

# MMU and Culture

## The Future of Knowledge



### We Don't Do It Alone.

We are very keen to hear from potential partners who are interested in working with us to share expertise and knowledge.

If you would like to know more about any of the initiatives showcased in this brochure then we will be happy to help.

Please call MMU's External Relations team on 0161 247 2184.



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**“Human creativity is the ultimate economic resource. The ability to come up with new ideas and better ways of doing things is ultimately what raises productivity and thus living standards.”**

**Richard Florida, *The Rise Of The Creative Class* (2002)**

## MMU and Culture

Manchester is the UK's most creative city (Boho Britain creativity index) built on a foundation of pioneering individuals and independent thinkers; the home of the original Industrial Revolution and the birthplace of the modern day computer. Manchester is famous for the ability of its creative talent to innovate and, producing enterprising graduates, MMU makes a major contribution to the sustained development of the Northwest economy.

The pace of recent change in Manchester has been rapid and significant. Whole areas of the city's industrial past have been reinvented in flagship residential and commercial developments such as the Northern Quarter and New East Manchester. There are some thirteen theatres and the largest Gay Village and Chinese Quarter outside London, two Premiership football clubs, a vibrant gallery scene and numerous concert venues. The BBC and Google are locating new business in the Northwest and the Manchester International Festival is reinforcing the global status of the city's creative excellence. Manchester's reputation for popular culture continues to be legendary as the latest young musicians follow in the footsteps of The Smiths and Joy Division.

MMU's challenge is to continue to ensure that students and staff stay at the cutting edge of this creative renaissance; a mission that is beginning to resonate with policy makers and strategists who are convinced of the importance of the UK creative economy.

***“Between 1997 and 2004 the Creative Industries averaged 6% growth, around twice the rate of the economy as a whole. Far from being 'economy lite' our creative***

***sectors should be seen as 'economy central'....Our HE sector can act as a magnet for talent from all over the world.”***

**Tessa Jowell, Secretary of State for Culture Media and Sport, March 2006**

MMU is a major producer of new culture that enriches the creative vibrancy of the Northwest region. A new poem, an exhibition of staff work, a textile project, a conference based on European Horror Film; all of these examples can be used to illustrate how MMU's 8000 students and staff involved in cultural activity are applying knowledge and creativity to the environments in which they practice. Significant University venues such as the Capitol Theatre and the Alsager Arts Centre present a cultural resource to the community as do the distinct special collections and archives that MMU preserves for the region's benefit.

Made up mainly of small and micro enterprises with a high proportion of graduates, graduate enterprise is critical to the creative economy. MMU provides a fresh approach to enterprise skills development. The University has a Masters in Enterprise in Art and Design (MEnt) accredited by the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts (NESTA) and a BDes in 3D and textile design. Each provide students with the necessary skills to run a small business and prepares them for careers as self-employed entrepreneurs.

This brochure presents an introduction to the creative and cultural strengths of MMU with a focus on the transfer of knowledge that resonates in the wider business, political and social communities of which the University is part.

### MMU is:

- **One of the largest creative communities in the UK with over 8000 students and staff involved in culturally-related activity**
- **Home to the Schools of Art and Design, established in 1838 with alumni including L S Lowry, Adolphe Valette, Walter Crane, Peter Saville and Thomas Heatherwick**
- **Discovering the UK's best new literary talent through the Writing School and the Association of Creative Writing and English**
- **Informing the development of national and international creative industries policy**
- **Supporting graduate entrepreneurship in creative disciplines with fresh approaches to enterprise skills development**

...MMU's Degree Show is the largest free art show in Manchester with work from over 1,000 young artists...



