

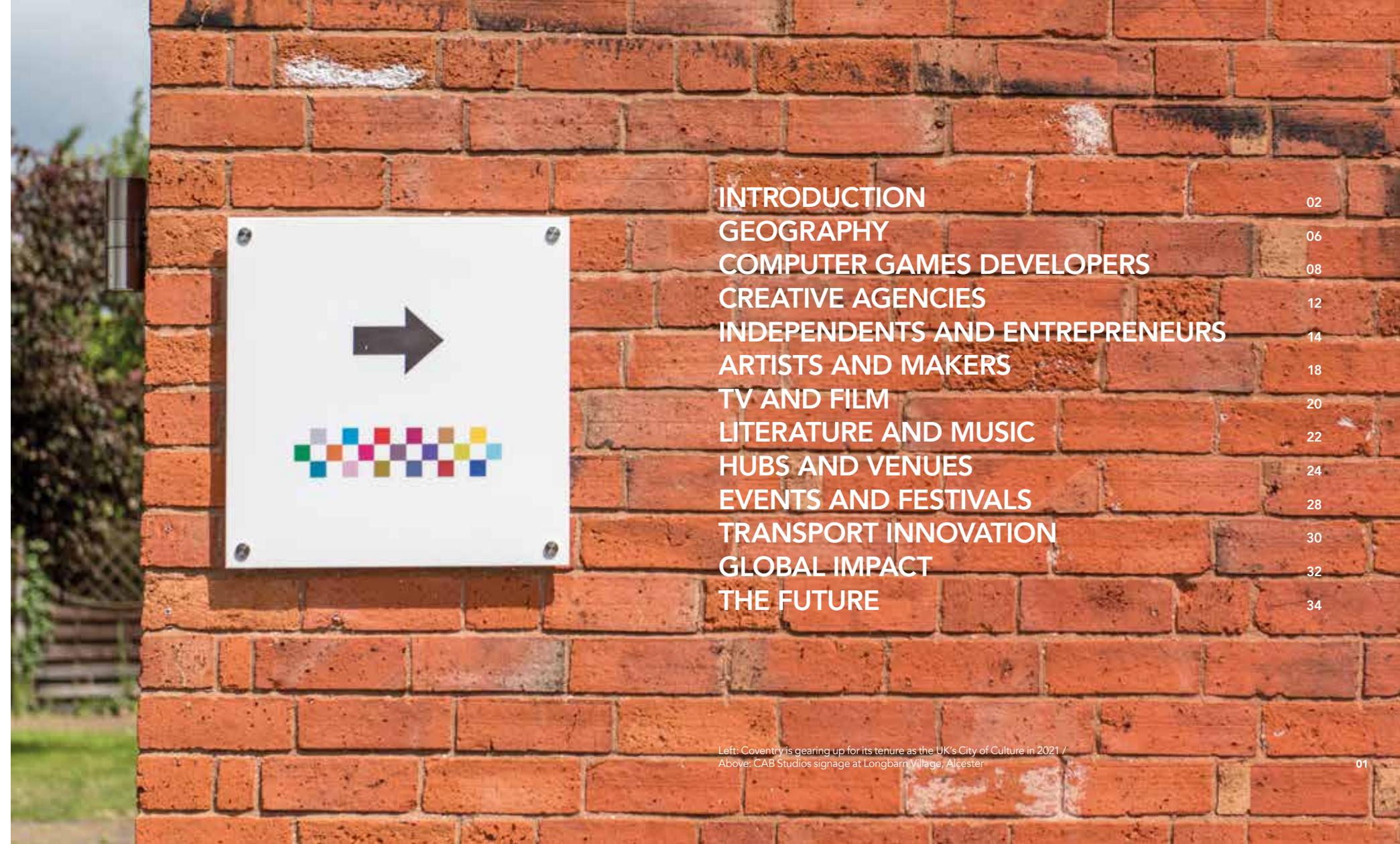


warwick.ac.uk/creativecommunity

FROM SHAKESPEARE TO SONIC

CREATIVE INDUSTRIES OF
COVENTRY AND WARWICKSHIRE

WARWICK
THE UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK



Left: Coventry is gearing up for its tenure as the UK's City of Culture in 2021 / Above: CAB Studios signage at Longbarn Village, Alcester

