

Young people interested in creative careers: Mapping career information and support needs

Working in the cultural and creative industries is an attractive option for many young people. However, getting a foothold in the industry is not easy, especially when missing vital work experience and networks.

Over the last fifteen years the V&A's Young People's Team has been supporting young people aged 13 to 24 years old to access information and networks for building a career in the creative industries. The V&A's Young People's Programme offers creative skill-building workshops and free activities such as career insights sessions, social inclusion projects for young people who experience difficulties in accessing creative education and jobs, career festivals and a youth collective.

Young people are not a homogeneous group. However, the V&A's Young People's Team wanted to understand how to respond better to their interests and needs by identifying profiles of young people pursuing creative careers. Working with Loughborough University London, the V&A have conducted in-depth research and evaluation studies on two flagship events offered regularly as part of the V&A's Young People's Programme:

- A creative careers fair targeting young people interested in art and design (Making It: Careers in Art and Design) and fashion creative careers (Making It: Careers in Fashion and Costume); and
- CreateFutures, a five-day creative skills workshop offered in cooperation with charities in East London.

These in-depth studies shed light on how young people's information and support needs differ in relation to the following topical areas:

- Career decision-making: having made a decision over a creative career vs still deciding/exploring opportunities;
- Career progression stage: low or no experience vs some experience/beginner professional;
- Know-how: industry know-how (what happens in a creative field) vs career development know-how (how to prepare for and enter that field);
- Depth and breadth of career information needed: wide-ranging and exploratory vs deep and focused information;
- Young people's knowledge base: low/some knowledge vs basic and above/intermediate knowledge on both sectoral and career-related areas.

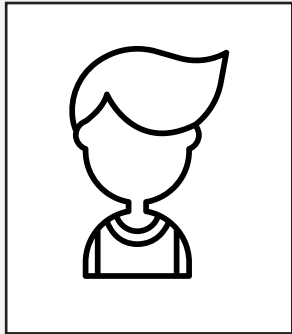
These insights enabled the identification of five profiles of young people interested in creative careers, each in a different career stage and featuring different needs for information and support to advance their education, training and careers. The five profiles are:

- Profile 1: The Selector. Starting to make decisions that will affect their career path
- Profile 2: The Multifaceted Creative. Talented and interested in more than one field
- Profile 3: The Decided. Chosen a career, looking for relevant opportunities in that field
- Profile 4: The Switcher. Transitioning into a creative career
- Profile 5: The Explorer. Looking for new ideas, spends time critically thinking to form new opinions

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Profile 1: The selector

Starting to make decisions that will affect their career path



“Confused about where to go with a creative future.”

“[I want] to become more confident about my choices. I sort of know already, but just to learn if I am on the right path.”

“I am trying to decide on a career. Discovering.”

Demographics

Age range: 14 -19 years, possibly early twenties

Education level: Still studying or just finished GCSE/ A-levels, possibly undergraduate

Employment experience: none/ scarce/ placements and internships

Defining Traits

- Concerned about making the right decisions, aware of the importance of informed choices
- Open to new experiences, keen on exploring possibilities
- Often uncertain about their own choices, seeking external validation
- Willing to gain volunteering experience
- Perhaps unsure where to start/find sources of information
- Sometimes lacking confidence

Creative Career Goals

- Definitely interested in a creative career, but not certain which one to go for
- Probably looked at various options, and have some idea what’s out there
- Maybe overly ambitious / unrealistic about goals vs reality
- Sometimes don’t fully understand what a creative career is, or the skills/qualifications needed

Challenges in Career Progression

- Lack of information about what happens in a creative sector
- Lack of knowledge about needed skill and steps to pursue a career / route ahead
- Lack of access to networks and creative professionals

Career Stage

- Still deciding over ‘the’ career
- Don’t know the broad range of potential careers
- May have already a shortlist of suitable professions
- Some may have decided on a career, but are uncertain and want validation

Needs and Expectations to be delivered by Provider

- Industry know-how and career know-how to be able to decide or validate one’s choices
- Access to creative professionals for career advice and first-hand experience stories
- Rather broad, generic, wide-ranging information covering more creative sectors
- Opportunities for hands-on taster activities

Career Influencers

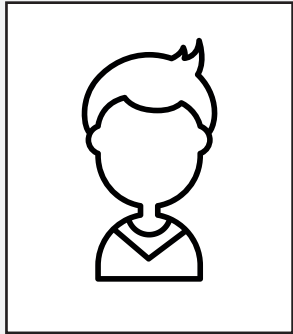
- A wide range (from creative professionals to teachers, parents, and peers), different for individual profiles
- Likely to be particularly sensitive to information and advice from experienced professionals and teachers
- Hard to find a balance view
- Decisions often formed too quickly without verification

What Activities match their profile?

