

# **On Being a *Systems Creative***

**by Leigh Davies**

# A New Perspective

Hello there pixel wanderer!

Welcome to this lovingly crafted guide on what it means to be a **Systems Creative**.

Born from a personal analysis of my career working within the creative gig economy as a mixed disciplinary practitioner over the last 10 years - I decided to establish this new professional identity in an effort reinforce the foundations of creative generalism and help more practitioners not only make sense of their own professional identities, but provide them with the reference points that can help them navigate the choppy seas of the world in which we work.

The mindset of a Systems Creative is driven by 6 simple but powerful philosophies:

- 1). You are not WHAT you do...**
- 2). Leave Home.**
- 3). Organisation is Key.**
- 4). Create with Purpose.**
- 5). Learn how to Learn.**
- 6). Think in Systems.**

Together they cover everything you need to consider on becoming a Systems Creative - so let's take a look at them, one by one...

# 1). You are not **WHAT** you do...

No matter your disciplinary background, origins, or new directions - you must no longer define yourself based on **WHAT** you do.

To do so limits you to opportunities of the past; opportunities associated with those traditional disciplinary descriptors; opportunities that are dramatically shrinking in numbers.

Gone are the days where you fumble over your words when you're at a social gathering and you're asked to explain what you do. From here on out your professional identity is simple and clear...

...you are not **WHAT** you do - you are **WHY** you do it.



## 2). Leave Home

Just because you found your love of live music through a life-changing concert...

...doesn't mean that this is the only world in which your passion and skills for sound can exist.

The same goes for all you creatives out there.

Allowing yourself to be defined by your **WHY** presents you with the opportunity to apply your craft in new contexts, for new needs, and for new people.

Your **WHAT** limits you to engrained and antiquated expectations of your discipline.

Your **WHY** opens doors for you.



# 3). Organisation is Key

To manage an array of creative disciplines takes...discipline!

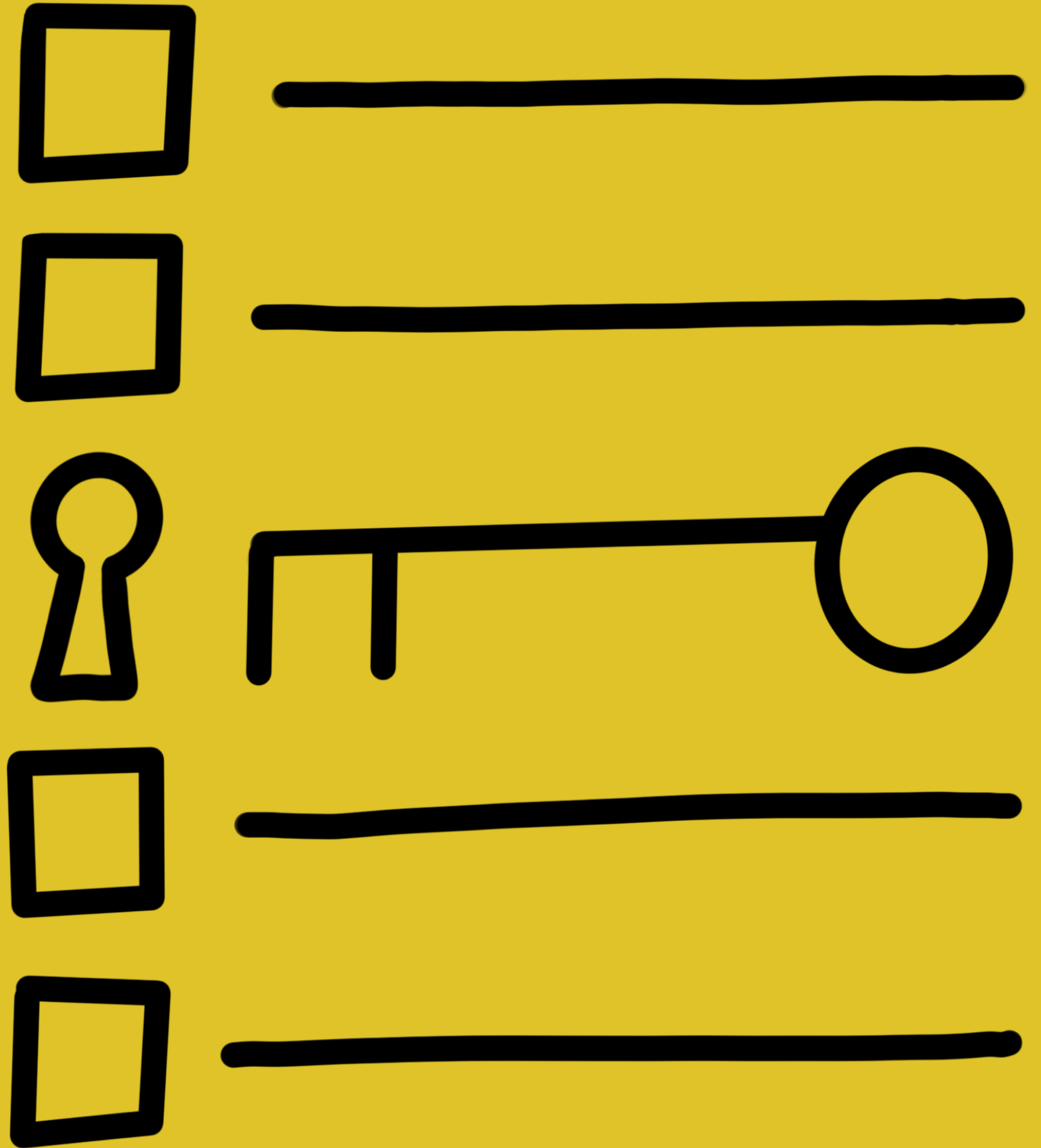
Keeping on top of a multi-faceted professional identity is very difficult - things will get chaotic very fast - and we have a little something called entropy to thank for that...

