

Career Insights from 21+ Forward-Thinking Creatives

C R E A

T I V E

Celebrating

365

days of our
community

J O U R

N E Y S

the \ CREATIVE
OCCUPATION

Edited by Lorelle Skelton



What a year!

On 27th July 2021, I launched a platform - The Creative Occupation - to help uplift, connect and support diverse creatives. This book honours one whole orbit around the Sun since that day, and is a celebration of everything our community has built together.

CREATIVE JOURNEYS combines interviews, artwork and musings in an exploration of the, often winding, path we're all on as creatives. Within these 90 pages we hear from designers, illustrators, artists, founders, and more, as they share their stories; their highs and lows and their learnings along the way.

Whatever stage you're at in your career, I hope that you can find wisdom in this book. I hope that it provides you with some useful insights, that it makes you feel inspired and, most importantly, that you're amongst friends.

Read it, share it, thank you.

Lorelle x



Photo Credit: Ellie Grace Photography

About Lorelle Skelton

Lorelle is the Sheffield-based founder of The Creative Occupation, a Graphic Designer and mama to a toddler. She also runs a conscious creative and consulting business with her husband. Learn more at

www.greatgoodconsulting.co.uk

What does the word 'journey' mean to you?

Process
over
product

@artico__s

Interviews

Kei Maye

Jane Bowyer

Heidi & Halah El-Kholy

Ami Vadi

Dani Molyneux

Kofi Nelson

Laura Bertinelli

Joke Amusan

Javie Huxley

Murugiah

Ayesha Pearce

Nadina Ali

Mary Hemingway

Tihara Smith

Helen Tong

Devi & Iqrah

Judith Poitras-Raynault

Kieron Lewis

Katie O'Rourke





Kei Maye



We're kicking off with a brand new feature... it's Kei, a London-based multi-disciplinary creator, educator and the founder of Creative Champs; a learning platform for creators and creative business owners. She's got 17 years of industry experience and she's passionate about sharing the wealth to empower frustrated creators. We were so excited to chat with Kei and she did not disappoint with this frank and truly inspirational journey; from dark places to confidently doing what she loves.

Kei, what's your creative occupation?

I'm a creative consultant, teacher and founder of a learning platform for creators called Creative Champs.

Where have you been?

I've been to many a dark place. From being an absolute anomaly on my university course, to feeling like a complete impostor the entire time I was there, to never being able to afford to go on the same trips that seemed to catapult everyone else's creative careers.

I've been in a place where I had absolutely no confidence - and I mean none. It was only in the years after uni that I truly started to learn to even like myself, let alone anything else; once I stepped into my power - things have been going from strength to strength ever since.

I've been involved in the creative industry since I was 15 (I got my first paid gig at 17), went to uni to study Graphic Design & Visual Communication, and graduated in 2010.

Uni made me fall out of love with Graphic Design, I'm not even going to lie to you. I actually hated that experience, but I wouldn't change it because the time I spent there has been the biggest driving force behind Creative Champs.

After graduating, I pivoted into various creative disciplines; learned that it's okay to try out different things and that you don't have to handcuff yourself to anything.

This one life, we should be able to spend it exploring and doing all of the things that tickle our fancy, 'cause no one wants to reach a point in their life where they're torturing themselves with 'what if?'

“Always learning, always picking things up along the way – always listening and taking notes. Always adapting.”

Where are you now?

I'm in a space where I'm able to wake up and do exactly what I love for a living after spending nearly two decades juggling everything and trying to find my way.

I'm in a more confident space. If you had asked me if I would be a public speaker a short 4 years ago, I would have laughed it off as the silliest thing ever. Fast forward to the present day and I've just completed my 50th public speaking event (who would have thought?).

I'm the founder, director (and sole employee) of Creative Champs; a learning platform designed to make expert knowledge, resources and support more easily accessible for creators from under-represented backgrounds.

Where are you going?

Forward. Always learning, always picking things up along the way - always listening and taking notes. Always adapting.

Finally, what's occupying your thoughts today?

How I'm going to organise the remainder of my week! This is the busiest week I've had since starting my business, so I'm working out how best to structure my time and energy so as not to burn out and overwhelm myself.

www.creativechamps.co

What does the word 'journey' mean to you?

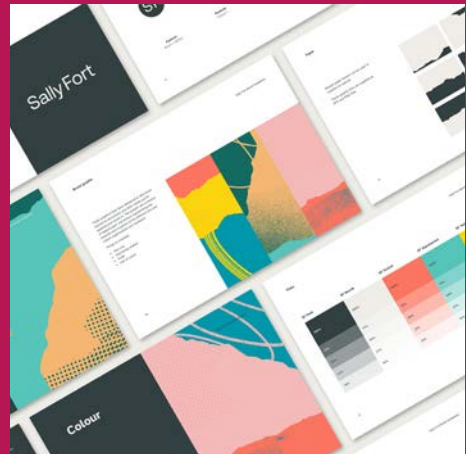
Having a destination in mind. You have a general idea about how you'll get there, you know you'll see wonderful things. There might be some bumps in the road, you might need more rests than you envisaged. You might even break down all together, but you'll recover. You'll get back on your route. You might even have to take a detour, go off course from the one you'd planned.

But one way or another...

**you'll get to
where you're
meant to be.**



@bowyerjane @studiocalledjane @womeninprintuk





Jane Bowyer

Meet the creative wizard that is Jane Bowyer aka A Studio Called Jane. She's a Designer, Illustrator and Founder of the awesome Women in Print. In this interview, Jane shares how she's learning to sit with her negative thoughts (and not buy into their BS!), how she prefers to put her 'trust in the journey', rather than make a rigid plan, and why her one-woman studio isn't always a one-woman show.

Photo Credit: Ellie Grace Photography



First published April 7, 2022

Jane, what's your creative occupation?

I am a designer, illustrator and self-described one-woman studio. A Studio Called Jane is the name of my creative outfit. Jane is where play meets purpose, meaning meets impact, craft meets graft and, you get the idea. With my vibrant blend of design and illustration I bring ideas to life and create visual solutions tailored to the values of local heroes and global leaders alike.

Where have you been?

I've just got back from the butty shop (that's sandwich shop for anyone outside of northern England) and I am about to eat lunch but well before that I was a sensitive, arty kid stubborn enough to follow my dreams to study graphic design at university. Graduation was followed by a ten-month stretch on the internship circuit which eventually led me to being offered a Junior Designer position at one of the agencies I had interned at in Manchester. I bounced up the agency career ladder to Senior Designer level pretty quickly before deciding to jump off it to see if I could land on my freelance feet. The jump was a big one and the landing certainly bumpy, but I'm happy I made the leap. Seven years on and I'm still making it work on my own.

Where are you now?

In 2021, I founded A Studio Called Jane. 'Jane Bowyer Design and Illustration' lacked lustre as a business name and I needed my business and brand to

better represent my creative practice and years of experience. Sure, it's still me behind the wheel but this one-woman studio isn't always a one-woman show. Sometimes I fly solo, sometimes I might bring together other independent designers and doers to crack a client brief and sometimes I am hired by bigger design agencies to work on a particular project, coming aboard as a lead designer or illustrator.

I'm also working on building my side project, Women in Print, which I started in 2016; telling the stories of women from the north of England through print and design. Women in Print puts artists at the centre of its programming, bringing a wide range of practitioners' work to the public's attention in cultural and educational settings. We have recently co-curated 'First in the Fight', an exhibition currently on display at Kampus in Manchester.

“I’m getting better at sitting with my negative thoughts and not buying into their BS.”

Where are you going?

I don't have a rigid 10 year plan; I have long-term goals but I prefer setting myself short-term goals which when achieved and added up together over time, will support long-term success. I put my trust in the journey and remain open to getting involved in the right opportunities that come my way. I am confident I want my days to be rooted in doing something creative and purposeful. My style, means and motivations might change over time but I hope that whatever I do, I continue to do it with integrity, compassion and a whole lot of heart.

Finally, what's occupying your thoughts today?

Firstly, finishing off answering these questions you've kindly sent me. My thoughts are usually tied up in completing daily tasks, thinking about what I'm going to eat and resisting existential panic. A lesson I've had to learn in order to get through the last couple of years is; you are not your thoughts. Our brains love to tell us stories, to make sense of what's going on around us and to keep us safe. This is especially the case when we're experiencing something difficult — like a global pandemic. Like a bangin' Lizzo track, these stories get stuck in our heads and can turn into negative thoughts. If left unchecked, negative thoughts can make us doubt ourselves, act out, steal our joy and stop us moving forward. I'm getting better at sitting with my negative thoughts and not buying into their BS. It's a (self) work in progress.

Catching up with Jane...

This year, I have taken the bold step to invest in myself and practice confidence. I believe that to move through this world with confidence as a woman, or a non-binary person – especially those of us who are also facing racism, ableism, homophobia – is a truly radical, feminist act. And we find that confidence not by changing ourselves but by changing systems, starting with dismantling patriarchy and white supremacy.

I want to uplift the work of Lauren Currie and the beautiful letter by Danielle Young to anyone who wants to dig deeper into this topic. Observe the narratives you are told and the images you are sold about your confidence and femininity. Who is sending you those messages? What's their motive?





STREET

@dotto_studio

DOTTO

MADE FOR
SUCH A
TIME AS
THIS



Heidi El-Kholy

This was the 2nd interview we shared after launching and it's still one of our favourites. It comes from Founding Member, Heidi, who shares her career journey; from event planning, to founding a badass creative studio – Salt and Sister – with her sister (and our other favourite), Halah. She shares her experiences of toxic workplaces, how she stayed true to her authentic self through writing and sisterhood, and what it feels like finally having the autonomy to say 'no'.



First published July 30, 2021

Heidi, what's your creative occupation?

One half of Salt and Sister Studio, which I founded with my sister (duh). My background is in events, marketing and brand activation, from hospitality to corporate and creative agency bits. I guess, formally speaking, I cover the copywriting, social strategy, account management, launch events and pop-ups etc. but the great thing about working for yourself (with your sister!) is that everything we work on is collaborative (but I don't claim to have any digital design skills, soz).

Where have you been?

For the last ten-odd years, I've been in and out of the events, hospitality and marketing industries. From working in some boujie af venues in London, I watched the Wedding Planner with JLo (my biggest love) and blagged my first events job doing weddings for a venue in Kent. I also got my CELTA and taught English to foreign students in sunny Manchester for a bit before I went back to marketing, events and 'business development' (such a wanky term!) for restaurants. After that, I started to work for an international events agency in Oldham, and was suitably traumatised; then, my last formal 'job-job' was as Account Manager for a digital marketing agency, before I was made redundant in October 2020. While this is unfortunate, I won't lie to you: my main client was a property developer and the content required was pretty dry, but great experience in process and procedure. I set up Salt and Sister with Halah after we trialled a few projects together during lockdown and found that we LOVE working with each other, unbothered and unhindered by the toxicity of rigid white-male-centred workplaces.