Left: Kenilworth Castle / Right: Electric Wharf
creative living and working spaces in Coventry



**AMONG THE CHOCOLATE BOX SCENES OF
WARWICKSHIRE AND THE POST-INDUSTRIAL
LANDSCAPES OF COVENTRY, THE CREATIVE
INDUSTRIES AREN'T JUST THRIVING... THEY'VE
BEEN BUILDING QUIETLY FOR DECADES.**

CREATIVE INDUSTRIES CONTRIBUTE £1.1 BILLION IN GROSS VALUE ADDED (GVA) IN COVENTRY AND WARWICKSHIRE AND ARE GROWING AROUND 6.5% ANNUALLY.



For an area more famous for Shakespeare and The Specials, it might come as a surprise that Coventry and Warwickshire produce creative work for some of the biggest brands and franchises on the planet, and also gave the world *Teletubbies*, *The Fantastic Adventures of Dizzy* and *Nativity 3: Dude, Where's My Donkey?*

Did you know:

- Mickey Mouse computer games were made above a shoe shop in Royal Leamington Spa?
- The dance studio of the choreographer behind the opening ceremony of the London 2012 Paralympic Games is here in Warwickshire?
- THREE Warwickshire computer games developers spoke on stage at Apple's 2018 Developer Conference in San José?

Creative businesses here are booming. In fact, a recent statistic states '*Coventry & Warwickshire have seen the fastest productivity growth since the 2009 recession (out of anywhere in the country), growing at almost twice the national average.*'

Office of National Statistics 2018
GVA (Balanced) per job filled.

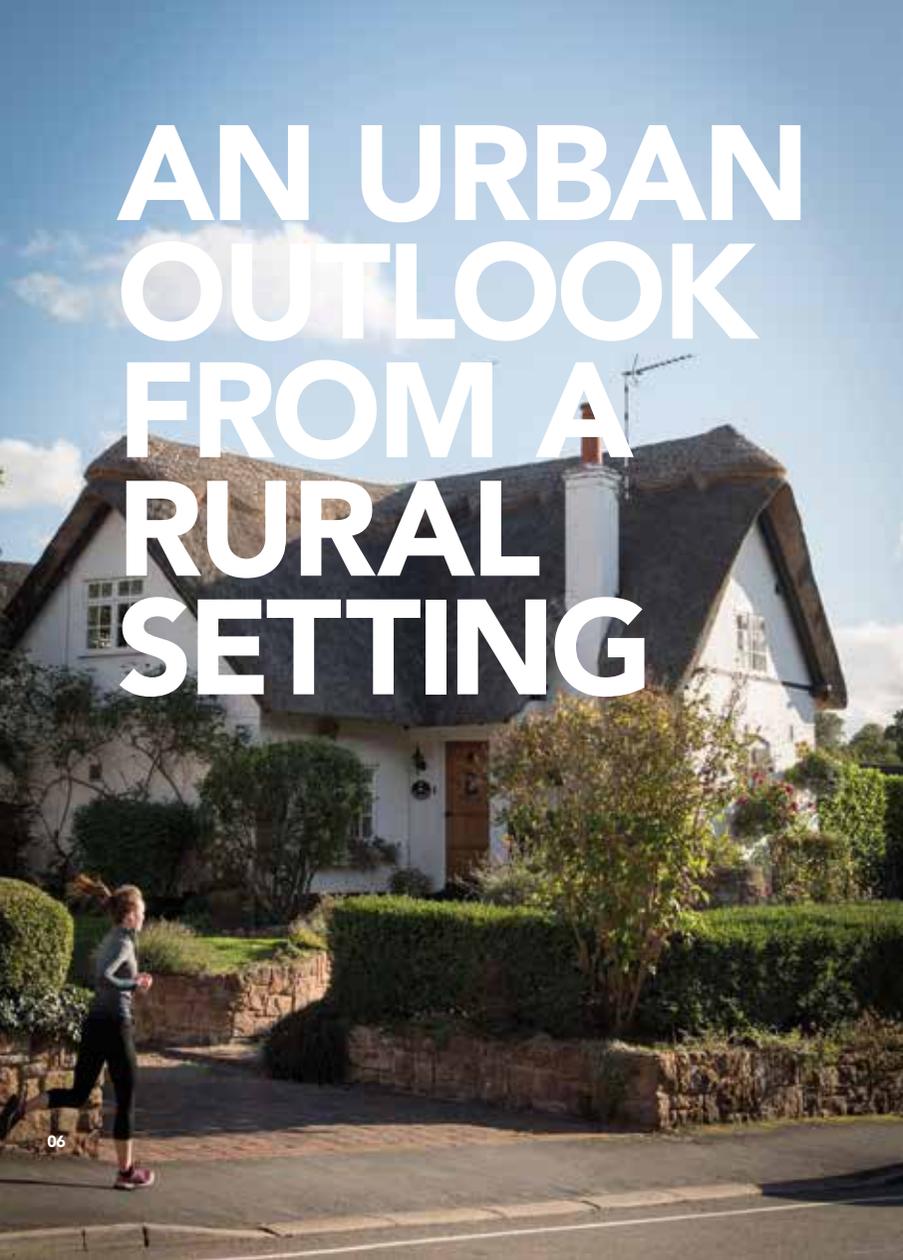
The University of Warwick is well placed to tap into the rich diversity of the local creative industry.