- Career focus festivals, events giving: informative talks on industry know how and career know how, advice sessions, taster sessions, workshops, demos
- Longer/more engaged, hands-on courses and workshops to experience a creative practice and /or another skill

Profile 2: The Multifaceted Creative

Talented and interested in more than one field



"I'm interested in visual arts. I'm coming from a background of writing and music but I'm trying to learn more about the visual aspects of it."

"Photography remains a plan B, plan A is music, so photography is something to fall back on. I know what's trendy, you have to go with the times."

Demographics

- Age range: 16 -21years
- Education level: Still studying or just finished GCSE/ A-levels, possibly undergraduate or new graduate
- Employment experience: Scarce or some experience – internships/ some arts gigs/ occasional one-off creative work
- Take part in a wide range of societies/organisations/clubs
- Often have voluntary experience

Defining Traits

- Talented in more than one creative domain
- Anchored in contemporary youth culture – heavy users of social media, contemporary music, love dynamic, exciting experiences, don't like repetitive boring stuff
- Embrace flexibility: Open to freelancing workstyle that gives liberty, despite low job security
- The younger the more open to exploring possibilities, but not keen to focus on one thing just yet even at 22yrs+
- Unsure how to choose which career to pursue

Creative Career Goals

- Interested in a creative career, but not keen to settle on one just yet
- Exploring different routes that match their talents, often connected
- May also explore creative routes as a hobby/side profession while pursuing another career

Challenges in Career Progression

- Need to build solid skills to match their interest-based learning style
- Lack of knowledge about the experience of being creative in a certain sector
- Lack of knowledge about needed skills and steps to pursue a career
- Lack of connecting networks and access to creative professionals
- Lack of confidence and direction

Career Stage

- Still deciding over 'the' career, they have already some firm options to choose from (some still in talent/ potential stage)
- Likely show interest in more than one area and train for more than one
- Often not keen to decide over a single and final career, rather exploring different routes and matching them to opportunities

Needs and Expectations to be delivered by Provider

- Map creative career paths – skills needed/the route ahead (career know-how)
- Sample or hear about the experience of practicing in a creative sector (industry know-how)
- Get access to creative professionals for career and industry insights, advice, inspiration, new ideas
- Guidance on how to follow multiple careers or pick one
- Benefit from mentoring

Career Influencers

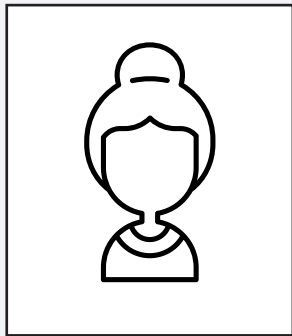
- Reject schools and authority, likely to want to learn more from creative professionals and peers
- May also use social media to get informed, and to propel their own career, actual influence of social media on career choices likely to be higher for the under 20yrs

What Activities match their profile?

- Career focus festivals, events giving: informative talks on industry know how and career know how, advice sessions, taster sessions, workshops, demos
- Longer/more engaged, hands-on courses and workshops to experience a creative practice and /or another skill

Profile 3: The Decided

Chosen a career, looking for relevant opportunities in that field



"I study art and design and want to be an architect."

"I am looking for a placement, internship, I am doing a BA in Product Design."