Photo Credit: Eliza Hatch

“My experiences have made me super protective of women, especially women of colour, in their twenties, who are starting out.”

It's probably important for me to note that throughout all of the moving around, job-hopping, and having to adapt and re-assimilate into quite problematic working environments (usually as the only POC in the workplace), one thing that remained consistent and vital to my mental wellbeing was my involvement in a feminist creative and activism group that I met while in Kent in 2014. With the support and safety provided by this community of women from all backgrounds and of all ages, I write and perform pieces about assimilation/rejection of the two cultures that I straddle, micro-aggressions, and the often overlooked but very sinister 'polite racism'. Looking back, I'd say the sense of kinship, the many shared goals and invitations to discuss social issues openly and in-depth, really kept me anchored to my identity and truth as a brown woman – especially as it was often my only outlet and rebellion in response to the bulls**t that I would experience in my everyday 'profesh' life, and not be able to react authentically to.

Where are you now?

Sisterhood! Collaboration! Community! I'm pouring all my efforts into Salt and Sister, using mine and my sister's combined skillset to do what we love the most: crafting, cultivating and elevating your brand identity to engage your following like fangirls at a(nother) Spice Girls reunion concert.

The idea that we have the autonomy to be able to say 'no, we don't want to work with you because your ethos is exploitative and perpetuates harmful things, like toxic diet culture/whitewashing ethnic practices

etc.' is wild to me; I don't think it's sunk in yet that we don't have to (hopefully) ever work with arseholes in giant soulless corps again, and that is so liberating it makes the fear of going freelance worth it.

My experiences have made me super protective of women, especially women of colour, in their twenties, who are starting out as creatives in the minefield that is internships, exec roles and general exploitation (wahoo). The Creative Occupation, and Lorelle's vision of a creative community, really resonated with me, so I'm thrilled to be a Founding Member and seeing where this goes!

Where are you going?

Growing and growing. Growing our network and community; growing our skillset together; personal growth and learning to navigate the fun things that come with going freelance, like imposter syndrome (a term I hate but is all too real). I'm taking a fundamentals class in Co-counselling or Re-evaluation Counselling and I look forward to having my life changed by that, too!

Finally, what's occupying your thoughts today?

As always, what I'll be having for dinner tonight. I'm really feeling tomatoes and capers in this freak weather we're having; imagine tanning in the puddle that is Manchester!

www.saltandsister.co.uk



Catching up with Heidi & Halah...

As some of the earlier Founding Members, and the first creatives to be interviewed by Lorelle, we didn't really know what to expect - but one thing we did know was that Lorelle knew her shit when it came to freelance work, and identified the need for a creative community. It was perfect timing as we'd just started Salt and Sister, and were very green to freelancing!

Looking at TCO's growth, it's amazing and humbling to be in the company of so many talented artists, who all ended up here as part of their own unique career journey. The work is gorgeous and the stories really reinforce the idea that, though freelance can be isolating, it's really the community that gets you through!



SALT

& SISTER & SISTER & SISTER & SISTER



SALT

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Halah El-Kholy

Next up, naturally, discover how our Founding Member, and the other half of Salt and Sister, Halah, left bar work behind to forge a career in graphic design, and how lockdown prompted a new chapter; the birth of her bulls**t-free, female-centric, creative studio. We couldn't be more in awe of what Halah and her 'salty sister' are building. Discover more in this interview from way back in July last year. They were just getting started then... and they're nowhere near finished.



First published July 28, 2021

Halah, what's your creative occupation?

I'm half of Salt and Sister Studio – a creative-space-slash-studio-slash-experiment founded with my sister – where I work mostly on the design-y, illustration-y bits.

Where have you been?

It's been a journey! So, I've got a degree in Illustration, but had absolutely no idea how to translate that into commercial work-work because I graduated at a time when having a 'personal brand' was a bit gross and everything was a bit more analogue. I had a bar job and told myself that I'd do creative work on the side, which of course only happened in drips.

After a great incident when a regular felt it was okay to come up to me and whisper 'We've all been talking so I have to ask – are you pregnant? Don't worry, I won't tell!' (I'd just had a mediocre burrito for lunch and was suitably mortified btw), I decided to leave 'Spoons behind, retrained in graphic design, and interned until I found an in-house job at a small company.

Lockdown happened, I ended up with a lot of free time on my hands and a sister that was freshly made redundant. We did a few trial projects together before realising we worked disgustingly well together, and we decided to make Salt and Sister an Actual Thing.

"I like not having bulls**t office politics, managerial egos, and toxic workplaces to deal with."

Where are you now?

I've gone fully freelance now, working on design at Salt and Sister, and my personal illustration stuff, too. I like not having bulls**t office politics, managerial egos, and toxic workplaces to deal with. I loooove working mainly with women also starting small businesses, and having the freedom to say 'Not today, Satan!' to problematic arseholes we don't want to work with.

Me and Heidi are exploring passion projects on the side too – all of those 'wouldn't it be great if, slightly tipsy conversations – and having a blast! Working in-house has its perks, but this new creative experimenting has been an absolute breath of fresh air.

Where are you going?

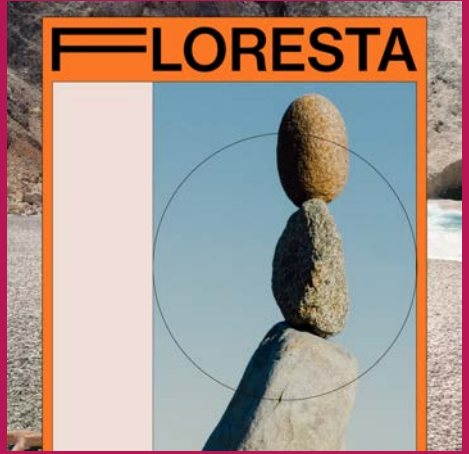
Right now, it's all about seeing Salt and Sister grow. I'm so excited to see where we go, but I'm also excited to just do more STUFF – I neglected all my true-to-myself, female-centric creative work for a long time, and getting back to making and sharing work I love is my main current dream. On the technical side of things, I'm very slowly learning animation so I can make things move.

Finally, what's occupying your thoughts today?

My arsehole cat ruining all the soft furnishings and how I'm ever going to get my deposit back. I love him but I hate him.

Who the eff would ever sleep with Matt Hancock. Why are men so gross.

Madonna's American Pie cowboy phase is criminally underrated.



@halahelkholly @salt.sister.studio



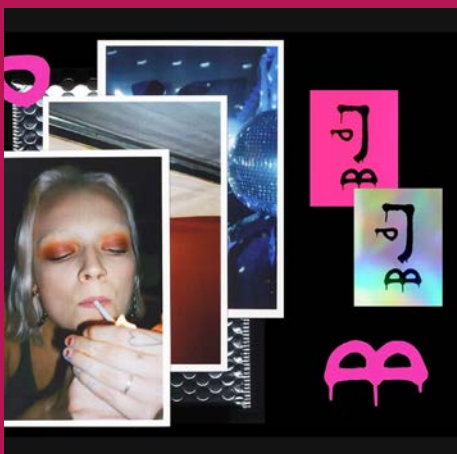
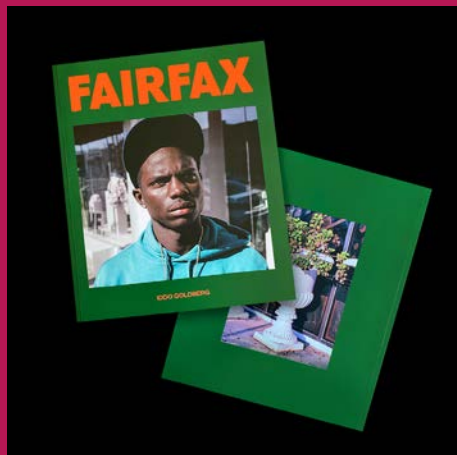
What does the word 'journey' mean to you?

For me, I think the idea of a journey is about embracing change, trial-and-error and learning lessons constantly. When we were just starting S+S, I had to supplement my income with ad hoc event work, as well as food writing. Over the last year I've had less and less time for this and eventually stopped (though I do still love to write about food!), as we've been lucky enough to be working and *actually* making a living doing what we love. Our decision to centre our values and ethos as one of the strongest parts of our identity and online presence has led to us working with some amazing clients. It's so great to work on projects that you care about, with people who share your values.

This last year has been so busy, with three weddings and house-moves adding to the massive changes to our day-to-day lives, with a new working structure. Our journey is really only at its start, but it's really exciting watching the business grow. We're learning a lot more about how to stay afloat and navigate the pitfalls of freelance life (it's still very feast-or-famine right now in terms of work but that's all part of the fun, I guess!) Don't get me wrong, I feel like the uncertainty will always be a part of working freelance, but the pay-off in terms of job satisfaction and the flexibility has been great so far. Plus, if we hadn't made the jump and started S+S we would never have met Lorelle and the fantastic TCO community.

*Here's to
the journey!*

@salt.sister.studio





Ami Vadi



Here's Ami, a London-based Multidisciplinary Designer with an exciting portfolio of work that incorporates her 'ideologies and personality' to 'create a conversation'. A creative since early childhood, she's gone on to hone a varied skillset and launch an enviable career; from her day job at Unreasonable Studios, to passion projects, like mural painting, she's booked, busy and optimistic about what's to come. We can't help but see bright things in her future, too.

First published February 10, 2022

Ami, what's your creative occupation?

I'm a British-Indian Multidisciplinary Designer based in London. I'm currently at Unreasonable Studios where I work on Creative Artworking, Editing and Motion design. I also work as a Freelance Designer in my free time.

Where have you been?

I've always been creative from a very young age, pretty much from the moment I could pick up a pen (literally); and thanks to my supportive parents I was able to channel my creativity into a career. I studied Fine Art, Film Studies and Graphic Design at college and later on studied Graphic Design at Leeds Arts University, taking the skills from the different disciplines with me. Since then I continue to incorporate my ideologies and personality into my work and create a conversation.

