**EVOLVING YOUR CREATIVE CAREER**

## Kayleigh 0:00

We've all been there, justifying our creative job to Mum and Dad; explaining what our job is to Grandad; brushing off jokes about freelancing from our mate who works in finance. But times are changing and the value of creativity is being recognised. The creative industries are the fastest growing part of the UK economy, and the least likely jobs to be taken over by robots. I'm Kayleigh Mcleod and this is ‘Get a Proper Job’, where I'll be talking about the issues that matter.

**Jessica Dunrod 0:31**

Ultimately, I understand that in all of my businesses, I am my businesses. Really it's just taking the same expertise and applying them to different circumstances.

## Kayleigh 0:42

In today's episode, we'll be talking about how creative careers evolve and change with Jessica Dunrod and Jonny Campbell.

Hello and welcome! In today's episode, we'll be talking about how creative careers evolve and change. How do you develop your skills, interests and areas of passion throughout your creative career? We're joined today by two guests to share their experiences and learnings in this area.

Jessica Dunrod is a translator, author, activist and director of the only black owned translation firm in the UK: Lily Translates and Ambassadora. And Jonny Campbell is a creative producer, award winning filmmaker, cameraman and editor who has a background in architecture. Someone who writes books and someone who makes films, I feel like we're going to have lots of great storytelling in this episode. Welcome to both of you and thanks for joining us!

At Creative Cardiff we're still working from home so we're recording this, our third series of ‘Get a Proper Job’, remotely. As with the last series apologies in advance if you hear sounds of our home lives in the background. The global pandemic has forever altered the world of work, particularly in the creative industries and so over the next few episodes, we're going to explore what that means for creatives. Our guests today have an eclectic career portfolio for us to dive right into.

So Jessica, can you start by telling us a little bit about your career to date, please?

## Jessica 2:19

Hi. I launched Ambassadora Translations and Language Solutions in my penultimate year of my BA at Cardiff Uni where I studied translation. I recently launched Lily Translates. Ambassadora was set up to deal with all businesses and help them expand internationally through language solutions and then spotting a niche in the market where I saw there was no translation firm dedicated to children's literature. I launched Lily Translates specifically to assist authors and publishers, and also to produce their multilingual audiobook to accompany the translation. And then I wrote some books.

**Kayleigh 2:58**

And then I wrote some books - to just throw that in there. You've written two children's books, which is amazing. What were your main drivers for doing that?

## Jessica 3:07

Well, George Floyd started everything because that happened and then the Race Equality Steering Group was formed in Cardiff University (of which I'm co-Chair). And we're working on decolonising the curriculum and you know, actually sorting out those issues that are institutionally prevalent.

Our issue was, well we're going to sell everything out on campus and leave, but then ignorance will come into our university… how do we help the younger years? So that was kind of my way of subliminally fight racism without ever saying the word race and put it in children's literature and also heal a community which has never been represented in literature, because we know that we represent less than 2% black characters in children's books, and authors who write them but then there are more than 40% dog main characters. So, the perspective you know… we're not really getting much. Let alone say if you've got neurodiverse needs and you really need a book that you can relate to, there still aren't many books out there to help children with autism, and with identity issues. So, it's kind of starting a process really, in order to help other marginalized voices come through.

## Kayleigh 4:16

And so where did you start when it came to writing a children's book?

**Jessica 4:19**

Well, I started writing on the fourth of November “Your Hair is your Crown” and then halfway through I just realised there were very many books that needed to be written, even the simple picture books! I thought about the Doll Test, and thought, how do we counteract that if we know that racism and stereotypical views have formed by the time you're three or four years old? How do we counteract that? Which is why our standard would be to see a young black girl dressed as a judge and an engineer and all these different roles where women are not necessarily associated with and also people of colour…? It is a very long-term goal to try and fix this over time.

## Kayleigh 4:58

Do you feel like you've got lots of other books in you?

## Jessica 5:01

Yeah, I've already started writing, there's a few coming up: the Welsh History textbooks… there are so many things that need to be done. At the moment, I've started a GoFundMe page to raise money to translate 10 black British authors into Welsh, while we wait for more black Welsh children's authors to emerge because I'm believed to be the first Welsh born black children's author, and it's going to take ages until people start producing books.

There are currently amazing books out there in the UK literary world, which just haven't been translated into Welsh, and therefore are inaccessible for our schools.

## Kayleigh 5:37

I'm excited to hear more about that. Jonny, can you just tell me a little bit about working as an architect and then as a filmmaker and how that journey has developed?

## Jonny 5:47

Sure, yeah. Well, to tell the truth, I've never actually worked as an architect. It's what I studied at university (I went to Cardiff Uni as well) and I did a placement year. But legally, I wasn't allowed to call myself an architect because I didn't study it for long enough. I didn't go into studying it necessarily with the ambition to do it as a job. I thought it would be a really interesting thing to study; I liked the balance of creative and practical thinking, I guess, which at school, I'd always been quite good at both. So, it felt like a sort of natural progression.

