

Good Afternoon

We're going to cover lots of ground together today and we've woven the programme loosely around thoughts of 'the future'.

And we've done that because the creative industries are particularly good at imagining new possibilities - and even foretelling - the future.

In 1865 Jules Verne predicted the moon landing, 104 years before Armstrong and Aldrin touched down.

In *Brave New World* Aldous Huxley wrote about antidepressants - a mood-altering pill called Soma – 20 years before scientists first discovered the connection between depression and brain chemistry in 1951.

But perhaps one of the greatest creative imaginings of the future is celebrated right now at the Design Museum's Stanley Kubrick exhibition. Could there be a more chilling – or more beautiful - depiction of Artificial Intelligence gone rogue, than Hal in 2001: A Space Odyssey?

Science fiction likes to take a very dystopian view of the future, but I'm an optimist and believe that our creativity can help us to shape a better world.

Look at the Blue Planet effect.

Produced by the BBC's Natural History Unit, just up the road from my own office in Bristol; a programme that confronted global audiences with the damage that plastics are doing to our oceans.

TV so powerful, it's widely believed to have sparked a turning point in the war on plastics.

Apparently, applications to study Marine Biology have shot up.

In China, the first episode actually slowed the internet as 80 million people streamed it simultaneously.

But what really matters, is that 9 out of 10 people who saw the programme, are reported to have changed their behaviour as a result.

In our first panel today, we're going to hear from 4 mission-based private businesses discuss how they are motivated by more than profit. Working in and with the creative sector to make the world a better place.

We're also going to explore how the creative industries can help us shape the future we want.

Last week the Institute of Fiscal Studies' launched their review into inequalities.

Their Chairperson is the Nobel Prize-winning economist Prof Sir Angus Deaton. And hearing him talk reminded me of the most frightening of all science fiction's future dystopias.

Deaton claimed that if Britain continues to follow the US, we will see real wages reduce as GDP rises.

Life expectancy fall, as the less educated die - predominantly by their own hands - from suicide, from alcoholic liver disease, and from drug overdoses.

And, gaps between rich and poor widened to a degree that makes a mockery of democracy.

Challenging that degree of inequality, must surely matter to us all.

One of the core values that unites many of us in the creative sector is our intellectual curiosity. Our belief in the power of culture to build communities and good businesses to serve them, and our commitment to harness our creativity to achieve that change.

We are of course living through a time of seismic change, with the creative industries at the forefront of it. Constantly innovating, adopting and driving new tech.

So, we all have a collective responsibility to help shape and channel such rapid change.

If we don't use the stuff that makes us human to imagine a better future, data driven technology on its own, may simply perpetuate the mistakes of the past.

And it's just these kinds of issues that we'll explore in our panel on the next chapter of storytelling later this afternoon, with our guests from the world of immersive media.

Now, Creative England was established to address the massive imbalance that exists in the creative sector. And over the last few years we've invested millions of pounds into creative companies and people all over the country.

And we've had some success

We've uncovered amazing talent – 19 BAFTA nominations and 2 winners; 14 BIFA wins and a raft of nominations and winners of games industry awards such as TIGA and BAFTA games. ,

We've seen an average of 25% revenue growth for the businesses we've supported.

And we are very proud that we have leveraged over £4 of private finance for every £1 of public money that we've invested.

But what makes us happiest, is that most of the businesses we've helped to grow have been in areas of the country that need it most.

And most of the talent we've helped, had never had a break before working with us.

Doing that is not easy. Culture loves to perpetuate the romantic myth that great talent will out.

Take Jeff Koons. One of the very first things Google will tell you about him, is that he rose from humble beginnings in an industrial backwater of Pennsylvania, son of a decorator and a seamstress, to become the World's most expensive living artist. Or take another JK - JK

Rowling. You may not be able to name all the books in the Harry Potter series, but I bet you know she was a single Mum living on benefits when she wrote them. Now she's significantly richer than the Queen.

Of course, we all love a rags- to-riches story, but that kind of exponential rise, particularly in the creative industries, is the thing of legend. And it's the thing of legend precisely because it's vanishingly rare.

But it's a dangerous story. Dangerous because it perpetuates the belief that if it's good enough, creative talent will blossom with very little cultivation.

But, we all know that's only half the truth. We all know that if you work in the creative sector, who you know, who you see, who your role models are is often the making of your career and your business success.

To quote our host, June Sarpong "As the world becomes increasingly diverse, we must ensure that creative industries lead the way in workplace fairness and equality. Only through creating more companies that hire, nurture and promote talent from all walks of life can we reach our full economic potential."

If we're helping others to imagine a better future, we need to get our own house in order along the way.

One of the ways we are doing this is by connecting talent to market opportunities, for example, through our Shortflix partnership with Sky Arts and Greenshoots with Microsoft. The starting point of Shortflix, is to tackle the economic exclusion of young people from the film and TV industry.

We recruit talented, ambitious young filmmakers under 25 who are not in full-time education, employment or training and give them the support they need to translate their stories to the screen, which are then broadcast on Sky Arts.

The first round of films explored diverse stories from black gay culture to toxic friendships. Participants tell us that they found their experience genuinely life changing.

In creating those stories, they had the opportunity to imagine what they wanted and I'm sure they in turn will become role models to others, eager to have their voices heard.

And similarly, through our partnership with Microsoft we've been finding and investing in new indie games companies who also, are breaking the mould.

In that vein of shining a light on great talent; today, sees the launch of CE 50.

50 of some of the most interesting, exciting, creative companies and individuals. In the nooks and crannies of the country, that rarely attract the attention of the mainstream media.

And we're going to be meeting some of the people from our past CE 50 reviews. And hear from them how they've grown their companies. Many received investment from us. And the small amounts we provided, gave them the much-needed resource that helped them get their foot on the ladder.

So, today's focus is to hear, first-hand, from creative companies and practitioners who've built their businesses from scratch.

From our first session with Margot James, Minister for Culture, Communications and Creative Industries, who I've persuaded to share with us her experiences of growing and then selling, a successful creative business outside London.

And isn't it wonderful to hear of an MP who's had a job and knows what it's like to submit her VAT return.

All the way through to our last interviewee this afternoon, Kanya King. Who, at 16, founded the MOBO awards, and is now recognised as one of the 100 most powerful women in the UK.

We hope today to inspire, inform and importantly to connect. To create the connections that build more inclusive creative business, and in turn more inclusive economic growth. And ultimately, perhaps make our own small contribution to a more inclusive society.

That's what makes me, and the whole team at Creative England, get out of bed in the morning. And put on events like this one today.

I hope you'll be inspired, enthused, meet some new people and make some new connections.

Thank you for taking the time to join us today.

I hope you enjoy all that we've lined up for you this afternoon.