After graduating, I worked freelance and was shortly connected with PoCC through Ollie Olanipekun to work alongside him and the team as a Lead Designer for their first national campaign. Ever since then I've worked with PoCC on several projects that help put the spotlight on under-represented artists. I had the amazing opportunity to show my work on billboards across the UK. After losing my first job due to Covid I went back to freelancing. I branched out into editorial design, designing books for Phoebe Lovatt, Kevin Morosky and Iddo Goldberg and then did small passion projects for myself. Covid made being creative quite challenging, putting a lot of strain on my mental health, so I tried to keep myself

busy and jumped at every opportunity I saw to learn and progress in the creative industry; this resulted in me becoming a member of The Converse All Stars team.

Where are you now?

I've been working full-time as a Multidisciplinary Designer at Unreasonable Studios in London where I recently had my design concepts chosen to rebrand the agency. I get to work on projects for brands such as YouTube Music, Pandora, Mini, and Google. I am very excited to get myself back in an energetic environment surrounded by such supportive and talented people. I'm still working freelance on the side and taking on passion projects where I can. One recent project was painting a mural for Gaia's Garden; which is by far one of my favourite pieces to date. I also took part in mentoring emerging creatives with The Arena, where I really enjoyed talking to emerging female creatives. Currently, I've just started a project designing illustration portraits of the Euphoria cast as Season 2 rolls out. It's a way for me to still tie my artistic skills to design.

“Experiences that I faced last year (...) have helped me to set boundaries, mature and protect myself as I navigate this industry today.”

Where are you going?

I found out quite recently that I was selected by Paul Smith's Foundation to take part in an amazing two day workshop. 12 other creatives and I will meet Paul Smith himself, take part in talks, workshops, activities and learn how to use our creativity to create change; which is the exact reason I chose a career in this industry. I'm so excited!

Finally, what's occupying your thoughts today?

Compared to how I was last year I'm extremely excited and optimistic about this year. I have learnt a great deal from experiences that I faced last year, which have helped me to set boundaries, mature and protect myself as I navigate this industry today. This year I'm learning the importance of focusing on me and my happiness; learning when to take breaks, to let go of things that are out of my control and just do what I love. I hope everyone else is able to do so as well.

www.amivadi.com





Dani Molyneux

We're super happy to share Dani's career journey next. Dani founded her studio, Dotto, back in 2017 and has been putting out meaningful, type-focused work ever since. Since leaving 'agency land' behind, she's forged an exciting freelance career and continues to push the boundaries with her studio; embracing collaboration and the 'arty' side of her practice.



First published October 7, 2021

Dani, what's your creative occupation?

I'm a typographic artist and graphic designer working out of my own practice – Dotto. I work within brand identity, editorial, and creative typography/type art. Basically, I make words work. And arts orgs, socially responsible businesses and conscious brands are my favourite.

Where have you been?

I spent a fair few years in agency land, in London and then back in the North-West. Working on a range of disciplines, from corporate communications, packaging and advertising, finally finding my feet with brand identity. I went freelance in 2013, then set up Dotto in 2017 to make meaningful work with good people. I was frustrated with the systems in place in many agencies and wanted to try a different approach.

Where are you now?

In 2021 I started focusing much more on the typographic side of my work. Introducing more creative type art, setting up the print shop and pushing the boundaries of what a design studio is supposed to be. Collaboration is important to me, whether that be the clients I work with or other creative experts. I find we make the strongest work when we are all part of the same team and focus on blending our individual strengths.

Where are you going?

I want to develop the creative typography side much more and push the 'arty' side of Dotto. Brand identity will always be an important element of my practice but I want to balance that more corporate side with a much more fluid, artistic side which explores different ideas and moods through typography. I'm also keen to take time away from the screen, and get the paints out. I'm moving into a new studio which will give me a bit more space to explore and experiment, and I'm really excited about this!

“Collaboration is important to me (...) I find we make the strongest work when we are all part of the same team and focus on blending our individual strengths.”

Finally, what's occupying your thoughts today?

Ha, today I'm thinking, how can I STILL be tired? I've found the past 18 months completely exhausting (like most people, of course) and I'm constantly trying to keep a check on balance and rest now. Taking decent breaks is a habit I'm trying to crack!

www.dotto.studio







Kofi Nelson

Back in October, we heard from the excellent Kofi Nelson days after launching his new single, 'I'm Down'. Specialising in Graphic Design, Videography and Music Production, Kofi is stacking up projects... and that's not including talking at Speak Up with our friends Fuse, or being interviewed for The Creative Boom Podcast (it's well worth a listen!). Discover how Kofi stumbled into Music Production (and what he thinks of his first ever creations!), the projects he loves to work on, and more.

Photo Credit: Sophia Carey



First published October 18, 2021

Kofi, what's your creative occupation?

I am a freelance creative specialising in the fields of Graphic Design, Videography and Music Production.

Where have you been?

Whilst in High School, I discovered my passion for Graphic Design and Videography. During this time, I worked on a variety of cool projects; helping me to develop my skills with creative software such as Photoshop and iMovie. When transitioning between High School and College, I stumbled across some Music Production software on my sister's iPad and from that day forward, I became obsessed with the music creation process. Now, when I look back at the work I was making at this time, it's safe to say that it was terrible and cringe-worthy lol. But you know what they say, if you don't look back at your past work and cringe then have you really made progress?

Where are you now?

After graduating from The University of Salford with a degree in Graphic Design, nowadays I can be found working on various projects; from helping family and friends build their brand identities, to creating the soundtracks for podcasts and documentaries. I have been fortunate enough to have some great opportunities come my way (like featuring on The Creative Occupation right now!) and I

make sure not to take these opportunities for granted. Having relaunched my music production website in October 2020, I wanted to give my internet home a fresh vibe, which is why I've added new and informative sections like "projects & features".

"I want to take part in more collaborations and contribute to a greater cause or message. If the goal of the project is to inspire, motivate or uplift, then I'm all in!"

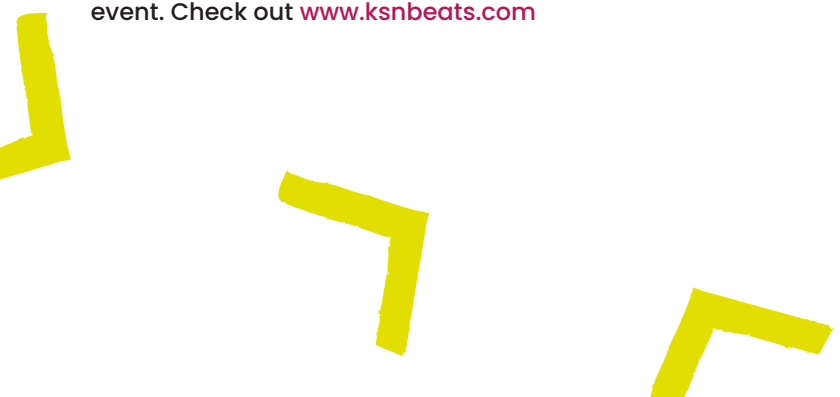
Where are you going?

In the same direction as all these blessings! As a freelance creative, I want to continue to work on projects that excite me. I want to take part in more collaborations and contribute to a greater cause or message. If the goal of the project is to inspire, motivate or uplift, then I'm all in! Because the creative work I do often involves Graphic Design, Videography or Music Production, I would love to build a creative agency that encompasses these three areas. Something like that would be wicked.

Finally, what's occupying your thoughts today?

It's so cold nowadays... and it's only autumn. During the winter, I'm gonna have to upgrade from 3 pairs of socks to 4.

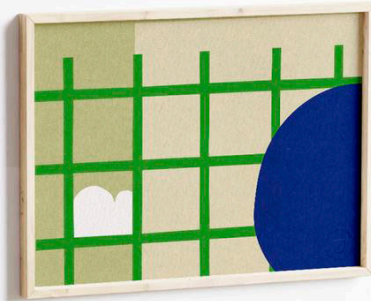
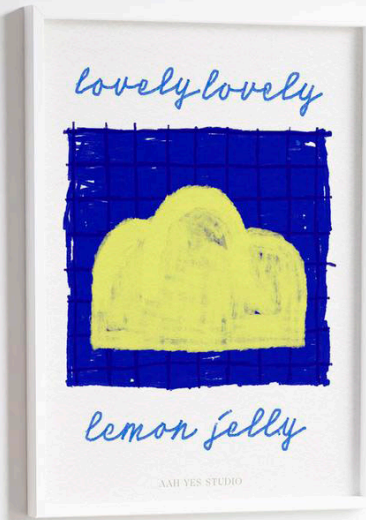
Since we spoke, Kofi has been busy making beats, including a soundtrack for season 3 of The Creative Boom Podcast, as well as speaking at another Fuse event. Check out www.ksnbeats.com





@laurabertinelli







Laura Bertinelli

London-based Graphic Designer & Art Director, Laura Bertinelli, lives by her motto, 'Do good, feel good and have fun', and it's served her well. Since moving to London from Italy back in 2013, she's been on an exciting (though admittedly bumpy!) journey. From the Southbank Centre, to her current role with Paperchase – not to mention her many and varied personal projects – she's gained a tonne of skills and knowledge, and she's excited about sharing it all with the online design community.



First published February 4, 2022

Laura, what's your creative occupation?

I'm a graphic designer with a big passion for art direction and illustration, and in my career I've always tried to work in an environment that allows me to combine these three things (of course, that's not always been the case – but that's life!). Outside of my 'day job', I keep my creative spirit awake through collage work, silly illustrations and personal projects, and mentoring young designers. My motto is 'Do good, feel good and have fun', which is my way of finding that creative fulfilment which does not always come from your 9-to-5 job, but that can instead come from many other different avenues.

Where have you been?

I moved to London from Italy in 2013, full of naivety, big dreams and expectations, hoping to establish myself as a freelance designer specialising in brand design. The journey has been quite bumpy! Surprise, surprise, you need to have a network around you to be a successful freelancer, and I literally knew only 2 people in London at the time. In my first three years here in London I had a variety of odd jobs, all alongside a 'regular' job as a shop assistant. I was juggling too many things, and that helped me realise that freelancing wasn't actually the right thing for me.

My first full-time role was a maternity cover in the design team at the Southbank Centre, and I loved it! Since then, I kept shifting around roles working in-house for small marketing teams, learning a tonne of different skills and how to wear

multiple hats at the same time. My passion for art direction comes from my experience in marketing and branding; working with photographers, set builders and interior designers, and having the opportunity to learn from them while collaborating... it's something that I find incredibly exciting!

“I am an incredibly curious person. I like trying out different things and learning something new. I get bored otherwise. Maybe that’s something most creatives have in common?!”

Where are you now?