I had a taste for what it was like to do as a job when I did a work placement and I realised that maybe I definitely didn't want to do it forever. And as a creative course, we were exposed to photography and even things like responding to briefs so filmmaking came about almost as a bit of a side hustle whilst I was studying. I had access to a camera and just started giving stuff ago and the more I did it, the more I enjoyed it.

When I left University in 2014 (after my master's) I just made the decision that I’d set myself up as a freelancer, just see if I get some work on camera or editing. I didn't get any because I had no experience on paper. So, I started trying to get in work experience and that kind of thing and I got a part time sort of retail job to keep that going. Eventually, having knocked on enough doors, finally I had a couple of opportunities, and really just went from there. Mostly down to other opportunities and you start to build a network of people. And yeah, that's sort of how that transition happened, really.

I suppose I've gone on to do that for about five, six years now. But then last year, the TV and film production sector obviously suffered quite heavily with the impact of coronavirus, lockdowns, and restrictions. I was put on furlough from the agency I was working with at the time, a video production agency and that actually gave me a bit of time to reflect, and I realised I had started to actually miss the world of architecture to a certain extent. So, what I'm trying to do now is explore where the world of architectural design and the world of filmmaking and the wide world of communications and storytelling might crossover.

## Kayleigh 8:16

Do you feel like there are transferable skills between architecture and filmmaking?

**Jonny 8:22**

100%. I think they are skills that you will come across in any creative discipline. I think the whole process of typically starting with a client who comes to you with an idea which you flesh out into a brief and that brief is always a conversation - it's a discussion. Then essentially, the core of it is your creative response to that brief. Now, whether that's designing a house or making a documentary, it’s essentially the same process and work.

Of course, working within parameters within that, there's always a budget, there's always a timescale. Knowing what is possible/what's not possible and how to communicate that stuff both to your clients, but also to people you're working with. So, in the world of architecture you don't work as a solo, you work with engineers, you work with planners, you work with the council, you should be working with the public, you have to be a translator, you have to know how to talk to different people in different ways. And again, that's the same with filmmaking, you're working with a crew, you're working with contributors and of course, you're working with your client at the end of the day. So yeah, there’s lots of transferable skills. It's really just the medium that you're working in that’s different.

## Kayleigh 9:35

And lots of complementarity there in terms of core skills.

Jess, I guess the same question to you really, do you feel like your career in translation complements your work as an author and vice versa? You mentioned the GoFundMe there. I'm assuming those are connected to both of your careers.

**Jessica 9:53**

Yes, definitely because one of the main reasons I wrote the books also was to prove how well I could translate and how complicated lexical elements in one language, or hidden political meanings, or hidden meanings can be translated in all languages while say promoting an underrepresented group or protecting a minorized language or culture like Wales. So definitely, and it's even led me to opening up my third business, which is all to do with diversifying children's literature, but also educational resources, and then helping schools to log racist incidents and stuff like that.

So, I suppose within the two years of opening Ambassadora and having, say, a publishing house and stuff like this, you've got to see the opportunities where it's there. And currently in Wales, there isn't really many services out there that will answer the direct problems that we're facing today. So, it's the simple things that I could do by translating a book, for example, and if people can cover those funds, because I understand that for my clients when they know and I've told them that 450 million people speak Spanish, and I'm asking them to translate into Welsh for 3 million, there's a population of 3 million in Wales, but I believe fully two thirds speak Welsh. So, actually they're doing it for us to benefit the Welsh culture. So yeah, I think it's just led me into different realms, and I believe it will continue to do so actually,

## Kayleigh 11:24

I mean a lot has happened in, did you say two years that you've been doing this work?

**Jessica 11:28**

I opened Ambassadora two years ago, and then Lilly Translates (and my books) were released in February this year, and then the other businesses have followed in the last six months. So, it's all happened rather quickly. But it's just because – well I'm good at what I do – but it's mainly because there aren’t many people or anyone doing it, so you just have to see the opportunity there. I'm sure the rewards will happen later. But at the moment, it's kind of become more of a duty that I have to do it and it complements my brands anyway.

## Kayleigh 12:02

Do you think that there are lots of benefits? Or are there any challenges to have any number of strings to your ball when it comes to your career?