Strong links to local businesses allow students to gain valuable insights in the form of visiting professionals, work placements and collaborative projects.



As a top-rated university, Warwick is proud of its role in creating ambassadors, change-makers, thinkers and doers tailored to the needs of creative companies – not only on its doorstep but the world over.

AN URBAN OUTLOOK FROM A RURAL SETTING



The region is one of contrasts. Coventry is a proud, working city built on innovation and industry, while Warwickshire is perhaps better known for its thatched cottages, two castles and the birthplace of a certain playwright.

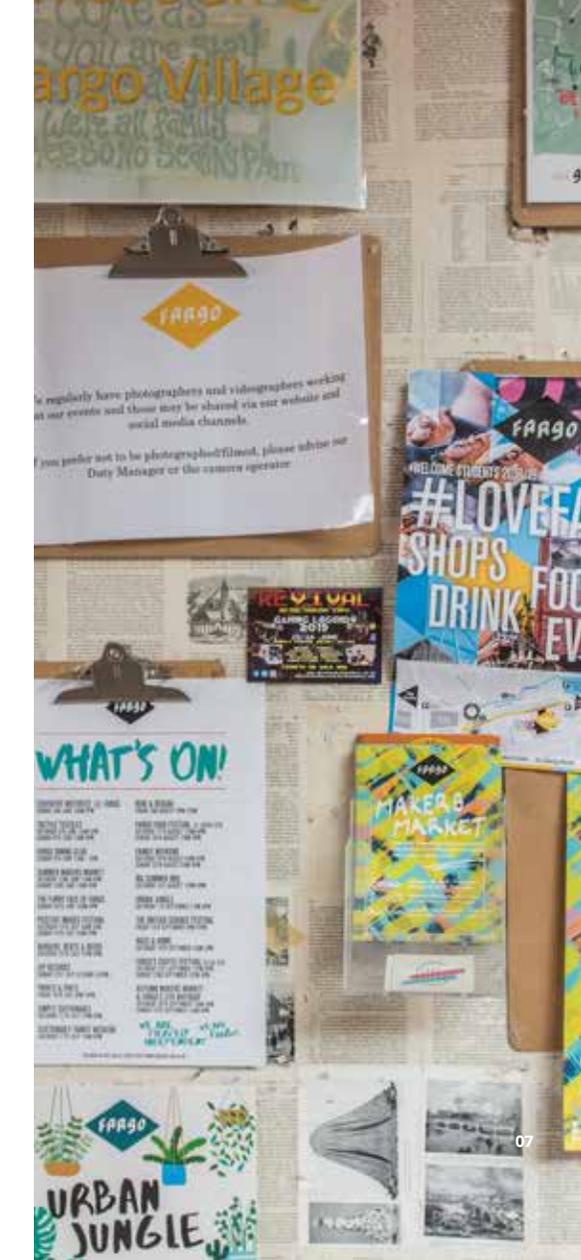
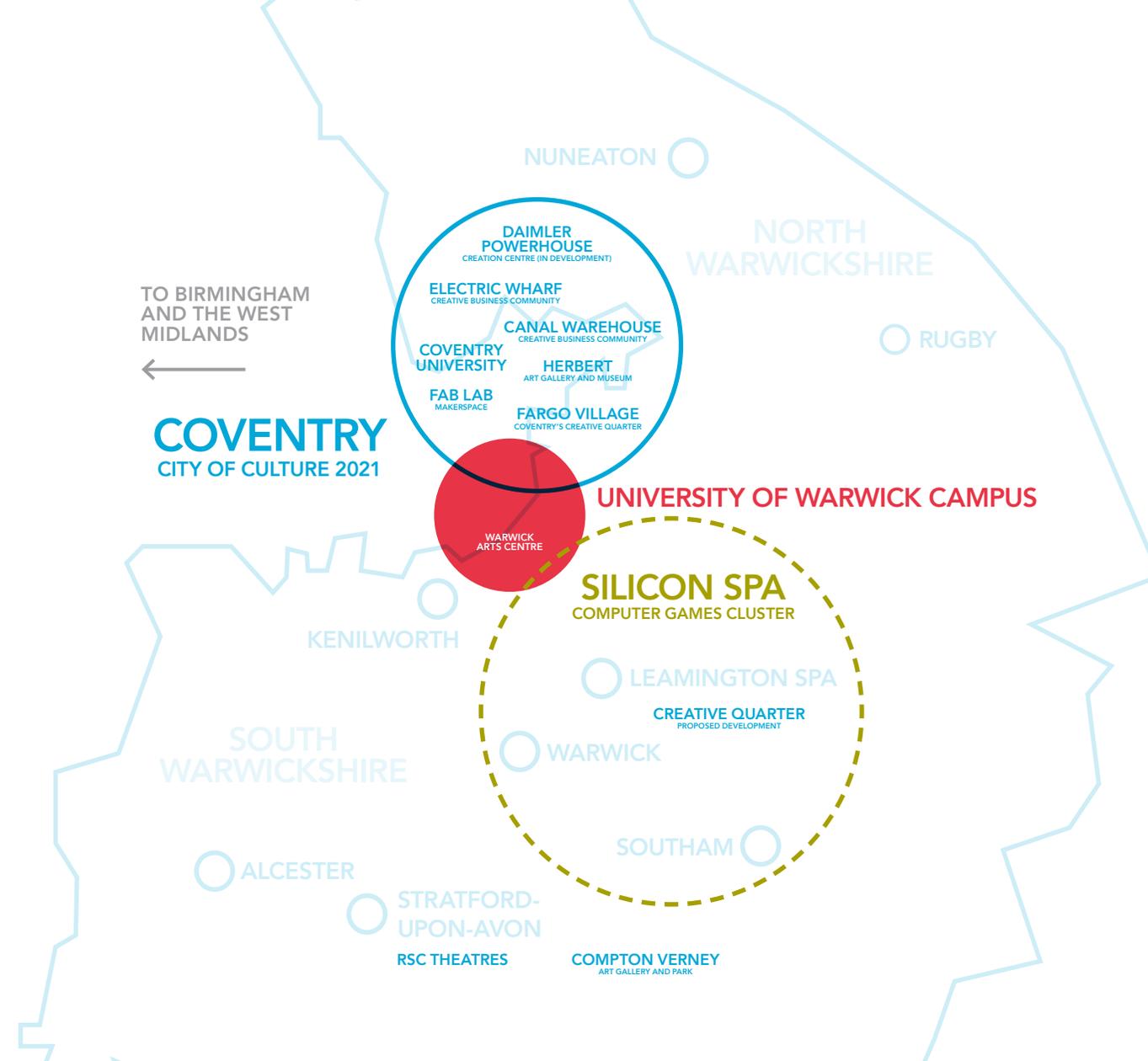
And it's here, on the nexus of these two environments, that the University of Warwick campus sits.