After 6 years working in marketing, in 2021 I decided that I needed a change. I joined Paperchase in the summer, where now I am part of the design team working on product ranges, prints and branded content. As you can imagine, it's super fun! As soon as I started my new job I decided to put all my personal projects on hold to allow me to begin the journey with the right focus and energy. It's now been long enough and I am now feeling ready to get back to making my own stuff! I have a couple of projects currently brewing in my head, as well as my renewed dedication to the online design community through mentoring.

Where are you going?

I'll be honest, I don't know! I am an incredibly curious person. I like trying out different things and learning something new. I get bored otherwise. Maybe that's something most creatives have in common?! At the moment my job is giving me the incredible chance to work on illustration projects, and this is definitely something I want to carry on doing and get better at. I have always loved drawing and doodling, but I've never considered myself an illustrator. I also love working with collage; I find that tactile, analog experience of creating incredibly rewarding and challenging at the same time. It forces me to use my brain in a different way, and I like it! I would like to do more of it, and to see how I can take aspects of that 'artistic' creative process and apply them to my 'design' creative process. Lastly, and this is something I know for a fact, I am committed to continue working with the design community where I can, especially through

mentoring, but also taking part in events and projects. Anything that allows me to give back where I can!

Finally, what's occupying your thoughts today?

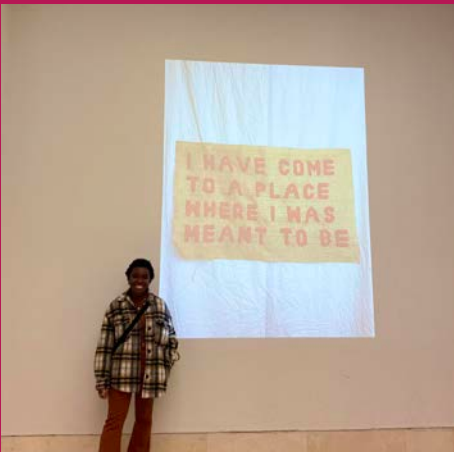
Oh, so many things. The current political situation is making me increasingly angry and frustrated, which is why after 9 years in the UK I've finally decided to begin the process of applying for British citizenship. It's my goal for 2022! All of this is making me think about the concepts of home, belonging, and identity – all of which can be a lot to process at times, but in a good way. Life happens, and we never stop to reflect on such big topics. It's not easy, but I am sure I will come out of it with a better understanding of myself, which will then, of course, have an impact on the work I do, and why I do it.

laurabertinelli.com



Catching up with Laura...

I found a way to funnel all these thoughts into a little personal project, in an attempt to visualise my feelings around the topic. I designed a limited edition t-shirt and decided to donate some of my profits from the sales to Refugee Action. Being aware of my privilege – of having two places that I can call home – it just felt like the right thing to do; helping people who are still looking for a place to call home.





Joke Amusan

Meet Joke, the gifted and incredibly inspiring artist who is on a mission to empower Women of Colour (WoC), both through her art, and her platform – She Stands Firm. Last year saw some incredible career highlights, from taking part in an exhibition at Tate Britain, to being featured as part of a nationwide billboard campaign, and we're so excited to discover what's next for her. Learn more about Joke in this chat; her struggle to understand where she fitted in as a child, her journey to speaking up against injustice, and more.



First published January 4, 2022

Joke, what's your creative occupation?

I'm a German-born, Nigerian artist based in London. I currently work in Marketing for an afro hair and beauty company, while creating my own art on the side. I also run a WoC empowerment website called She Stands Firm where I strive to empower WoC to embrace who they are unapologetically. To create a safe space, whether through sharing stories, speaking out about certain issues, or just being a platform to reflect some of the incredible women who are out there.

Where have you been?

I've always been fascinated by art and how it can not only be therapeutic for me but serve to empower others. Thinking back to my early university days, I remember knowing what I wanted to achieve through my art but not feeling confident enough to do it. I've always had a deep desire to find ways to uplift Women of Colour/Black women which stems from my childhood, where I longed to understand who I was and where I fitted in. Most of all, I wanted to do something so that other Black girls out there wouldn't have to feel that way.

It was in my final year at university that I truly started to express all of these thoughts through my art. I started to use my voice more and to speak up against injustice in ways I would have otherwise been too afraid to do. I realised the significance of sharing my story and I saw that, in doing so, I was able to build deeper connections with those around me. Those empowering conversations helped to shape me into who I am today. There's so much power in sharing our stories, and I'm happy that I took that step into the unknown.

During my final year at university I joined a People of Colour arts organisation, and together we were able to put on exciting shows in places such as The ICA and Tate Modern. Being part of this group showed me the importance of being surrounded by like-minded people. I remember my first art performance; being on that stage surrounded by amazing Black women and feeling like it was the beginning of something important. Later on that year I had my first solo show.

“We deserve to take up space”

Where are you now?

While I spent 2020 focusing on continuing to find my voice, I walked into 2021 feeling equipped to go out and use it through my art in physical spaces. I also made building relationships and joining communities a priority, which has made this past year all the more special. A particular highlight for me was having my art featured on billboards around the UK. My aim has always been to bring my art, and my words, directly to people so it was great for it to have happened in this way – I would have never imagined it! My art was also exhibited at Tate Britain to celebrate the launch of the ‘Life Between Islands’ exhibition, which was another moment I could only have dreamed of. I’m also grateful for exhibitions that were run by Black women, such as Picture Perfect, Presentations: A Celebration of Black Art, and MERAKEI, that created spaces specifically for artists of colour.

Where are you going?

I hope to go in the direction of being able to do art full-time and to continue to find new ways to be creative, while learning more about the world we live in and the different people who reside in it. I’ve always been concerned about where I’ll be, but I’m slowly learning to trust that it’s ok not to know exactly where I’ll end up. I’m learning to take things one day at a time, and to trust the journey without knowing the destination.

Finally, what’s occupying your thoughts today?

I’ve been reflecting on the past year. I’m sure that the year was full of ups and downs for us all, but I’m feeling very grateful for all the lessons and the blessings. I learned and grew a lot over the last 12 months, and I’m looking forward to a brighter 2022. I’d like to take my art deeper in the sense of finding new ways to use it to create more of a positive change, while remembering that it’s ok to take a break once in a while to rest. I hope that this year we will all remember that we deserve to take up space – however that may look.

jokeamusan.com | shestandsfirm.com

What does the word 'journey' mean to you?

GROWTH



both
professionally
and
personally

@bypeoni





JAVHUX



Javie Huxley

Javie is a London-based, freelance British-Chilean Illustrator. 2021 was an exciting year for her and in this chat, just as it was coming to a close, she reflects on all that she's achieved. Not least, designing for Claudia Andujar's exhibition at the Barbican! Delve into this interview to discover how she used comics to help navigate her identity, why creating socially engaged artwork is so important to her, and the project she's always wanted to work on.

Photo Credit: Mario Washington Iñieme



First published December 14, 2021

Javie, what's your creative occupation?

I'm a British-Chilean illustrator based in London. I mostly do editorial illustrations for magazines such as gal-dem and Shado Magazine. I have also started to dabble in book design and graphics.

Where have you been?

I'm largely self-taught and I've always loved drawing, but I felt really pressured to do something academic when I was growing up. However, it was during my undergrad degree that I started making comics and drawing began to be a real catharsis for me. To begin with, it was the way I navigated my identity. I loved that I could also create art that reflected the experiences of people so often left out of mainstream stories and conversations.

In 2018, I decided to do an MA in Children's Literature and Illustration at Goldsmith's and this is when I really started to pursue illustration. More than anything, the MA allowed me to have a year to work on my craft which I wouldn't otherwise have had the chance to do. It also took that year to realise how much joy I get from doing socially engaged artwork. I didn't want to take a commercial route, so really took my time to explore my craft in the ways that made me happy. That's how I ended up doing a lot of editorial illustration; it's allowed me to merge both art and societal issues that feel important to me.

Where are you now?

This year has been really special. Some highlights include designing a children's Activity Sheet for the Claudia Andujar: The Yanomami Struggle exhibition at the Barbican. Also, more recently I've been part of Camden Town Brewery's 'Fresh Prints' campaign curated by gal-dem, alongside 8 other incredible artists of colour. It's been so surreal seeing my artwork in supermarkets! Really excited for what next year holds.

“I get a lot of fulfilment from merging my politics with illustration. I will continue to centre social justice in my work, and platform marginalised voices.”

Where are you going?

What I do know is that I would love to do more book illustrations. I've always wanted to design a book cover for a novel, or even to illustrate a whole cookbook, so I'm putting those things out into the world. It's also super important to me that I keep using art as advocacy because I get a lot of fulfilment from merging my politics with illustration. I will continue to centre social justice in my work, and platform marginalised voices. Other than that, I'm keeping really open. I'm eager to learn and explore more areas of illustration.

Finally, what's occupying your thoughts today?

I always feel very pensive towards the end of the year and I tend to take this time to reflect. Freelancing can be very unpredictable, especially when you chuck a pandemic into the mix. In these quieter periods of work, I find it's more important than ever to take a step back and feel proud of all you've achieved.

www.javiehuxley.com



@_murugiah

வீழ்ச்சி

சுதிராட்சு





Murugiah

We're beyond excited to share the never-before-seen journey of profoundly talented, award-winning artist, Murugiah. Murugiah's work is instantly recognisable for its surreal quality and bright, joyful colours. In this interview, Murugiah shares how he trained as an architect before finally succumbing to the pull of life as an artist; something he'd always felt, how he balances commercial work with self-expression, and his thoughts on gratitude.

Photo Credit: Julia Boehm



Murugiah, what's your creative occupation?

I'm an artist based in London. I paint, illustrate... do a varied selection of things, but I'm an all round creative person. I mainly spend my time making psychedelic, transcendent work infused with the dichotomy of my Sri Lankan heritage and western upbringing, around themes of mental health, kindness in the face of chaos, the impending doom of our planet and climate change, amongst other things. I've made commercial projects for clients including Apple, Disney, Marvel, Vans and Wired.

"I get to wake up every day and choose what I want to do, on my own terms. What else could anyone ever ask for?"

Where have you been?

Where haven't I been?! I was born and raised in the U.K with Sri Lankan heritage. Enjoying films and art as a kid, I wanted to be an artist, but I spent my early years after school training to become an architect. After finishing my architecture training, I knew the industry wasn't for me as I kept feeling the pull of being an artist. I went on to work in graphic design and illustration for some other companies before going down the path of a full-time artist in 2012. Many years later, in 2020, I found the true meaning of my purpose as an artist.