## Jessica 12:10

There are disadvantages that say because I am a woman and well… Welsh and… you know… black. So, it's hard to get funding. I didn't start off with the same equal playing field, but absolutely not. I think ultimately, I understand that in all of my businesses, I am my businesses. So, whether I'm in a translation firm, I'm dealing with lots of different translation projects going into different languages, or I'm dealing with different books. It's kind of as long as you can stay on top of it, really it's just taking the same expertise and applying them to different circumstances.. and it helped me organise it a bit more because I do not need to go through a whole Price List of say generalised translation when translating a children's book (which has less words and is a completely different frame). So, it was a way of just allocating my expertise and those who work with me in a way which best fits each brand. Then my translators are not being bored with medical journals when they're really passionate about translating poetry, for example.

**Kayleigh 13:11**

Yeah, that's a really great approach.

Jonny, in terms of the upsides and downsides of wearing what we’d say are “multiple hats” as a creative; another way of saying multiple strings to your bowl. Do you feel like that is a benefit to you? You've described yourself as a permalancer in the past, which sounds a bit dangerous. Can you tell us what you mean by that as a term?

## Jonny 13:33

Well, I think, to talk about permalancer, I suppose I've always well, in the past few years, I've gone between working for myself and other periods of working for others as a member of staff, but I always sort of veer back towards freelancing. But there's the ambition there, that actually one day that becomes running, you know, being part of the business rather than just working on my own. Because the idea of just working here in this room, solo forever fills me with dread, to be honest. I want to be working with others, because that's where that's where the good stuff happens, I think.

But the advantage to me of having sort of cross disciplined, is that it's revealed opportunities in terms of the sort of research and development I'm doing now, which I think would be hard to stumble across, had you not actually worked or been in those different sectors for some time. You know, studying architecture for five years, and then spending another five or six in the world of filmmaking and communications has revealed opportunities, which to me seemed quite obvious, but having had lots of discussions with others, they are not. So, i think that's certainly a benefit to me. Obviously, that might not be applicable to everyone.

The downside is just that nagging sense, I suppose, of being a jack of all trades and master of none. There's a Jean brand in Wales whose like motto is: “Do ONE thing well”, and I think I think of that every single day. And it does try and keep me focused. But also, it gives me a sense of guilt that I've, over the past few years, I've done a few things “okay”. So, there's always that drive to, at some point really focus down on one thing and really do it well.

## Kayleigh 15:18

I'm sure you do lots of things well.

Jess, your book “Outstanding” inspires children to have a career in any field they choose. What advice might you have for anyone who's listening? Who might want to have a different career to what they have currently, perhaps maybe anyone that wants to become an author?

## Jessica 15:39

Good question. Changing your career… I suppose seeing that I’ve been a mature student at Cardiff Uni, I suppose it's quite evident that you can change what you're doing. It's never too late, really and you can always change what you're doing, and you can always transfer your skills. I mean, if you're the type of person who likes to live a fast-paced lifestyle, like me (I don't really like to choose between my projects) so, I just say yes to them all and then I do them all. So yeah, my main thing would be to just not let your personal circumstances hold you back, because of my specific learning disabilities, where I shouldn't really be in this field (but I am) I struggle a bit more. But you can always overcome whatever you're into.

When I was younger, I wanted to be an architect, funnily enough. And then I heard that you have to be good at maths, and you have to be good at drawing, and I'm dyspraxic. I can't even write properly. But actually, I'm sure there are ways to overcome that and other people that are dyspraxic Architects out there. I would just say, just try and research before you've got and what you're interested in. Always keep searching for what you're interested in because the second, you're no longer interested in what you're doing, it means you're not in the right place, or you're not doing the right thing.

## Kayleigh 16:57

I think that's really great advice and perhaps what a lot of people have come to find over the pandemic, you know, to think about those different career options available to them.

Jonny, I guess the same question to you, what advice would you have for those who are looking to slightly change direction in their creative careers? Maybe someone who wants to become a filmmaker? I know that you're a great believer in the value of networking? Do you feel like that would play a part in any sort of career change?

**Jonny 17:24**

Yeah, I mean, I guess my first piece of advice, ‘advice’ might be pushing it maybe, is that having come through an education system; where you pick your degree, at the age of what, you start thinking about it when you're 16, maybe apply when you're 17 if you anticipate going straight in from school. What you're essentially doing is potentially picking your future career when you're 16, or 17. I think it's maybe being able to drop that if you do your degree, or even if you're halfway through it and you're realising, actually, maybe this isn't what I want to do, not being afraid to explore some other options. Because I certainly don't think of my five years studying architecture was a waste of time, because that put me in a position where I was able to reflect on it and make a change.

I think that each thing you say “yes” to or you say “no” to, you will learn something from. And I think it's not being afraid to change directions as many times as you feel you need to before you arrive somewhere where you're like, now, this is what I want to be doing.

In terms of getting into filmmaking specifically, networking is important. I think, I’ve been quite fortunate to come into it at a time where the technology is way more accessible than it used to be. I'm not saying - it's still not a level playing field by any stretch of the imagination. But there are ways to get into filming things and editing things which just didn't exist 10 years ago, and where you can just give things ago and put yourself out there. I learned 60% of my professional skills from watching YouTube videos. So, the resources and the assets are out there, or at least are much more accessible than they used to be. So just start searching, I guess.