To the north, the City marks the beginning of the energetic urban sprawl west to Birmingham. To the south, the chic county towns nestle within picturesque rolling countryside.

Arguably the best of both worlds.

Together Coventry and Warwickshire form a unique, innovative, exciting part of the UK – an ideal place to have a dynamic, creative career full of global opportunities.

Left: High Street, Kenilworth / Below: Electric Wharf / Right: Fargo Village, Coventry



MAJOR PLAYERS



Coventry and Warwickshire's most intriguing and tangible creative cluster is the proliferation of computer games companies centred on the well-heeled Regency town of Leamington Spa.

Back in 1982, gaming pioneers Codemasters set up its base of operations in nearby Southam before going on to dominate the world of early games design and publishing in the UK.

Almost four decades later and that single company has (re)spawned a large group of games development studios considered to be one of the largest outside London.

It's a dynamic community with a mix of big names including Microsoft's Playground Games (*Forza Horizon*), SEGA HARDlight (*Sonic Dash*), Ubisoft Leamington (*Tom Clancy's The Division*) and Rebellion Warwick (*Sniper Elite*), along with smaller, up-and-coming studios such as Pixel Toys (*Warhammer 40,000 Freeblade*) and Exient (*Angry Birds Go*).

The cluster, known affectionately as 'Silicon Spa', now has over 2,500 employees across 83 studios (representing over 15% of the UK's total games developers).

Left: The Parade, Leamington Spa / Right 1: The original Codemasters logo / 2: Vintage *Dizzy* games / 3: The BAFTA award-winning *Forza Horizon 4* game by Playground Games / 4: The Backspace exhibition / 5: *Angry Birds* at Exient / 6: Andy Wafer, CEO of Pixel Toys, on stage at Apple's 2018 Developer Conference





Among this vibrant scene you can also find emerging technology leaders RiVR taking virtual reality in new and exciting directions, alongside Silicon Spa's founding fathers still leading the way in mobile technologies. Meanwhile, just down the road, Codemasters continues to build on its heritage of racing games. Boardrooms and receptions across the county are home to a fair few BAFTAs and it's

a source of civic pride that *Mickey Mouse*, *Spongebob Squarepants*, *Sonic the Hedgehog* and *Pac-Man* have all continued their digital adventures in the centre of Leamington Spa. So much so that the town celebrated local games makers with the award-winning *Backspace* festival and now hosts an annual conference for the industry, *Interactive Futures*.



SONIC DASH – MADE IN LEAMINGTON BY SEGA HARDLIGHT – IS DOWNLOADED 150,000 TIMES A DAY.

Left 1: Famous characters featured in the *Backspace* timeline / 2: VR training at Royal Leamington Spa College / 3: Leamington Spa-cade cabinet / 4: Codemasters' head office in Southam / 5: *Epic Mickey 2* by Blitz Games / 6: Game designer Alex Darby / 7: *Sonic the Hedgehog* / Right: Codemasters' BAFTA for *Race Driver: GRID*



AGENTS OF CREATIVITY



Coventry and Warwickshire are home to a high concentration of world-class creative digital, branding, marketing, design and communications agencies – all serving some truly impressive (and demanding) brands.

For example, in Leamington town centre alone, in an area of three square miles, creative work is produced for international brands such as Microsoft, Rolls-Royce, Barclays, Audi and Disney along with companies such as the BBC,

Channel 4, Studio Canal and Chelsea Football Club.

Right across the region there's a staggering amount of creative agencies of all different shapes and sizes, from Auburn to Zube.



Left and right: CAB Studios, Longbarn Village, Alcester



INDEPENDENTS AND ENTREPRENEURS

It's not just traditional, established agencies that are making a difference.

The area also attracts a wealth of creative entrepreneurs, freelancers and independent talent in step with the growing gig economy and the flexible services needed by business today.