Where are you now?

I am in a place where I am building on top of the work I did in 2020, after finding my purpose. Making sure my work is as surreal and dreamlike as possible. Pursuing themes that are important to me. I'm making sure I have a healthy balance of commercial illustration projects, like film posters and cover designs. I'm also expressing myself through my paintings and digital art.

Where are you going?

I'll be at New York Comic Con signing prints and meeting fans. I've got a large scale mural project coming up in Leeds and a clothing collection with a major sportswear brand. Lots of fun and exciting projects to come.

Finally, what's occupying your thoughts today?

Gratitude as I respond to these questions. Gratitude that I get to wake up every day and choose what I want to do, on my own terms. What else could anyone ever ask for?

murugiah.com



What does the word 'journey' mean to you?

The thing that I associate now with
the word journey is that

I hope it never ends.

Early in my career, and life, I was always interested
in having this fully formed style and approach to
my work. It was only recently that I let the idea
into my life that it is

all about the journey.

Sure, I was told this a lot over the years but I only
accepted it recently! Of course, one can have self-
discovered stylistic and thematic elements in their
work that they can build on, like I am doing with
my work, but

***I'm no longer focused on the
end result.***

It is important to start and finish a piece of work,
but also build on it, learn from it and

***make another
and another
and another***

until you start to see a pattern forming. A pattern
of how you see the world through your work.

@_murugiah





Ayesha Pearce

Over 10 years into her career, Founding Member, Ayesha, retrained in Graphic Design and started down a new creative path. Discover how she built her contemporary art & design practice Aah Yes Studio, working with 'objects and moments from daily life, relatable happenings that often go unnoticed', and then find out what we discovered when we caught up with her almost a year later. She's been busy!



First published August 13, 2021

Ayesha, what's your creative occupation?

Artist & Designer

Where have you been?

My background is in branding. I spent over 10 years working with playful, childlike companies, bringing their brands to life through marketing, brand strategy and advertising. As I progressed along my journey as a marketer, my job became more strategic and I moved further and further away from the creative side of things. I was feeling pretty unfulfilled by what I was doing day to day and so I decided to switch gears.

I spent a year retraining as a Graphic Designer at Shillington, and in 2018 I bit the bullet and opened AAH YES STUDIO – my own design business, a place where I could be the one to create these wonderful worlds, rather than just play in them.

Where are you now?

The first couple of years running the studio has been such a whirlwind. I've had the pleasure of working with so many wonderful people across all kinds of projects: branding, packaging, billboards, shop windows, product launches, and creating a print collection. After craving some creative time away from my screen I started oil painting and caught the bug.

I now run AAH YES as a multi-practise business, working on both art and design projects with businesses and individuals.

Where are you going?

My big focus right now is painting. I've been told that the worlds of fine art and graphic design don't always play that well together, so I'm making it my mission to bridge that gap and create gorgeous art that is influenced by graphic design but created using fine art techniques!

I'm currently working on a series of food-inspired paintings. They start life as paper cutouts which get scanned in and artworked on screen before being drawn up onto canvas and painted in bold, bright, juicy colours. At each stage, moving the piece between digital and analog spaces allows new, wonderful intricacies to be created. Subtle marks and obscurities that would otherwise not exist – it's a really rewarding process.

On the design side of things, I'd love to work on projects in some new industries. Publishing is high on my list; designing a cookbook would be awesome. The music industry is also a really rich area for design that I'd like to explore a bit more.

Finally, what's occupying your thoughts today?

Coffee and pizza. It's nearly always coffee and pizza...

aahyes.studio



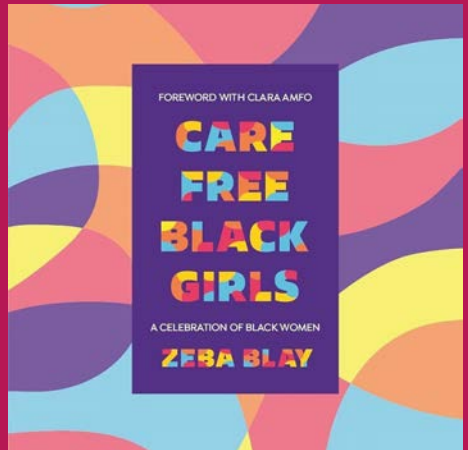
Catching up with Ayesha...

Since we last spoke I got quite busy with prints; launching on Glassette in November '21 and then in The Conran Shop March '22... so it's been a total whirlwind! I moved to Bristol at the end of last year, which has been incredible. There is so much going on here and everyone is so lovely. It's naturally smaller and quieter than London but that's actually been a welcome change after a few very crazy years. It's enabled me to have a bigger studio which is opening up opportunities to create in new ways. Now prints have calmed down, I'm back to being all in with paint again. I am expecting my first little one in September '22 so I am trying to spend as much time as I can in my studio before I take some time away to focus on family. I'm currently working on a collection looking at the 'dark side' of plants. It's an exploration into how something beautiful and natural can also be a bit sinister. I'm having a lot of fun visiting botanical gardens and researching plants.



NOBODY
IS FREE UNTIL
PALESTINE
IS FREE

MAKING GOOD THINGS



@nadinadihis



Nadina Ali

Founding Member, Nadina aka Nadina Did This, worked in fashion, and briefly baking, for years before launching her freelance Graphic Design career. It's been a journey, but she's happy to be where she is today, using her work to champion causes that matter to her. We're big fans of Nadina's work, in particular the book cover design for 'Carefree Black Girls' by Zeba Blay that came out shortly after this was first published. Check it out!



First published August 22, 2021

Nadina, what's your creative occupation?

I'm a graphic designer and I'm currently learning to paint murals.

Where have you been?

I was born, and grew up, in Marseille, South of France and moved to the UK in my early 20s to go to University to study fashion. I developed an interest in fashion in my teenage years and attended a fashion workshop throughout high school. However, I couldn't afford to go to fashion school in France as they're quite expensive so I ended up going to University in Aix-en-Provence to study Foreign Languages instead. When I graduated and realised I wasn't sure this was the path I wanted to pursue career-wise, I took time off studying and went to Manchester to work as an au pair for a few months. At the time, I was looking at fashion courses to attend in my spare time and came across the Clothing Design and Technology degree course at Manchester Metropolitan University. I could get funding to attend and was happy to go back to Uni so I applied, got in and studied there from 2005 to 2009.

After graduating, I worked in product development in the fashion industry for a few years, mostly in Manchester but also in Bahrain, and later on in London. The work I was doing within fashion was very technical and not very creative so I ended up pursuing creative hobbies such as sewing, baking and screen printing to make up for it. I reached a point where that wasn't enough any more to fulfil my creative aspirations and at the end of 2017, I took a break from fashion to

explore alternative creative paths. As I was doing a lot of baking at the time, I decided to try out working as a baker in professional kitchens and moved to London in the process.

Whilst working as a baker, I started doing lettering as well (which I was really into at the time) but I soon realised I wasn't good enough at hand drawing to bring to life my ideas the way I envisioned them and moved onto working with typefaces instead, which made my design process a lot easier and quicker. I developed a strong interest in fonts and graphic design when I was at Uni so working with typography was a natural progression. Early 2019, I started doing graphic design projects on the side and decided to keep that going as a side gig.

“I hope my work can inspire other people to speak up about the things that matter most to them.”

Where are you now?

When the pandemic hit last year, I was back working in a fashion head office and I got made redundant. This prompted some serious questions about what I really wanted to do work-wise as I was feeling more and more uncomfortable with how unsustainable the fashion industry can be, especially in terms of how it treats garment workers in “developing” countries, and also the environment. The pandemic really amplified that feeling and as a result, I decided to focus on graphic design full-time as I knew this would give me the opportunity to do work that really matters to me. I went freelance, which I had never done full-time before, so that was a scary move to make. But thankfully, I have been able to work on projects since that confirmed it was the right choice and today, I feel even more confident about choosing this path and seeing where it takes me.

Working with typography has allowed me to be more vocal about things I care about, such as social justice and representation, and I hope my work can inspire other people to speak up about the things that matter most to them.

Where are you going?

I'm currently learning to paint murals with the Lewisham School of Muralism, which has opened new creative avenues to explore within my work. So my current goal is to figure out the best way to connect my digital and painting work, and see where that takes me. I had the opportunity to do a couple of outdoor projects over the past year and I am really keen to do more over the next few months.

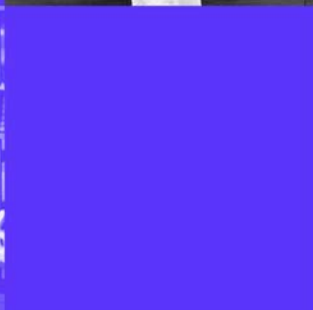
Finally, what's occupying your thoughts today?

I need to make time for personal projects so I'm trying to come up with ideas to make that happen!

Some of Nadina's artwork is currently being showcased on billboards, digital screens, bus-shelters, shopping centres, cinemas and train stations across the UK until 15th August! Check out www.nadinadidthis.com



DESIGN BY WOMEN



@maryhemingway _ @designbywomen _



Mary Hemingway



We're honoured to be sharing, for the first time, an interview with Mary Hemingway next. As she explains, rather too modestly, we think, she's a Graphic Designer - agency and freelance - who also likes to 'dabble' in illustration, photography and surface pattern design. She's Founder and Creative Director of the incredible Design by Women (DbyW) platform, and a mama, too. Basically, she's a powerhouse. In this chat, she shares where she started (textile design!), why she was inspired to launch DbyW during lockdown, and more.

Mary, what's your creative occupation?

I'm primarily a graphic designer but I also like to dabble in illustration and photography, and I love a bit of surface pattern design. Alongside working part-time in a design agency, and taking on the occasional freelance project, I run creative platform Design by Women which I founded in June 2020 as a self-initiated lockdown project.

Where have you been?

My career has been a very winding path to say the least! Way back when I did a degree in textile design and started out working as a sample cutter and embroidery designer for a company that made wedding dresses. I then worked in retail sales for several years before having my son. I juggled single motherhood with various part-time jobs, including a stint in teaching. During this time, I completed a masters in surface pattern design and eventually decided to retrain in graphic design ten years ago.

Where are you now?

This is an interesting question. Currently, I'm spinning a lot of plates and trying to work out what projects I want to put my time and energy into. I'm just finishing up a lovely freelance re-branding project for a designer-maker duo based in the Jewellery Quarter in Birmingham, and recently worked on a fun project, with the agency I'm at, where we got to work with a plant stylist on design work for a display at Chelsea Flower Show.