## Kayleigh 19:14

And it's like you're both committed to always learning and developing yourselves. We're coming to the end of our time together now. I could listen to you both all day. But I'm just going to ask one last question, which is about the future.

Jess, what's next for you and your career? What are your hopes?

**Jessica 19:31**

Well, I’m graduating from my MA, so it'd be nice to actually go through a graduation ceremony because they botched my BA last year! I'm going to continue on with writing the Welsh history textbooks. I'm trying to make connections to make “Your Hair is Your Crown” into an animation and create the Welsh “Dora the Explorer”. Essentially, there were already talks about play and all of that. So, it's really just building the brand, promoting Welsh culture and language and my translation firms internationally through their translations and, forming as many collaborations as possible because I completely agree with what Jonny said. Networking is the key to all of this; I wouldn't be able to do any of this without people who have their own expertise and they can complement what I'm doing.

## Kayleigh 20:19

I love the idea of the Welsh, “Dora the Explorer”, can't wait to see that. Of course, there'll be lots of people listening, who will be creatives in the fields of animation and different areas so hopefully, they'll be able to get in touch and like you said, make more connections.

Jonny, what's next for you? What's coming up?

## Jonny 20:35

Well, over the past few months, I've been really doubling down on exploring this crossover area that existed between architecture and filmmaking, and storytelling and communications. So, I'm actually about nine months into a sort of research and development process of exploring what that crossover could look like, and how to sort of essentially tell the stories of the design of the places around us in new and better ways that actually engage people or engage new people, engage different people than our sort of typically interested in those sorts of things. So, it's not just grand designs, it's not just objecting to planning applications.

It's an interesting world, which the built environment sector does a really bad job of telling the rest of the public. And so, I'm exploring ways in which that engagement can be improved. And weirdly, it's taking me away from filmmaking, it's taking me away from design into somewhere in the middle, and I’m still not quite sure what it is. But we'll find out

## Kayleigh 21:35

Hybrid space, those stories of you know, placemaking is so important as well. We wish you all the best with that.

We're going to end with a quick recommendation if you both don't mind. At Creative Cardiff, we believe in passing on knowledge and learning to our community. So, do either of you have a resource that you would encourage creatives to engage with when they're thinking about their career? It could be a podcast, a book, website, social media account, you don't need to limit your imagination. Do either of you have any thoughts on that?

## Jessica 22:07

I'm terrible with computers so ‘Canva’ has changed my life recently. Someone is trying to get me to enjoy spreadsheets, which I still don't. I would say, there is a Cardiff University enterprise department where they can help you build your business plan. I hated doing it at the time, but two years later, it actually was helpful having that on a piece of paper because it was a quick ‘copy and paste’ job. You’ll use it for your marketing and for business proposals and stuff like that. So yeah, use the free resources on campus while they're there. You can also get ‘languages for all’ free language classes while you're there. Language learning is probably the future as well.

## Kayleigh 22:48

Great, we'll put some of those links into the show notes. We've actually had the enterprise team on the podcast in a previous series. So yeah, you're right, it's a really worthwhile thing to do your business planning on campus. Johnny, did you have any resources that you wanted to share?

## Jonny 23:04

I don't think I have a specific one, I'm going to be a bit more old fashioned. I just find going to something like a print journal, particularly if I’m thinking about a different sector, you can pick one up and you just get sort of a flavour of what is happening in that sector at a certain point in time.

But also, with journals and books, because they all reference each other suddenly, you have a way into almost like a network of literature, which just sort of spreads from that point. So particularly with the research and development I've been doing, I've been making sure I've just been reading. If I read a paragraph that really resonates with me, you can check the reference, you can see where that came from then it just sort of spreads like that. I find for me, that's what keeps me inspired and realising that, you know, to write a book, as I'm sure Jess can agree, is quite a commitment. And it's always inspiring for me to realise that people spend years of their lives writing about these topics that I'm kind of into, and that keeps me going as well.

## Kayleigh 24:02

That's great. Yeah, you can't beat the feeling of a physical book in your hands for inspiration.

I mean, that's all we've got time for today. Thanks to both of you for joining us.

## Jonny 24:12

No worries. Thanks very much.

## Jessica 24:14

Thank you for having me.

**Kayleigh 24:15**

And thanks to our listeners, we'd love to hear your thoughts on how you might be evolving your creative career.

So do tag us at @creativecardiff and any comments on Twitter, Instagram, Facebook or Linked-In. And if you liked this episode, be sure to hit the subscribe button to get future eps as soon as they land. ‘Get a Proper Job’ is made by Creative Cardiff with and for the creative community.