# MMU and Creative and Cultural Research

**"Imagination is the magnet that pulls knowledge forward."**

**Professor John Hyatt, Director, MIRIAD interviewed in *The Guardian* 2006**

MMU's expanding expertise in creative and cultural research is built around the Universities distinct strengths. The Manchester Institute for Research and Innovation in Art and Design (MIRIAD) is a large and successful art and design research institute that has been supervising higher degree programmes since 1968. The Institute undertakes research across a wide spectrum of creative arts including Media Arts, Craft Design, Drama, Dance and the Performing Arts, Fashion Business and Technology, Social and Environmental Arts and Visual Culture.

A particular strength of MIRIAD is its close ties with external networks which research professors can draw on in their work. These links provide the research community with a live project context that informs and develops their own practice. MIRIAD pioneered the practice-led Master of Philosophy (MPhil) and Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) and has developed an international first in the shape of a new award, the Master of Enterprise in Art and Design (MEnt). This is a unique opportunity for freelance artists and creative entrepreneurs who wish to take their talents in a business direction.

MIRIAD is also an Innovation Centre, supporting and developing events, community links and knowledge transfer activity. Current initiatives include:

## **International Centre for Arts in Healthcare**

MMU academics pioneered the arts for healthcare concept in Manchester in the 1970's and since then planning art and design programmes for healthcare environments has become internationally recognised and respected. The research team are undertaking a Treasury and Arts Council-funded programme called 'Invest to Save' that is aiming to develop the Northwest's arts and health infrastructure through networking, training and research.

## **Manchester Oxford Road, Avenue of the Giants Public Arts Strategy**

The Avenue of the Giants Public Arts Strategy is a MIRIAD-led initiative that is raising the cultural profile of the Oxford Road Corridor alongside the 'Manchester: Knowledge Capital' partnership. The aim is to transform the Oxford Road Corridor, on MMU's doorstep, into a thriving cultural destination that will rival the Las Ramblas and Broadway.

***"Manchester has the conditions and reputation to fully exploit the economic potential of the creative, cultural and media sector to drive growth in the North of England... The city region's educational facilities play a crucial role."***

## **Manchester City Region Development Programme, Accelerating the Economic Growth of the North**

The development of city regions, particularly across the North, has been the subject of much debate amongst policy makers and urban think tanks. Agendas such as the "Northern Way" and "Manchester: Knowledge Capital" see creative industry development as a key driver for growth in the economy of the Manchester city region. MMU's expertise has contributed to this debate and research teams such as The Manchester Institute for Popular Culture (MIPC) are focusing on contemporary urban cultures. Group members have been instrumental in establishing cultural sector development agencies in Manchester, Helsinki and St Petersburg.

Recent projects have included reports on the creative industries for the Northwest Regional Development Agency and Home Office-funded research examining the impact of community-based initiatives in sport. MIPC are also involved in producing a regularly series of conferences and events such as the headline-grabbing academic conference on The Smiths. An international



first, the conference generated publicity and attracted interest from TV stations, national music publications, newspapers and magazines from around the world.

There are many MMU researchers exploring the sociological and environmental aspects of urban cultures. Within MIRIAD the Social and Environmental Art Research Centre is active in community projects that reclaim the culturally important Manchester landmarks such as the Monastery of

St Francis and Gorton and the Victoria Baths. Another group The Cities, Space and Power Group is a team of MMU academics focused on social and cultural geography. The group is widely published and has written acclaimed books on Industrial Ruins, National Identity, The Globalisation of Sexuality and Cosmopolitan Urbanism. Regularly invited to speak at conferences the research group has an international reputation within critical human geography.



## MMU and Design

Since its origins as The Manchester School of Design in 1838, MMU has produced graduates who have changed the shape of twentieth and twenty first century design. Alumni include Peter Saville, the creative genius behind some of the most seminal popular design work of the last twenty years, and Thomas Heatherwick, contemporary designer and creator of 'B of the Bang' which is the UK's tallest sculpture and an iconic signpost to the regeneration that is taking place in East Manchester.

