

pro-manchester

# cre@tive conference

Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> September 2026

## Our Sponsors

**bruntwood**  
SciTech



**Manchester  
Metropolitan  
University**

**/HGF**



## Our Partners



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# About the Event

## *The Art of Significance*

There has never been more content, more platforms and more opportunities to be seen.

Yet making ideas resonate has never been more challenging. In fact, research suggests that 85% of online content fail to attract enough attention to create a lasting memory effect, highlighting just how difficult it has become to cut through the noise and create meaningful connections.

Creative Conference is a one-day event exploring what it takes to create work that truly matters in an increasingly complex world. Bringing together creative thinkers and industry professionals, the conference will examine how ideas cut through, build trust and leave a lasting impression.

Through a programme of keynotes, panel discussions and fireside conversations, we'll explore how complex ideas can be transformed into compelling stories, why simplicity remains one of the most powerful creative tools, and how organisations can build authentic connections in a rapidly evolving landscape. We'll also examine the role of creativity in shaping stronger communities, driving meaningful impact and navigating an increasingly AI-influenced world.

Hosted by Amna Khan, the conference offers a unique opportunity to gain fresh perspectives, hear from leading voices across the creative sector and connect with others passionate about the future of creative work.

# EVENT SCHEDULE

## 29 September 2026

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**09:30 - 10:00**

**Registration & Networking**

**10:00 - 10:10**

**Welcome from Host: Amna Khan**

**10:10 - 10:25**

**Keynote: The Future of Creativity  
Isn't Dead**

**10:25 - 10:55**

**Fireside chat: From Complex Ideas  
to Stories People will Remember**

**10:55 - 11:30**

**Panel: Creativity for Good: Why  
Creativity Is Essential for Thriving  
Communities and Inclusive Growth**

**11:30 - 11:50**

**Morning Networking break**

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# EVENT SCHEDULE

## 29 September 2026

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**11:50 - 12:15**

**Fireside chat: The Power of Place:  
What Spaces Teach Us About  
Communication**

**12:15 - 12:45**

**Panel: Why the Best Ideas are Often  
the Simplest**

**12:45- 13:20**

**Panel: Owning the Narrative: Trust,  
Authority and Originality in the AI  
Era**

**13:20 - 13:30**

**Close from Host: Amna Khan**

**13:30 - 14:30**

**Lunch & Networking**

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# CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

29 September 2026

## Morning Sessions

**10:00 - 10:25 - Opening speech from Host & Keynote: The Future of Creativity Isn't Dead**



**Dr. Amna Khan**  
Senior Lecturer, MMU  
Host



**Professor Jill Griffiths**  
Professor of Digital Arts  
and Creative Industries,  
Head of SODA, MMU

**10:25 - 10:55 - Fireside Chat: From Complex Ideas to Stories People Will Remember**



**OJ Borg**  
Broadcaster, BBC  
Radio 2



**Charles Dimmler**  
CEO, Holiform

**10:55 - 11:30 - Creativity for Good: Why Creativity Is Essential for Thriving Communities and Inclusive Growth**



**Steve Connor**  
Founder & Director - Creative  
Concern



**Paul Hine**  
CEO - Made By Mortals



**Marisa Draper**  
Head of operations and  
Internal Business Strategy -  
Venture Arts



**Ronke James**  
Co-Founder & Director - Black  
Creative Trailblazers



**Ciaron Wilkinson**  
Head of Partnerships and  
Engagement - Manchester  
Museum



**Kirsty Fairclough**  
Professor of Screen Studies,  
SODA Research and Innovation  
Lead - MMU

**11:30 - 11:50 - Networking Break**

# CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

29 September 2026

## Afternoon Sessions

**11:50 - 12:15 - Fireside Chat: The Power of Place: What Spaces Teach Us About Communication**



**Hannah Churchman**  
Head of Innovation & Growth - Bruntwood SciTech



**Alex Smith**  
Partner, Sheppard Robson

**12:15 - 12:45 - Why the Best Ideas are Often the Simplest**



**Lauren Somers**  
Chartered UK Trade Mark And Designs Attorney, HGF



**Jo Scott**  
Founder, Truth Creative



**Rachel Chesters**  
Founder, Start



**Ben Topliss**  
Creative Director, Embryo

**12:45 - 13:20 - Owning the Narrative: Trust, Authority and Originality in the AI Era**



**Michael Taylor**  
Editor, The Business Desk



**Nicky Unsworth FIPA**  
Non-Executive Director & Advisor



**Ruth Allan**  
Director, Wire Press Ltd



**Jo Beggs**  
Head of Development - Manchester Art Gallery

**13:20 - 14:30 - Close from Host, Lunch & Networking**

# CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

29 September 2026

## Morning Sessions

### **Keynote: The Future of Creativity Isn't Dead**

This keynote explores why creative thinking is critical for innovation, growth and thriving communities, and why investing in creativity is essential for businesses, organisations and society alike.

