where people enjoy visiting, working, and living.

Our values

We have a set of values that are fundamental to our behaviour, decision making and the delivery both of our purpose and strategy: Act with integrity; Take a creative approach; Listen and collaborate; Take a responsible, long-term view; and Make a difference.

About Covent Garden

Covent Garden is a world-class global destination in the heart of the West End, including the iconic Piazza, Market Building and surrounding streets, together with Seven Dials. The portfolio is home to over 200 retail stores including global flagships, British and independent brands as well as 200 restaurants, bars and cafes. www.coventgarden.london [@coventgardenldn](https://www.instagram.com/coventgardenldn)

About Pauline Loctin

Pauline Loctin is a multidisciplinary artist and creative director whose contemporary sculptural practice transforms paper and fabric through intricate folding techniques into immersive, sensory installations.

Drawing on principles of repetition, geometry and material tension, Loctin manipulates surfaces into rhythmic, three-dimensional forms that shift with light, movement and perspective. Rooted in narrative and precision, her work balances technical craft with poetic expression, creating moments of quiet wonder that invite audiences to pause, gather and engage through form, visual language and spatial experience.

Pauline Loctin's previous work has included collaborations with dancers from the Dance Theatre of Harlem and Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre, the New York Times and having her large-scale sculptural installations exhibited at the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts and 2024's London Design Festival.

About The Royal Ballet School

- The Royal Ballet School was founded by Dame Ninette de Valois in 1926 and began as The Academy of Choreographic Art.
- The Royal Ballet School is one of the world's most celebrated centres for classical ballet training. It is the leading classical ballet school in the UK and an international institution, attracting dancers with exceptional potential from the UK and worldwide.
- Students are selected based on talent and potential, regardless of academic ability or financial means. Over 90% of students receive financial support, with around 25% on full support. The work of the School is only possible through generous support from donors.
- The School trains more than 200 full-time students across its two sites: White Lodge in Richmond Park and Upper School in Covent Garden.

- Graduates of the School go on to professional careers with The Royal Ballet, Birmingham Royal Ballet, and other leading UK and international companies. 80% of The Royal Ballet dancers trained at The Royal Ballet School.
- For nearly a century, the School has produced dancers and choreographers of international renown. Notable alumni include Margot Fonteyn, Kenneth MacMillan, Darcey Bussell, Lauren Cuthbertson, Marianela Nuñez, Marcelino Sambé and Christopher Wheeldon.
- Throughout their time at the School, students are supported in exploring the art of choreography through the Ninette de Valois Choreographic Programme, in honour of the founder's commitment to nurturing the creative impulse in emerging young artists.
- The School is committed to widening access to classical ballet through its national Associate Programme, which offers high-quality ballet training to students aged 8 to 18 at nine centres UK-wide. More than 1,000 students will train through the Associate Programme in 2026/27.
- The School sets the standard for the future of classical ballet training with its extensive teacher training programmes for the vocational or recreational sector.
- In 2026, The Royal Ballet School celebrates its centenary with a year-long programme of performances, events and partnerships, opening up its work to wider audiences.
- With a legacy built on excellence and a future focused on expanding opportunity and access, the School continues to shape the next century of classical ballet.