Current students get to choose from a range of courses that are relevant to the needs of employers. MMU's architectural provision is the result of an innovative collaboration between MMU and the University of Manchester. The resulting Manchester School of Architecture enjoys mutually beneficial links with the professional architectural community and was rated as the second best course in the UK in 2006 by the Guardian newspaper. MMU is the custodian of the Manchester Society of Architects Library.

The University is home to the only full-time embroidery degree in the UK and the University has a reputation for excellence built upon the success of the students in events such as the New Designers Show, the UK's largest and most prestigious graduate art and design event. MMU students are consistently highly placed with previous winners having their work commissioned by well known design houses such as Terence Conran, Donna Karan and Vittorio Radice.

The University is recognised for the quality of its fashion design. Students regularly participate in catwalk shows and their stunning creations have led to many honours at events such as London Graduate Fashion Week and the Royal Society Awards.

World class resources include the Design Council Slide Collection and over 300,000 slides covering all aspects of art and design-related subjects are held in the Visual Resources Centre. MMU's library preserves internationally significant archives including the Philip Granville Poster Collection, the Book Design Collection and the Schmoller Collection of Decorated Papers.

The University's commitment to innovation in graduate entrepreneurship is reinforced through the provision of the BDes programme. In an optional fourth year, textile and 3D Design students have the chance to work closely with tutors who are creative industry entrepreneurs. The programme involves independent learning, seminars, masterclasses and one to one tuition as well as providing first stage incubation and workshop space in which students can begin to establish their businesses whilst developing confidence and skills.

**"We need to ensure all businesses across all sectors are thinking more creatively about the challenges they face and making more effective use of design."**

**DTI Report: Creativity Design and Business Performance**



## MMU and Contemporary Performance and Art

“A vital element of MMU’s character is a strong identification with the city, its creative communities and cultural institutions.”

**Professor Maureen Wayman,**  
Dean, Faculty of Art and Design

The Municipal School of Art from which today’s Art School developed has always been a creative hub for the City. L S Lowry and Adolphe Valette are associated with the original development of the School. Today the methods might be more modern but the University has an equally impressive record for producing artists and performers at the forefront of their chosen fields. Recent alumni include David Threlfall, Steve Coogan and The Chemical Brothers.

MMU’s acting provision is accredited by the National Council of Drama Training and enjoys extremely close links with theatre companies such as the Royal Exchange, the Royal Shakespeare Company and the Royal National Theatre and TV production companies such as ITV Granada and the BBC. All students that complete the course are eligible for Equity status. Alumni include Julie Walters, Richard Griffiths, Bernard Hill and Amanda Burton. The spiritual home of the course is the Capitol Theatre, a cultural venue that regularly attracts agents and impressive audiences to student performances.

MMU has been running courses in production, direction and film for over 30 years and the University’s approach to contemporary film is highly regarded by industry professionals. MMU students are consistently winning awards for work in this field. Recent success stories have

included Interactive Arts student Chris Boyd who was described as “a genius” by top art critic Brian Sewell on TV’s Big Art Challenge. Ex-MMU Interactive Arts student Ryan Gander is making an impact after being short-listed for the prestigious Beck’s Futures Art Prize. MMU has also produced award-winning photographers, most notably documentary photographer Martin Parr, member of the esteemed Magnum Photos Agency.

MMU Cheshire is an interdisciplinary centre of Contemporary Arts and the Department’s activity includes cultural enterprise, community arts, dance, drama and music as well as visual arts and writing. The Alsager Arts Centre offers a superb line-up of contemporary performance and exhibitions and regularly presents performers of an international stature.

An important resource for film enthusiasts from across the region is MMU’s Northwest Film Archive. The Archive is the UK’s largest public collection outside London and the professionally recognised home for moving image in the North. With over twenty years experience of collaborating with TV production companies, footage from the archive has appeared in hundreds of broadcasts including *Arena* and the *South Bank Show*. The Archive team is also conducting action research providing inclusive access to the collection.