1, 6, 7 + 14: CAB Studios / 2, 8 + 9: Vital Marketing / 10: Edge of the Web, Warwick / 3, 13 + 18 Craig Spivey Creative / 4: Althorpe Enterprise Hub / 5 + 11: Purple Monster / 12: Longbarn Village hotdesk / 15: Renegade Communication Agency / 16: COWork Arch Four / 17: Remote working at Temperance

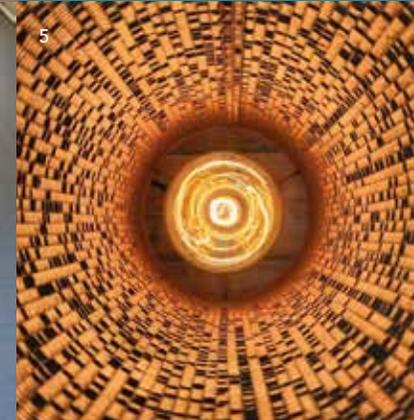
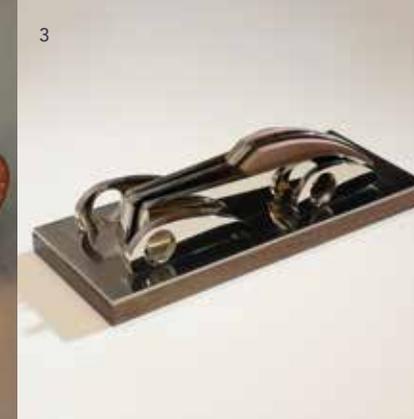
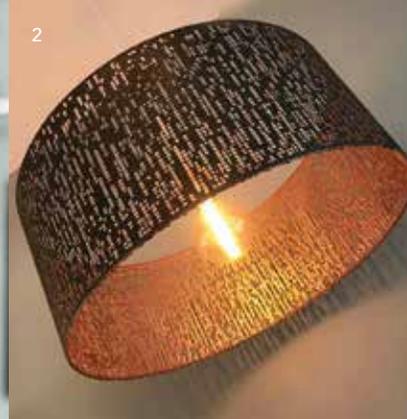
A strong thread of contemporary digital communications runs through many local companies, although, by contrast, artisans such as Pinched Post are bringing the lost traditions of letterpress back to the high street.



Left + above: Pinched Post graphic design studio and letterpress workshop, Leamington / Right: Design By Touch, Leamington

Away from both screens and print, there's also a strong showing in the region's product design disciplines with studios such as DCA, Small Fry and Design By Touch developing new innovations for the medical industries and children's toys.





ARTS AND CRAFTSPEOPLE

Artists, designers and makers can be found throughout the region working in every medium imaginable, producing everything from homewares to critically acclaimed artworks.

Whether that's jewellers, such as Warwick University Chemistry graduate Ruth Mary, who creates hand-stitched lace jewellery cast in silver and gold, or designer makers like 2017 London Design Award winner Kate Hollowood, whose contemporary lampshades have been featured in *Vogue* and *House & Garden*.

Silicon Spa veteran Jonny Ambrose, a co-founder of FreeStyleGames, has swapped pixels for wood, metals, composites and carbon fibre to create sculptures inspired by his love of cars and interest in Leamington's history of making wartime camouflage.

And the County even boasts Channel 4's *Amazing Spaces Shed of the Year* runner-up – Oli Renison of Black Tea One Sugar – a multi-disciplinary craftsman, furniture maker, carpenter and 'builder of things'.



1 + 3: Jonny Ambrose and his *Classic Lines* sculpture / 2, 5 + 8: Kate Hollowood and her *Matrix* lighting range / 4 + 7: Builds by Black Tea One Sugar / 6 + 12: Ruth Mary Jewellery / 9: Leather sculpture by Mandy Havers / 10: Illustration by Christine Cuddihy / 11: Pop Bang Colour, who paints with toy cars / 13: Stained glass by Hazza Bee

THAT'S ENTERTAINMENT!

TV AND FILM

Very much part of the Midlands regional block of TV and media companies, Stratford-upon-Avon is notably home to programme makers First Look TV (*Inside the Mind of a Serial Killer*) and Ragdoll Productions (*Teletubbies*, *In the Night Garden*) alongside Warwickshire-based companies who provide related services, such as Noisegate Studios (creators of all the music for *Horrible Histories*) and imaging leaders Pix+Codex.