Demographics

- Age range: 20 -24years. Can be younger and studying in a chosen creative field
- Education level: Likely to be still studying or just finished undergraduate or postgraduate
- Employment experience: Some experience – starter jobs/ entry levels/ internships/ some arts gigs/

Defining Traits

- Keen to build a broad base of skills to get ahead of the crowd/ consolidate one's position in a chosen creative sector
- Be aware and informed about what happens in one's field

Creative Career Goals

- Build a career in a chosen creative field
- Keep informed and aware of what happens in the chosen creative sector

Challenges in Career Progression

- Lack of knowledge about the running of the industry they have just begun to explore
- Lack of access to connecting networks and creative professionals for leads and opportunities – jobs, freelance, training and internships

Career Stage

- Have chosen a career, either still studying for a creative qualification or moving from study into work

Needs and Expectations to be delivered by Provider

- Get access to creative professionals for career and industry insights, advice, inspiration, new ideas
- Identify leads and opportunities such as workplaces, internships, etc
- Deeper, more specific information about industry and career know-how, above the basics

Career Influencers

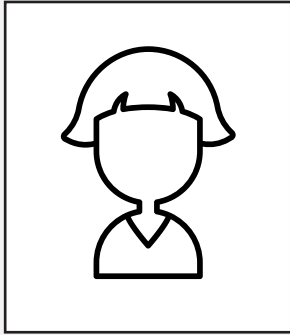
- More autonomous decision-making, likely to accept information from peers and creative professionals, trusted instructors/mentors

What Activities match their profile?

- Events that put them in touch with creative professionals and expose them to how things work in a field and enhance networking
- Talks and career stories from creative professionals and follow up information
- Possibly applied workshops, more in-depth than the taster workshop to get more advance skills

Profile 4: The Switcher

Transitioning into a creative career



“I am working in film and visual arts. I am interested in alternative career routes, not the traditional ones.”

Demographics

- Age range: 23years+
- Education level: finished studies, possibly undergraduate qualification/postgraduate
- Employment experience: employed and / or with professional experience not necessarily in the field they want to be in

Defining Traits

- Preoccupied with finding a job that gives them more fulfilment and satisfaction than the current/recent one
- Feel pressure to succeed and get up to speed with others already in the field

Creative Career Goals

- Transition into a creative career
- Looking for alternative/ non-traditional routes to enter a creative sector

Challenges in Career Progression

- Lack of connecting networks and opportunities for career change
- Lack of knowledge about alternative/ non-traditional routes into creative industries
- Moving beyond volunteering/ casual working into an actual job in the creative sector

Career Stage

- Already working/ with professional experience but decided to change career
- May have decided on a target career or exploring options such as work experience or paid internship

Needs and Expectations to be delivered by Provider

- Gain knowledge on how to enter a new professional field without new studies.
- Want to find out about non-traditional entry routes
- Gain access to creative professionals for advice and career insights
- Access leads and opportunities they can follow up on

Career Influencers

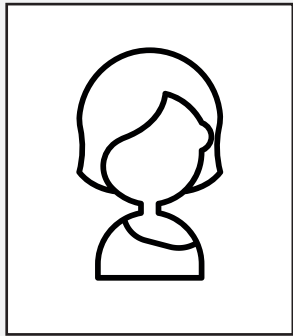
- Autonomous in taking decisions and choosing their influencers
- Likely to trust peers and creative professionals for information and advice

What Activities match their profile?

- Looking for leads, networking opportunities and connections, information to follow up on rather than ‘how to’ or exploratory talks and workshops
- (when exploring target career options) Sessions that give an insight into the experience of working in the sector, advice from experienced professionals

Profile 5: The Explorer

Looking for new ideas, spends time critically thinking to form new opinions



"[I came] to see what's it like to work in the creative industries. I heard about it from friends and social media."

Demographics

- Age range: 14 -19years, likely to be in the younger percentile
- Education level: Likely to be still at school or just finished GCSE/A-levels

Defining Traits

- Exploring what to do with their lives and looking around
- Believe in the importance of catching the right opportunity – eager to attend industry events/ networking/research
- Not yet quite ready to take a final career decision – want to get a sense of what's out there first
- Active on social media
- Very busy schedules

Creative Career Goals

- Still developing career goals
- Not certain about their career, and whether it's a creative career or not
- Want creative industry insights

Challenges in Career Progression

- Deciding. Too many choices
- Concerns over employability

Career Stage

- Still deciding over their career and study paths, and whether creative careers suit them

Needs and Expectations to be delivered by Provider

- Get general and specific information about choice of creative careers and a taste of how it is to work as a creative professional
- Need honest perspectives of particular industries

Career Influencers

- Social media (especially Instagram and YouTube), family, school and peers are all likely to influence them

What Activities match their profile?

- Informative talks on industry and career know how; taster workshops; demos
- Workshops and courses, hands-on activities where they can try out things and develop basic skills