“We hope to inspire emerging creatives by showing them the different routes they can take in the design industry.”

I'm also working, with the Design by Women team, on a careers series that launched at the beginning of July. One of the reasons I founded the DbyW platform is that when you hear about successful women designers the same few names keep coming up and I wanted to find out more about all the other talented creatives out there. We primarily post articles featuring established women, or gender expansive designers, who create inspiring work and/or have an interesting story to tell. Plus, we have a 'Ones to Watch' series where we showcase emerging talent.

We were having trouble featuring creatives who work in design agencies, studios and in-house roles because there are often NDAs on what they create, or they are part of a team of designers. This sparked the thought that we should do a series focused on career paths, which we hope will be useful for designers thinking about progressing from mid-weight to senior or senior to creative director etc. But also, we hope to inspire emerging creatives by showing them the different routes they can take in the design industry. It will primarily focus on career journeys, pivotal moments, and advice for creatives (at any stage) looking to take the next step in their careers.

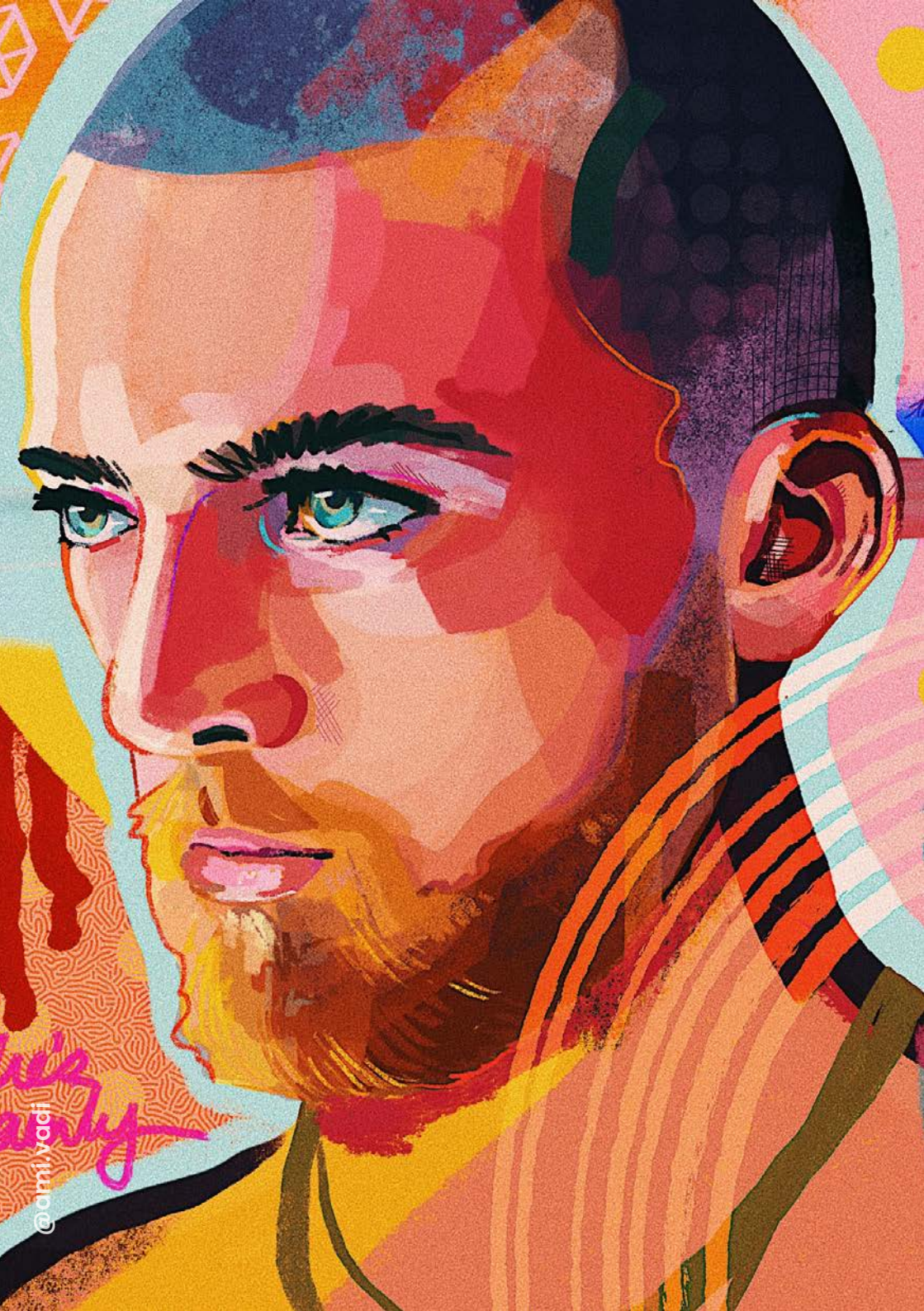
Where are you going?

I'm going for a run shortly! I'd like to be able to carve out more time for Design by Women and take on some more varied freelance work for projects that use design as a tool for social change. There's a lot happening in the world right now and sometimes that can be overwhelming, so I'd also really like to take some time to figure out where I want to be in the next few years—it's something I'm currently working through.

Finally, what's occupying your thoughts today?

Today my son had his last A Level exam after a month of intense revision, so we're celebrating that! I have quite a few admin tasks to do for DbyW – keeping on top of them almost seems a job in itself sometimes. I'm also thinking I'd like to get back to doing some drawing and painting, which I haven't done for years!

maryhemingwaydesign.com | designby-women.com



@ami.vacii

ami.vacii

E. MAKING WAVES

Donnie Career OBE

WRIGHT, THEATRE
IC AND SOCIAL
MENTATOR

pendant of Transcendence

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...tion and living care of a person who
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...which vapour, liquid, and will



Suzanne Packer

VICOR, TEACHER,
WALKER AND
BROADCASTER







Tihara Smith

Following on from her dazzling, Windrush-inspired graduate fashion collection, Founding Member, Tihara, has gone on to build a vibrant brand, encompassing blogging and a wide range of products; from greetings cards to pins. Discover her journey and find out what she's been up to since we first chatted, almost a year ago, when she was preparing to launch her first pop-up shopping experience.



First published August 9, 2021

Tihara, what's your creative occupation?

I am a fashion, accessories, and product designer. I studied fashion design at university and now have my own business designing accessories and products, like stationery and prints, inspired by my Caribbean heritage.

Where have you been?

I studied BA (Hons) Fashion Design Technology: Womenswear at the London College of Fashion for a year, before realising that it wasn't a great fit for me. I then restarted my degree at University for the Creative Arts Epsom studying BA (Hons) Fashion and graduated in 2018 after showing my final collection, inspired by the Windrush Generation, at Graduate Fashion Week.

After graduating, I did a work experience programme with Better Bankside where I, as part of a group of around 10 young people, took part in a variety of workshops hosted by Bankside businesses on topics like; project management, event management, social media, PR, marketing, networking, graphic design, and more. Through this experience, I was connected with a jewellery and accessories company in the area who were hiring at the time. I interviewed with them and got my first full-time role as a Production Assistant assisting the Production, Merchandising & Marketing Teams with a range of administrative tasks.

In my free time, whilst working at the jewellery and accessories company, I was working on building my own brand off the back of my final collection. I worked on designing products, growing my website, and going to weekend craft markets. After around a year, I realised that I wanted to focus my time on more creative pursuits so decided to resign from my first role to focus on running my own business.

“I hope to continue to spread the story of the Windrush Generation through design.”

Where are you now?

Now, I work full-time on my own business, designing and selling accessories and products inspired by my Caribbean heritage. The range has expanded from handmade bags and art prints, to include greetings cards, notebooks, gift sets, enamel pins and t-shirts! I also write a blog on my website all about Caribbean culture, including Caribbean recipes and Black British history. In 2020, I won a competition with Start Up with Seven Dials. The prize is to have a pop-up shop in Seven Dials in summer 2021, which is a huge and amazing opportunity! So that's what I'm mainly working on now.

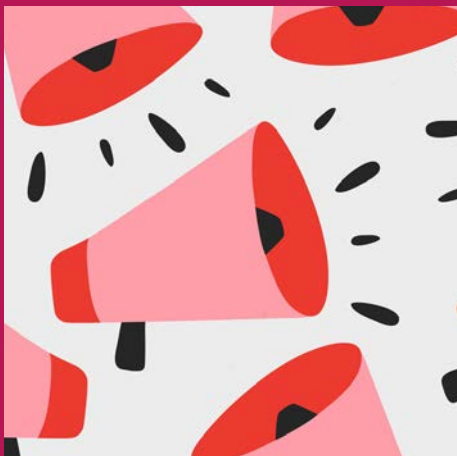
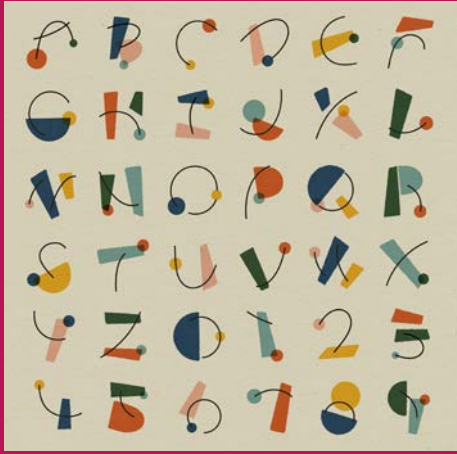
Where are you going?

I hope to open a successful pop-up shop in Seven Dials over the summer. I plan to continue to grow my business; designing new products and hopefully finding some stockists to stock some of my products – like the greetings cards and stationery. Hopefully, I'll get a chance to get back into fashion design and design a new collection. I hope to continue to spread the story of the Windrush Generation through design.

Finally, what's occupying your thoughts today?

Today, as I'm writing this, it is the eve of Windrush Day 2021, so I'm thinking about the Windrush Generation and all they endured so that their descendants, like myself, could enjoy opportunities in our education and career. I'm excited to celebrate them all tomorrow!