Add in a number of smaller filmmakers such as Jam Sutton, Tasty Media and Blackfire, plus a wealth of freelance broadcast professionals, and the local broadcast media sector is more than well represented.

The creative talent of Coventry and Warwickshire has helped shape stories on the big screen too – from comedy and social realism to a galaxy far, far away. Debbie Isitt (*Nativity*), Ken Loach (*Kes*, *I*, *Daniel Blake*) and Gareth Edwards (*Godzilla*, *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story*) all hail from the area,

as do Hollywood leading lights Clive Owen and Sophie Turner.

Productions as varied as *Doctor Who*, *Upstairs Downstairs* and *The Italian Job* have all been shot on locations in Coventry and Warwickshire.

And the British Film Institute even chose Gaydon as the location for its state-of-the-art film and TV archive facility.





THE WARWICK WRITING PROGRAMME IS NUMBER ONE FOR CREATIVE WRITING IN THE UK.

THE TIMES/SUNDAY TIMES LEAGUE TABLE

Left: The Big Comfy Bookshop, Coventry's champion of grassroots music and literature / Right: A locally made vintage piano, restored and put to regular use at Temperance in Leamington

LITERARY HERITAGE

Beyond Shakespeare, the area has boasted a wealth of writers throughout history who have used Coventry and Warwickshire as inspiration for the worlds they created on the page. These include Nuneaton's George Eliot and Jane Austin, whose stays at Stoneleigh Abbey inspired many of her works. In more recent years, Coventry has produced poet Philip Larkin, Jack Reacher creator Lee Child and award-winning fantasy author Graham Joyce (*Dreamside*, *The Tooth Fairy*).

POPULAR MUSIC

1960s electronic music pioneer Delia Derbyshire was a Coventry

An abundance of literary and music events take place throughout the region – from poetry slams and open mic nights to the *Stratford Literary Festival*, *Kenilworth Arts Festival* and the *Godiva Festival*.

lass, though the City really took the spotlight in the early 1980s as the epicentre of the two-tone scene with The Specials and The Selecter. By the late eighties it was two other famous sons of the City – Pete Waterman and Matt Aitken – who dominated the charts as two thirds of the Stock, Aitken and Waterman 'Hit Factory', writing and producing for Kylie Minogue, Rick Astley and many others.

More recently, the City has basked in the indie cred of The Enemy, and Leamington's (as yet) only number one artists Nizlopi are often credited as a major influence on Ed Sheeran, who was a guitar tech at many of their early shows.



CREATIVE SPACES



The region also boasts a number of world-class theatres, galleries and arts companies, most famously the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) in Stratford-upon-Avon.

Globally renowned dance and circus company Motionhouse is based in Leamington and post-digital arts collective Ludic Rooms is housed in Coventry's renovated Canal Warehouse.

Located right in the heart of the University campus, Warwick Arts Centre is the second largest outside London, while the nearby Herbert Art Gallery & Museum and Compton Verney host frequent exhibitions of national significance.

Left: The Royal Shakespeare Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon / Right 1: Warwick Arts Centre, currently undergoing an extensive refurbishment / 2: Coventry Canal Warehouse / 3: The Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Coventry / 4: Compton Verney art gallery and park / 5: Spencer Yard, Leamington, home of Motionhouse



Motionhouse creates and tours a range of exciting dance-circus productions to theatres, festivals and events in the UK and across the globe. We have been based in Leamington since Kevin Finnan MBE and I created the company here in 1988.

IT'S AN INCREDIBLE PLACE TO WORK AND BEING BASED HERE HAS ENABLED US

We are proud to take work made here all over the globe: with tours to Australia, the US, Japan, Macau and China as well as our regular touring across the UK and Europe.

We have made shows for four European City of Culture celebrations and were commissioned to make work for the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Our work also featured in the the arts and cultural programme of the Gold Coast 2018 Commonwealth Games in Australia.

Louise Richards, Executive Director

TO THRIVE AND GROW AS A COMPANY ON OUR 30-YEAR CREATIVE JOURNEY.