Photographed by Arek Chrusciel

...Master Painter L S Lowry was taught by Adolphe Valette at the Municipal School of Art, the forerunner of what is now MMU...



# MMU and Creative Writing

MMU has an international reputation for literature and creative writing arising from the professional work of the writers. As well as offering a distinctive portfolio of undergraduate courses, MMU's Writing School is the vehicle for an ambitious postgraduate programme designed to be of benefit to the wider professional literary community.

Young writers are supervised by a team of award-winning and distinguished practising authors including Simon Armitage, Carol Ann Duffy and Jeffrey Wainwright. Close relationships exist with the literary world including the independent and major publishing houses, as well as editors of national newspapers. The Writing School enjoys a regular programme of visits from influential writers; recent guests have included Margaret Attwood, Germaine Greer, Fay Weldon, Andrew Motion, Doris Lessing and Arundhati Roy.

MMU's Writing School has a reputation for discovering and launching the careers of fresh literary talent. The department

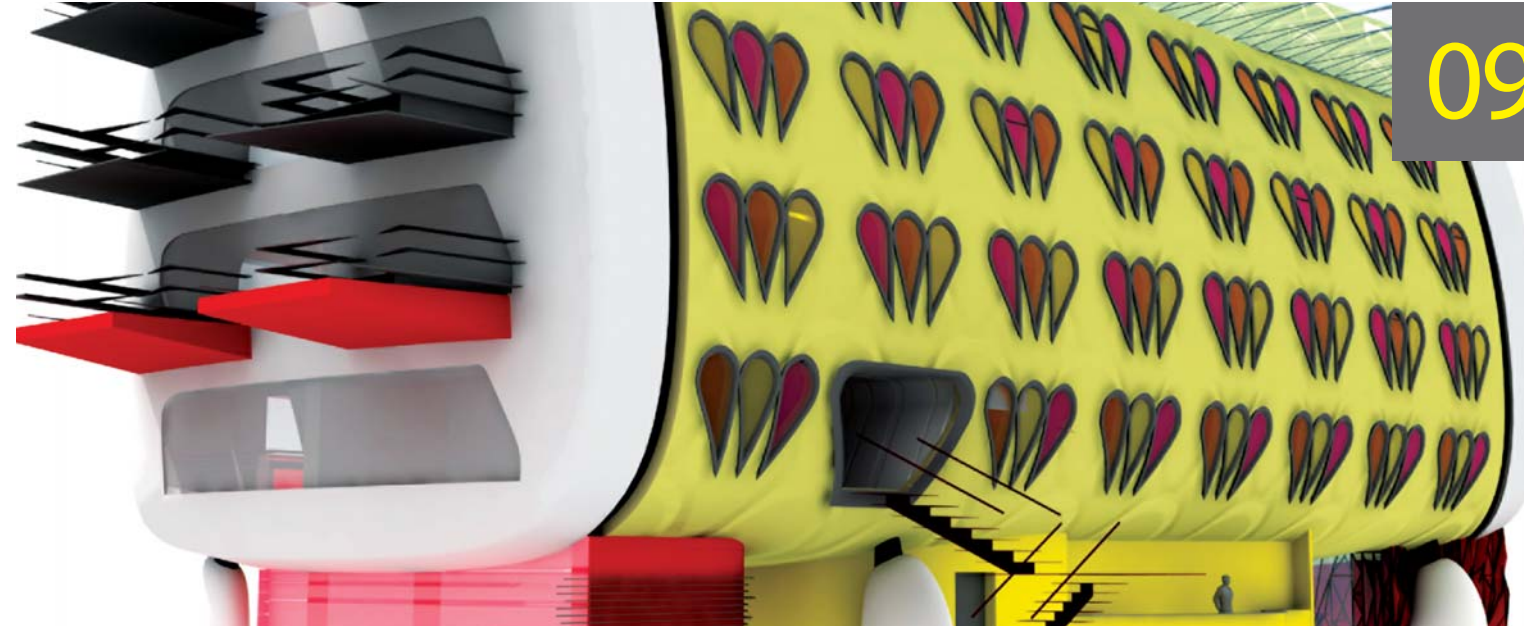
publishes its own journal called MUSE that showcases the best creative writing produced by students at MMU. Current graduates who are at the top of the nation's reading lists include Gwendoline Riley, acclaimed as the best new author in the UK by the Guardian newspaper and Jane Yeh, whose *Marabou* collection was shortlisted for the 2006 Whitbread Poetry Prize.