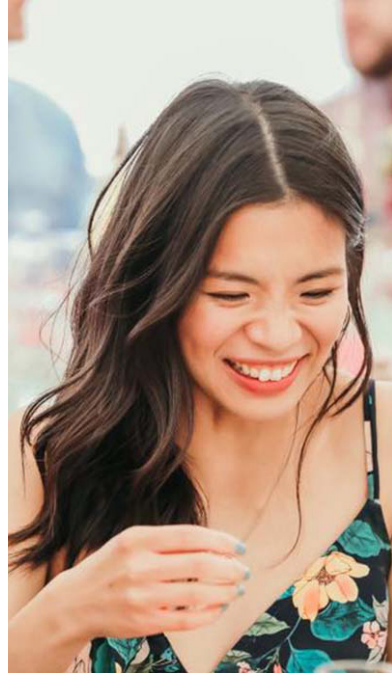
Since we last spoke to Tihara, she's launched a successful pop-up shop in Seven Dials and a partnership with Jamii, had an ensemble acquired by the Museum of London and expanded her range of products, including a candle collection. Check out www.tiharasmith.com





Helen Tong

Meet Helen. She worked in publishing and digital roles for over 5 years before retraining as a Designer. Thanks to a 'life-changing' three months at Shillington, she's now working in branding design for an exciting agency, and has plans to pursue some personal projects in the future, including creating typographic prints and giving back to the design community through mentoring. She's also a Design by Women collaborator; a multi-talented and busy gal, no doubt!



First published March 10, 2022

Helen, what's your creative occupation?

I'm a Designer who loves to explore new things! I dabble in a bit of everything, such as illustration, stitching and typography, and I'm inspired by vintage and Japanese design. I also have a thing for bright colours and weird shapes, so I always try to incorporate them into my projects somehow.

Where have you been?

I've had a bit of a windy path into design! I've always been a creative person, and interested in art and design, but never pursued it as a career when I was younger. I worked in publishing after university and shifted into the digital space, working within web content production and website management roles for over 5 years. Towards the end of 2019 though, I was getting increasingly unhappy and unfulfilled with my career so I finally decided to bite the bullet and change careers into design. I quit my job, and at the beginning of 2020 I started the immersive three month course at Shillington. It was honestly life-changing. It felt so natural to be designing and creating everyday, and Shillington was an eye-opener for me in terms of personal development too. After finishing the course, I interned and freelanced at a small branding agency, picking up some other freelance bits on the side, and then ended up working as a designer for a small PR firm.

Where are you now?

Currently, I'm working in branding design at Siegel + Gale. I started just before Christmas last year, and it's definitely been a learning curve, but it's been great being part of a bigger team, and learning and collaborating with others. As our clients are mainly corporate too, it's a fun challenge trying to create and bring something unexpected and exciting to industries that can seem more rigid and 'professional'.

“I hope one day I can give back to the design community.”

Where are you going?

Oo there's so many directions! I'm hoping to develop within branding and get to a more senior level, but I'd also like to push my illustration and typography a bit more. I fell into a bit of a creative rut towards the end of last year, so I'd love to be able to pick up those personal projects again and start playing around with illustrations, and exploring creating typographic prints. I'd also love to head into mentoring later on, too. I can't thank enough those who have guided and helped me through my design journey so far, and the impact their support made. I hope one day I can give back to the design community and help those entering the industry.

Finally, what's occupying your thoughts today?

That I feel like I need another weekend – why do they always go by so quickly?! There never seems to be enough time to do all the things I want and have a proper rest! (Here's me secretly campaigning for the 4-day work week :P)

helentong.com

What does the word 'journey' mean to you?

m **O** **v** **e** **m** **e** **n** **t**

in any
direction

at any
speed

with any
purpose

@yvieormsby



Episode 2: Life After University ft. Lance Renzo



@thecreativecornerpod



Episode 3: The Imposter, Stress & Burning Out ft. Laura Kadani



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Devi & Iqrah

Introducing the founders of The Creative Corner Podcast. We got to know the gals behind the show in this lively chat. Learn how Devi mastered the Instagram algorithm to expand her client base during the pandemic, why she moved away from being a full-time freelancer, and how she's taking her future international! Plus, how Iqrah discovered that it's OK to love a bit of everything, why she won't be 'stuck behind a screen', and, of course, the thought process behind the pod.



First published July 11, 2022

What's your creative occupation?

Devi: I am currently working as a Visual Merchandising Graphic Designer for Estée Lauder where I design for all of the Clinique stores in the UK & Ireland. In my free time, I also freelance as a 'hybrid creative'. For people that might not know what that is – I basically wear a lot of hats!

Iqrah: I am a British-Pakistani gal currently working as a Motion Designer/Art Director for a creative agency based in London and New York, specialising in luxury fashion and beauty. I also freelance as a photographer and director in my spare time (not as often as I would like).

Where have you been?

Devi: I started working as an intern throughout high school to get a feel for the industry, and to see what type of design was best suited to me. This helped me make a decision on what I wanted to study at University, which was Graphic Design. I started at Ravensbourne and by my second year I had begun freelancing and was commissioned to be the lead designer for a new campaign. I created various motion graphic and promotional items which were showcased in over 90 pub locations all around London and Manchester during the 2019 Rugby World Cup. You don't see many British-Indian girls in the creative industry, so this was a big win for me to really represent. When Covid hit, I had to think of new ways to keep myself relevant and engaged in the creative industry, so I decided to grow my brand on social media.

I stayed consistent no matter what the engagement was initially (and it was definitely a slow start), and posted various pieces on Motion Graphics, Typographic Design etc. I really learnt how to master the Instagram algorithm and this brought in clients from all over. I even worked with individuals and organisations on pro-bono social design projects based in Hong Kong, Singapore and Australia.

Iqrah: I graduated in graphic design during the middle of the pandemic and spent my last term in lockdown doing my final major project. In between the first lockdown and graduating I was super bored and started watching Adobe After Effects tutorials on YouTube, and teaching myself motion graphics. I also picked up my camera, after studying at GCSE, and fell in love with it again. I started shooting my friends and anyone who would let me. During this time, I was seeing the switch Instagram was making to become a video-focused platform, and they introduced reels, which I was intrigued by. I started combining my photography, and all the editing techniques I had learnt, to create short reels/videos. I instantly saw how in demand this style was, and how well received it was on social media. Throughout Uni, I feel like it was ingrained in me to specialise in one area of the creative industry and now, being in the middle of it, I have learnt that it's okay to love a bit of everything... it's an asset. I can see how my skills in motion design help communicate in post-production and inform decisions I make at the start of tackling a brief.

I always knew that I didn't want to be stuck behind a screen, and I wasn't too keen on pursuing a career in Graphic Design because of that. I started picking up work through Instagram and was exposed to being on a set – I was in love with the fast pace and energy, and instantly knew this was something I wanted to do! Within a year of graduating, I had been the creative director of a Nike and Converse campaign... something I had always dreamed of.

“Our main aim is to show representation of women who look like us, something we didn't have growing up and see the need for.”

Where are you now?

Devi: After graduating, I spent the next two years freelancing for: a branding and strategy agency, a Museum in London, a multidisciplinary creative studio and clients of my own. Even though I was enjoying all of these experiences, I did find that being a full-time freelancer was a lot, as it wasn't always consistent work.

I was looking for something more permanent which is when I landed my current job at Estée Lauder (which I absolutely loveeeee!!). Sometimes I still can't believe I work for such a huge brand and that they believe in me to be a lead in the team, and run my own projects that you'll all hopefully see showcased across the UK and Ireland.

Iqrah: When we started coming out of lockdown, I landed my current job and have had the opportunity to be part of incredible campaigns, working with the most supportive group of creatives. I've been a part of Milani Cosmetics' anti-gravity campaign and flew over to New York to help shoot the BTS. I also edited the entire campaign and led post-production, which was the most challenging but rewarding piece of work I've done in my career so far!

In our free time (when we're not freelancing), Devi and I run a space called The Creative Corner Podcast. We created the pod as a way to share our journey as newbies in the creative space and women of colour. We are joined by our friends in the industry to help us explore and share advice on obstacles we face. Our main aim is to show representation of women who look like us, something we didn't have growing up and see the need for.

Where are you going?

Devi: In the next few years, I aim to start working and travelling abroad as I would love to see more of the world, and being in the industry we're in we have the flexibility, so... why not! I would also like to explore my style and see where I can take my own brand. Who knows, maybe even take The Creative Corner international.

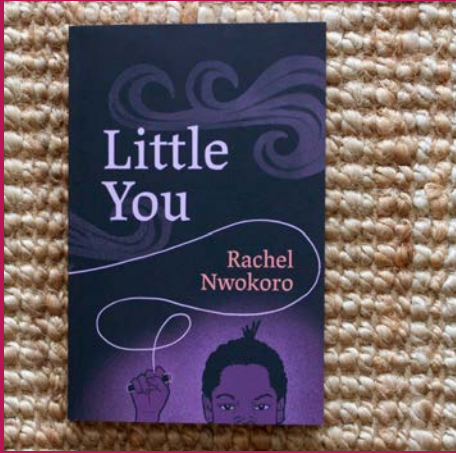
Iqrah: I'm not the biggest of planners but I do know I want to travel a lot more for work. I love the idea of doing what you love in a completely different environment! I am a huge sneaker head and obsessed with Nike so doing more work for them in the future would be a dream. I want to tap into my own style as a creative and keep improving and learning new skills.

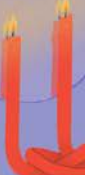
We are also in the midst of planning Season 2 for The Creative Corner, which we have big plans for!!

Finally, what's occupying your thoughts today?

Devi: I'm in a place in my career where there are so many opportunities around me given the experience I have, the projects I've worked on and the great clients I've met – there's so much to do and I finally have the free creativity to choose what I really align with. I'm very lucky to be in a position where people see my creativity and allow me to shape their vision. I'm feeling really grateful for the journey I've been on so far and I'm excited to see where it will take me.

Iqrah: I feel like I am learning how good breaks are and I'm working towards a better work/life balance. I have always struggled with switching off – what I love is what I do for a job – so creating boundaries is what I am working towards.





Judith P. Raynaud



Judith P.Raynault

Founding Member, Judith, spent 10 years working as a Fashion Designer in Canada, before embarking on a new career here in the UK. Discover what prompted her decision to retrain in Graphic Design aged 32, and how she forged her own path as a freelancer. Make sure you read our catch up to discover what she's been up to since this chat was first published almost a year ago, too, then check out her stunning illustrations (her 'Reading Corner' series is perfection, in our opinion).



First published August 6, 2021

Judith, what's your creative occupation?

I'm a graphic designer and illustrator.

Where have you been?

I'm from the province of Québec, Canada, where I worked as a fashion designer for 10 years before deciding to go back to college to study graphic design when I was 32. I had known for some time before quitting that fashion wasn't my passion anymore, partly because the company I worked for didn't let the designers be creative enough, and partly because I didn't feel like it was what I wanted to do long-term. At the same time I found myself more and more attracted to the graphic design part of the job – thinking about a new swift tag, creating an all over print or a placed print, etc. But I kept thinking that the market must be saturated because 90% of my friends were graphic designers. And then I thought "well, all of them have a job so surely there's still room for more!". That's what convinced me.