ALWAYS SOMETHING GOING ON

In addition, the area benefits from a healthy calendar of events, festivals and exhibitions. The annual *Warwickshire Open Studios* and *Leamington Art in the Park* both showcase the many artists who live and work in the region. *Interactive Futures* brings the national games industry together. And Leamington

is the smallest town in the world to be given permission to host *Creative Mornings* branded events – usually only bestowed on cities. What's more, Coventry, Warwick and Leamington each hold a *TEDx* licence, putting on several speaker events every year. For a small area, that's a lot of ideas worth spreading.



WARWICKSHIRE OPEN STUDIOS 2019 SAW OVER 300 ARTISTS OPEN THEIR HOMES, STUDIOS AND POP-UP EXHIBITIONS TO THE PUBLIC.



TRANSPORT INNOVATION



Coventry and Warwickshire's legacy in the automotive and manufacturing industries also means it is home to innovators of a different kind.

In 1957 Malcom Sawyer designed the *E-Type Jaguar* – considered by many to be as much a 'work of art' as a car – and that tradition continues today within many companies in the area.

All across the county creative talent at companies such as Jaguar Land Rover and Aston Martin is hard at work on all aspects of the engineering and manufacturing processes – from car seat textile design to onboard computer UI systems.

Among the greatest leaps in modern transportation are 'autonomous

vehicles', which is an area being extensively researched and developed in the region. In October 2018, a locally designed *Range Rover Sport* completed the first ever self-driving lap of one of the UK's most challenging road layouts – Coventry's infamous ring road.

The future of transport, from driverless cars to very light rail, and the user interfaces, information and entertainment systems they will employ will impact the world in major ways. And you can be sure it will be realised, in part, by local companies such as RDM and Creative Design.



Left: Jaguar Land Rover Smart Wallet technology / Right: Jaguar Land Rover Virtual Eyes Intelligent Pod

FROM WARWICKSHIRE TO THE WORLD

The creative economy is currently worth more than £130 billion to the UK and, for a relatively small county, this region punches above its weight to make a significant contribution to this figure.

The work produced in Coventry and Warwickshire can be found on screens, stages and homes the world over. Silicon Spa's games are played in every corner of the world, the RSC broadcasts live shows globally and has long enjoyed a cultural, artistic and educational exchange with China, and in 2018 DCA received a Queen's Award for Enterprise in International Trade (the company's second and one of only 152 awarded across the country).

Recent Warwick graduates have gone on to secure roles in creative and media organisations worldwide, while some opt to embrace the vibrant local scene.



CREATING A COMMUNITY



The creative industries of Coventry and Warwickshire show no signs of slowing down.

The eyes of the nation will be on Coventry as it begins its tenure as the UK City of Culture in 2021, closely followed by the 2022 Commonwealth Games in Birmingham during which parts of Coventry and Warwickshire will host teams from all over the world.

The West Midlands is also soon to become one of the world's 5G test beds, which will allow a gear change for those developing the next generation of mobile entertainment and services in the region.

As the industry continues to grow and change, Wawick University's creative

courses will evolve with it. Not only will we work in step with industry, but we will also lead the way with initiatives such as *Albert*, as we embed sustainability into the education of production and broadcast graduates.

On the back of the launch of the new School of Creative Arts, Performance and Visual Cultures, the next few years will also see the new state-of-the-art Faculty of Arts open on campus.

This will be joined by the new Daimler Powerhouse Creation Centre in Coventry and Leamington's Creative Quarter regeneration project, further galvanising existing businesses and providing space for the creation of new ones.

There has never been a better time to be involved in the creative industries in Coventry and Warwickshire. The past has been inspirational... the present is exciting... *help us define the future.*

Left: The old Stoneleigh Arms pub / Right: The United Reform Church – both key redevelopment sites for Leamington Spa's proposed Creative Quarter



THANKS

With acknowledgements to all the companies and organisations that contribute to Coventry and Warwickshire's creative scene, of which these are just a few...



This publication has been created to give a flavour of the diverse creative activities in Coventry and Warwickshire. It is not a directory, nor is it a paid advertorial. We could not include everybody, but we hope to revisit this again in the future and will be expanding the story online.

If you're doing something interesting in the region that you think we should know about, please drop us a line at creativeanddigital@warwick.ac.uk

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