### **Fireside Chat: From Complex Ideas to Stories People Will Remember**

How do you make complex ideas accessible, relatable and memorable? This conversation explores the power of storytelling to help audiences connect with challenging concepts and inspire action.

### **Panel: Creativity for Good: Why Creativity Is Essential for Thriving Communities and Inclusive Growth**

Creativity has the power to do far more than sell products and services. This discussion explores how creative thinking can support stronger communities, encourage inclusion and drive meaningful social impact.

## Afternoon Sessions

### **Fireside Chat: The Power of Place: What Spaces Teach Us About Communication**

From workplaces to cultural institutions, the spaces around us shape how we think, feel and connect. Discover how design and architecture influence human behaviour and brand experience.

### **Panel: Why the Best Ideas Are Often the Simplest**

This session explores why the strongest creative work is often built around a single idea, message or emotion. Through real-world examples, speakers will share how stripping away complexity can create stronger, more memorable and culturally resonant ideas.

### **Panel: Owning the Narrative: Trust, Authority & Originality in the AI Era**

As AI-generated content becomes increasingly common, authenticity becomes more valuable than ever.

This session examines how individuals and organisations can build trust, establish authority and create distinctive voices that audiences genuinely believe.

# OUR SPEAKERS

The Creative Conference brings together a diverse range of voices from across the creative, media, business and communications landscape. From broadcasters and journalists to designers, strategists and changemakers, our speakers will share insights, experiences and fresh perspectives on the ideas shaping the future of creative work.



**Dr. Amna Khan**  
Senior Lecturer, MMU  
Host



**OJ Borg**  
Broadcaster, BBC  
Radio 2



**Michael Taylor**  
Editor, The Business  
Desk



**Paul Hine**  
CEO, Made by Mortals



**Jo Scott**  
Founder, Truth  
Creative



**Alex Smith**  
Partner, Sheppard  
Robson



**Marisa Draper**  
Head of Operations &  
Internal Business  
Strategy, Venture Arts



**Steve Connor**  
Founder & Director,  
Creative Concern



**Nicky Unsworth FIPA**  
Non-Executive  
Director & Advisor



**Ronke Jane Adelakun**  
Co-Founder &  
Director, Black  
Creative Trailblazers



**Ciaron Wilkinson**  
Head of Partnerships  
& Engagement,  
Manchester Museum



**Ruth Allan**  
Director, Wire Press  
Ltd

# OUR SPEAKERS



**Prof. Kirsty Fairclough**

Professor of Screen  
Studies, MMU



**Lauren Somers**

Chartered UK Trade Mark  
And Designs Attorney -  
HGF



**Hannah Churchman**

Head of Innovation &  
Growth - Bruntwood  
SciTech



**Jo Beggs**

Head of Development -  
Manchester Art Gallery



**Rachel Chesters**

Founder, Start



**Professor Jill Griffiths**

Professor of Digital Arts  
and Creative Industries,  
Head of SODA, MMU



**Charles Dimmler**

CEO, Holiferm



**Ben Topliss**

Creative Director, Embryo

# Meet our Creative, Digital and Media Committee

Creative Conference is shaped by a dedicated committee of professionals from across the creative industry. Drawing on their expertise and insight, the committee helps develop the conference theme, curate the agenda and bring together the voices, ideas and conversations that make the event possible.



**Jo Scott**  
Founder, Truth  
Creative



**Gareth Clements**  
Co-Founder, RUMPUS



**Gemma Blades**  
Creative Development  
Manager  
GM Business Growth Hub



**Lee Curtis**  
Partner, HGF



**Rachel Chesters**  
Founder & Managing  
Director, Start



**James Guérin**  
Founder, JG  
Consulting



**Paul Culshaw**  
Business & Digital  
Strategy Consultant,  
Recognition



**Sam Dunn**  
Creative Director,  
MC2



**Clair Heaviside**  
Chief Creative Officer,  
Embryo



**Andy Schofield**  
Founder & Growth  
Guide, Summit

# Get Involved

## **Attend the Conference:**

Book your ticket today and be part of the conversation shaping the future of creative work.

**[Book here](#)**

## **Sponsor the Conference:**

Interested in sponsoring Creative Conference?

Get in touch to discuss opportunities to showcase your brand, connect with industry professionals and support the region's creative community.

**Contact: [Aaron.Emburey@pro-manchester.co.uk](mailto:Aaron.Emburey@pro-manchester.co.uk)**

## **Speak at the Conference:**

We're always looking for expert speakers and fresh perspectives to help shape the conversation.

Get in touch to discuss future opportunities.

**Contact: [Nadia.Adofo@pro-manchester.co.uk](mailto:Nadia.Adofo@pro-manchester.co.uk)**