When I finished my graphic design course, I moved to the UK, because my husband is British – meaning that I started my new career in a new country, without any contacts. Something I 100% would NOT recommend, haha! Thankfully someone gave me a chance, and I was hired to work as a graphic designer for a charity. I moved on to an in-house agency about two years later.

Where are you now?

I decided to become self-employed three weeks before the first lockdown back in March 2020, so that was interesting! It was something I had been thinking about for a while though, I'd say about two years before I took the plunge. London is a VERY competitive market for graphic designers, and finding a job in a decent place, with a decent manager, at a decent salary, is hard if you don't have connections or didn't have the option to do a barely paid internship at a well-known agency. So, I figured that going freelance would be my best chance at working on projects I like (including doing more illustrations), and deciding who I would work with – and being my own boss! So I said goodbye to my permanent job and I've been lucky enough to find a client that has been giving me consistent graphic design work from the start. I also take on illustration commissions and other small graphic design contracts in between. In the past year I opened an online shop to sell my illustrations.

Where are you going?

If 15 months in a pandemic has taught me anything, it's that, who knows where I'm going? Not in a scary way, but in a way that leaves room to change my mind about what I want for my professional and personal life. But for now, I'd really love to work on cultural projects and on book projects in any capacity possible for someone with my skill set.

Finally, what's occupying your thoughts today?

At the moment I'm often thinking about how to balance working on projects that fulfil me, working on projects that pay my bills, and giving myself time to enjoy life and all the things I like to do.

judithpraynault.com

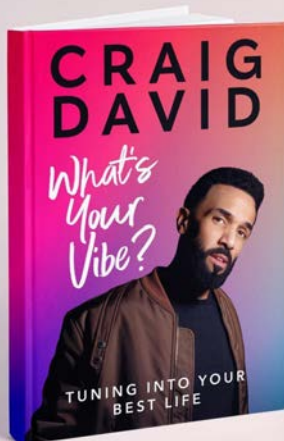


Catching up with Judith...

I'm pleased to say that since the interview I have worked on a cultural project, and I'm currently working on another! I also decided I'd put more energy into my shop. So, in order to get more eyes on my prints I've started doing markets. Those are not the best money makers on the day, if I'm honest, but I now see them as a long-term investment. Hopefully, someone who saw my prints there might want to buy from me in the future.



Adobe Live



STILL BREATHING

100

BLACK VOICES ON RACISM

100 WAYS TO CHANGE THE NARRATIVE

EDITED BY SUZETTE LLEWELLYN & SUZANNE PACKER

SHAUN BAILEY
 STEVIE BASKOLA
 DR ROBERT BEECHER
 COLTON BEECHER
 HERMON AND JESSICA BERNARD
 LORD PAUL BENTON
 STEPHEN BIRCH
 JOSETTE BISHFIELD
 DAVID BLOOM
 SONIA CAMPBELL
 SHAWN D. CARROLL
 FIONA CROFTON
 TROY COOKE
 DR JONAS COOK
 DORIS DAVIS
 DANIEL PAUL DANIEL
 MARCO DEEN
 ERROL DONALD
 NEDDY DUFFY
 DR STEVE DUFFY
 MALINA EDWARDS
 PAT DWYER
 JOCELYN JOE ESEN
 DR SARAH ELLIOTT-QUAY
 TRINA EYRE
 JOANNE J. FRANCIS
 PAMELA FRANKLIN
 PAULINA GETHING
 BONNIE GIBBS
 MICHELL GRIFFIN-ROBINSON

KAI HARPER
 ANDREW HARRIST
 TONY HARRISON
 JACKIE HENDERSON
 BERENICE HENSON
 PROFESSOR UGO HERRI
 ANGELA JACKSON
 JUSTIN JACOB
 D. JAY
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 RIZ KIMBERLEY
 STELLA KINGHAM
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 DAVID LAMPT
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 REVE JON MAEADAY
 BENJAMIN MANNING
 KEVIN MARSHALL
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 SONIA O'BRIEN
 MICHAEL O'BRIEN
 CHINDRILEEN O'BRIEN
 PAUL O'BRIEN O'BRIEN
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 JACQUELYN PEARSON
 REYDOR PHILLIPS
 LETICIA PIERCE
 REVE DR SHAWN PRATT
 REVEALY RAYBURN
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 SHERA DR HOLLY POTTER
 RUC BRILLINGFORD
 ROSEMARY
 CAROLIN SMART
 COURT SPOONER
 RUC TOWNS
 BENJAMIN TOWNSHIP
 ANTHONY TOWNSHIP
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 DR FAITH UWADIA
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 ANSEL WALKER
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 SALLY WILSON
 BERND WINTER
 STEA WISSELL
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EDITED BY
SUZETTE
LLEWELLYN
&
SUZANNE
PACKER

STILL BREATHING
100 BLACK VOICES ON RACISM
100 WAYS TO CHANGE THE NARRATIVE



@kieronanthony!



Kieron Lewis



This freelance graphic designer and public speaker is racking up accolades left and right; he's one of The Dots' 100 Black trailblazers, a D&AD Judge... we could go on and on! In this chat, Kieron shares what he got up to before going freelance around a year ago (just a month before buying his first home!), where his 'place of zen' is, and a top notch maxim for combatting overwhelm. Check out his incredible work, including his design for the powerful book, 'Still Breathing'.

First published June 29, 2022

Kieron, what's your creative occupation?

I'm a freelance graphic designer specialising in marketing, branding and editorial design, as well as a host on Adobe Live and the co-founder of Olga & Kay.

Where have you been?

Well, I got my university degree at Winchester School of Art about 9 years ago. Since then, I've worked full-time at numerous agencies covering advertising and editorial design. I always knew eventually I would like to go freelance, and I made the decision to do so about a year ago ...literally a month before buying my first home with my fiancé – wild, right?! From my various roles full-time, as well as balancing self-directed projects, this has given me the confidence and people skills to hit the ground running within my freelance career.

Where are you now?

Currently, I'm based in South London. I have an office at home, which is my place of zen! However, to mix things up I usually work at the Wellcome Collection in Euston. I'm actually typing these answers from there now! In terms of life, I literally just got married about 10 days ago! So, I'm in a very happy place at the moment.

“Over the years I’ve learnt an important lesson to become more calm and take each moment as it comes – the universe will unravel the way that it should!”

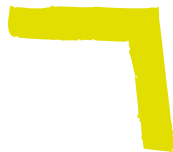
Where are you going?

At the moment, I’m in a position within my career where I have the opportunity to travel a lot. Primarily within the US. A few months back I was invited to speak in Washington DC and share the design process of a hardback publication in collaboration with Harper Collins, focusing on community, race and design. Most of my clients now are from the states, so I see myself collaborating more overseas! However, I will always have a soft spot for South London, in particular Brixton. This is where I was raised!

Finally, what’s occupying your thoughts today?

Honestly, not much and that’s not me trying to play it cool! I recently got back from my honeymoon, so my brain is feeling very relaxed at the moment. I do have a mountain of emails to plough through and I’m hosting on Adobe Live this evening. The “Kieron of Young” would have been over-thinking and slightly panicky, however, over the years I’ve learnt an important lesson to become more calm and take each moment as it comes – the universe will unravel the way that it should!

kieronlewis.com



What does the word 'journey' mean to you?

Journey is another word for

growth
process

but also

time

It's about figuring out what your passions and interests are, which can change with time. Your journey will always involve learning, despite the ups and downs.

@mathuxphotos





Katie O'Rourke

For our final interview of the book, we've chosen Founding Member, Katie. When Katie saw an ad for Shillington, 'something clicked'. She graduated in 2017 and has been busy forging an exciting career in Graphic Design ever since. Whether at her former day job as Designer for British Cycling, or freelancing for publications such as NRTH LASS and Shado Magazine, she's been busy, but these days is learning to value her downtime, 'completely free from guilt'.



First published November 12, 2021

Katie, what's your creative occupation?

I'm a graphic designer who illustrates a bit. My favourite projects combine the two! My day job is designer at British Cycling, where I work on all sorts of projects – digital, print, branding, editorial, campaigns, illustration – a bit of everything! And in my spare time I take on a few freelance projects.

Where have you been?

A bit all over the place! Design is a second career for me, after struggling to know what I wanted to do for quite a few years. I graduated with a degree in Fine Art but knew I didn't want to be an artist. I randomly ended up working in admin and then management roles for five years – where I worked with lovely people, learnt a lot but ultimately felt a bit unfulfilled. So I decided to take the plunge and quit without really having the next step planned. I did the typical backpacking stint, and when I returned after 6 months I enrolled in Shillington's three month graphic design course. Something clicked when I saw an advert for it – I didn't really have a proper understanding of what graphic design was but the idea of a creative career with a practical application definitely appealed.

Where are you now?

When I finished the course at Shillington I dived into applying to lots of jobs, did a couple of brief internships and started finding a bit of freelance here and there – not loads, but enough to keep me encouraged! This slowly picked up and when

I started freelancing at British Cycling they offered me a full-time position after a few days.

That was three years ago, and I've kept up a bit of freelance on the side ever since. I seem to be approached by people who are working on projects with a feminist and/or environmental slant, which suits me really well.

“It does me the world of good to have a non-creative pastime and find a way to use my brain in a completely different way.”

Where are you going?

I'm decidedly unsure on that one! Slowly following paths which interest me, trying to learn as I go and not rushing towards any particular goal. As might be clear by now, I'm not much of a planner and I'm happy to wait and see what opportunities present themselves. At the moment I'm trying to learn a few simple animation skills to try and bring to life my typography and illustration work – that's definitely going to be a long and slow journey, but it's satisfying to see a bit of progress and learn something out of my comfort zone.

Outside of design, I've been learning French for the past couple of years and it's become a real passion/obsession! It does me the world of good to have a non-creative pastime and find a way to use my brain in a completely different way. Although I'd definitely love to see if I can find a way to collide these two worlds in the future.

Finally, what's occupying your thoughts today?

Prioritising having a restful day before the working week starts! I've realised over the past couple of years that being constantly busy doesn't suit me, and I really value my downtime, completely free from guilt.

At the start of 2022 Katie decided to become a full-time freelance designer. Contact her for bookings! www.katieourkedesign.com

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ROASTERS
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FOR BRITISH RED CROSS

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