Other young authors have been given their first taste of publishing success by MMU's Association of Creative Writing and English (ACWE). The ACWE is the focus for MMU's partnership activity with the wider educational community. Members include teachers from over 90 schools and colleges across the Northwest and English Advisors from eleven LEAs.

The ACWE recently ran an Arts Council-funded competition called the 'Muse Project' which aimed to encourage creative writing in the syllabus via a series of in-school workshops and masterclasses. The highlight of the competition was the discovery of new author, 16-year old Ian

Arnison-Phillips whose novel *A Comedian Isn't a Comedian Until Someone Laughs* impressed the judges so much that they decided to publish it. TV screenwriter Paul Abbott (*Shameless*, *Clocking Off*) presented Ian with the first published copy of his novel.

The English Department has an established reputation for the quality of its research. Adding the strengths of MMU Cheshire's Interdisciplinary Studies and Contemporary Arts Departments, the group has a number of specialist lines of enquiry including drama, dance, and creative writing, postcolonial and critical theory, film and American studies and literature and modernity. The group regularly plays hosts to conferences, launch events and readings. Guests have included Jeanette Winterson, Geoffrey Hill and Joanne Harris. The Institute also houses a Centre for Deleuzian Studies hosting events, editing a journal and maintaining a network of scholars and enthusiasts of the influential Parisian cultural theorist.



“The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious – it is the source of all true art and science.”

Albert Einstein

## MMU and Creative Technology

The definition of what is and is not considered to be a creative discipline is constantly evolving in line with new technology that allows artists and creatives to take their ideas ever further. At MMU we pride ourselves on producing independent creative thinkers, and autonomous learners who can use new forms of technology and transform science into creativity and creativity into science.

The key feature is an interdisciplinary approach that encourages students and staff to experiment within their chosen practice. This is one of the reasons why MMU produces such enterprising graduates with the confidence and ability to win awards for creative excellence across a range of subjects and disciplines.

A recent example of this approach is MMU student Danielle Chappell. Despite reading

for an embroidery degree it was Danielle's digital work *Linear Rhythm* that placed her as a winning finalist in the 2006 Nationwide Mercury Prize Art Competition.

MMU Research Institute's such as MIRIAD encourage projects that explore the relationship between art and technology. An interdisciplinary research network is exploring the interface between the material areas of ceramics and glass.

An MMU digital artist is using state-of-the-art solid imaging devices to make 3D models of sculptures in cyber environments where the laws of physics do not apply, and where otherwise impossible forms may be conceived and made manifest. The work is to be exhibited at the Royal Academy of Arts – the world's largest contemporary arts exhibition.

Computer gaming technology is one of the most exciting and fastest growing sectors within the creative industries and the UK has the third largest market in the world for games. Researchers at MMU are examining the potential educational impacts of this technology. The role of narrative in hypermedia interactive environments is being investigated by MMU's Multimedia Research Group and the Information Research Institute is exploring the links between gaming and mobile technology and how this combination can provide new learning experiences for schoolchildren. The Faculty of Science and Engineering offers courses in artificial intelligence, mobile and multimedia computing and technology and virtual design. There are combined honours routes available in special effects and multimedia technology.

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...The Writing School offers an innovative Virtual MA in Creative Writing to authors from across the Globe...