You see... the universe, and everything in it, is naturally tending towards a state of high entropy - or in other words, disorder.

So, give entropy a swift kick by injecting some energy back into the system.

When you do, you will reverse time's arrow...

...and your practice will move from chaos into order.



# 4). Create With Purpose

Liberated by your **WHY**, discipline is no longer an identity, it is an affordance.

When led by your **WHY**, you shouldn't necessarily create something because you want to - you should create something because you need to; you create something when it brings value to your cause.

Your disciplines are a carefully woven tapestry made from ingredients that are indispensable to your cause.

When viewed through this lens your trans-disciplinary tendencies are no longer fractured-and-glued.

Systems Creativity **IS** a specialism; master of trades - jack of sh\*t.



# 5). Learn how to Learn

The disciplines you practice are varied, diverse, and nuanced - it's no wonder it feels like you do lots of different jobs as a practitioner.

However, there is a thread that binds all of your creative disciplines together. It is a principle that transcends every skill you've acquired - known as Metalearning.

Metalearning can provide you with the strategies to help you guide your own learning, to succeed at things you have never tried before, and to establish a heightened level of self-awareness.

Understanding how you learn is crucial to the growth and sustainability of your professional practice. So if I was you, I would start learning to learn how you learn.



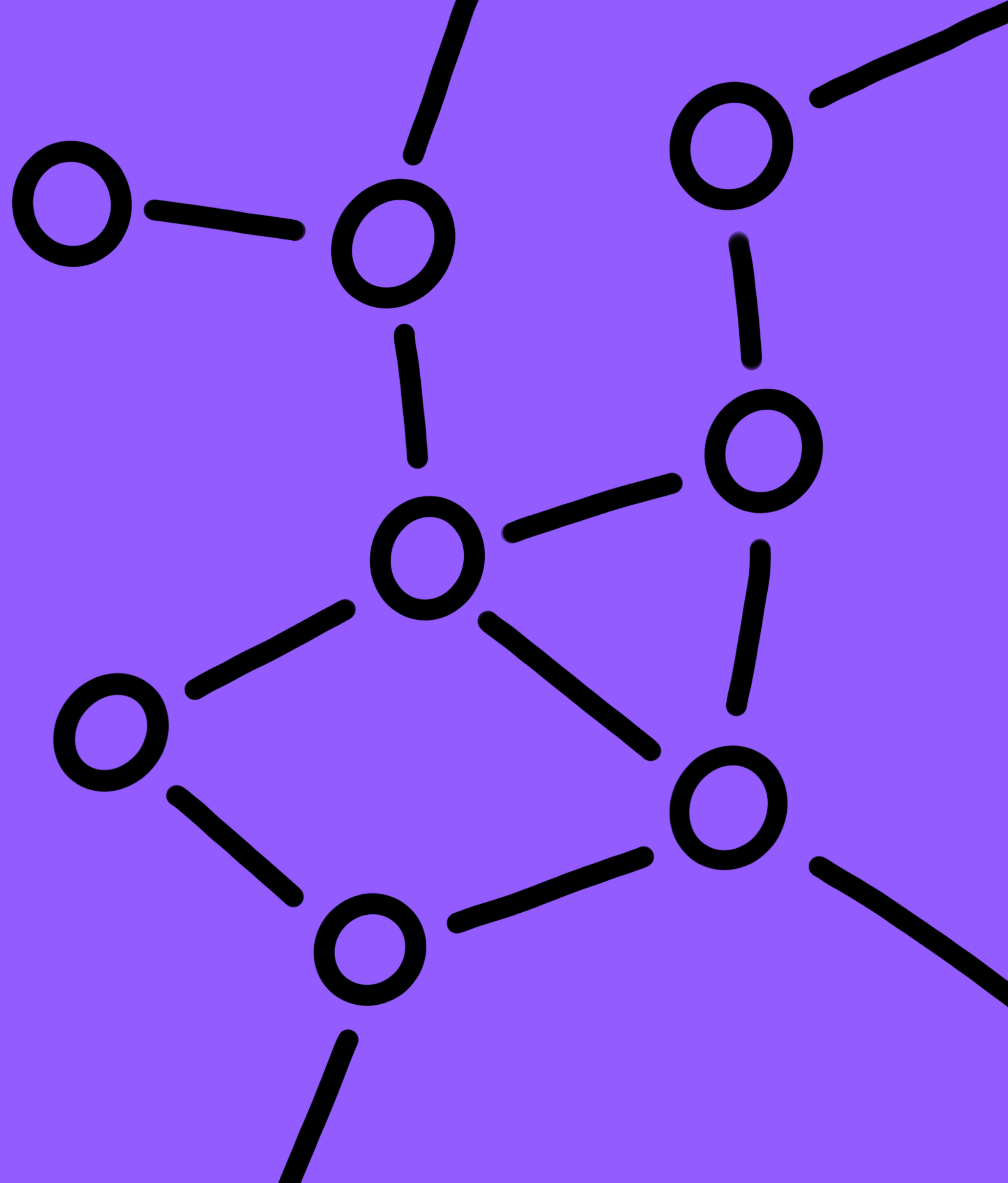
# 6). Think in Systems

Your creative practice cannot exist outside of the systems that surround us, no matter how much you may want it to. Everything in this world is entangled.

Your own personal creative expression is still very much valid - but it doesn't exist in isolation - it is a small part of a much greater system.

Intra-action will indiscriminately ensure that the world makes and unmakes you and the work that you produce.

...but when you acknowledge the phenomenon of intra-action as part of your creative practice - you will realise that you too have the power to make and unmake the world.





# ...All Together Now!

...and there we have it!

On establishing this new professional identity for myself - these 6 philosophies have been integral to the sustainability of my professional practice. They have helped me to better understand my purpose as a creative, helped me embrace my mixed disciplinary skillset, and helped me navigate the uncertainty and unreliability of the creative gig economy.

...and they might just end up being as useful to you in your own professional journey!

So if you also wish to identify as a Systems Creative moving forwards - just remember...

Allow your professional identity to be primarily defined by your purpose. On doing this you will begin to discover that your craft can exist in more places in this world than you may have previously realised! It's going to take a lot of energy to organise yourself, to utilise your disciplines as a set of carefully selected tools, and to truly understand how you learn as a person, but if you take into account the wider world and all of its occupants and happenings...

...then your creative practice will thrive in a way that it never has before.

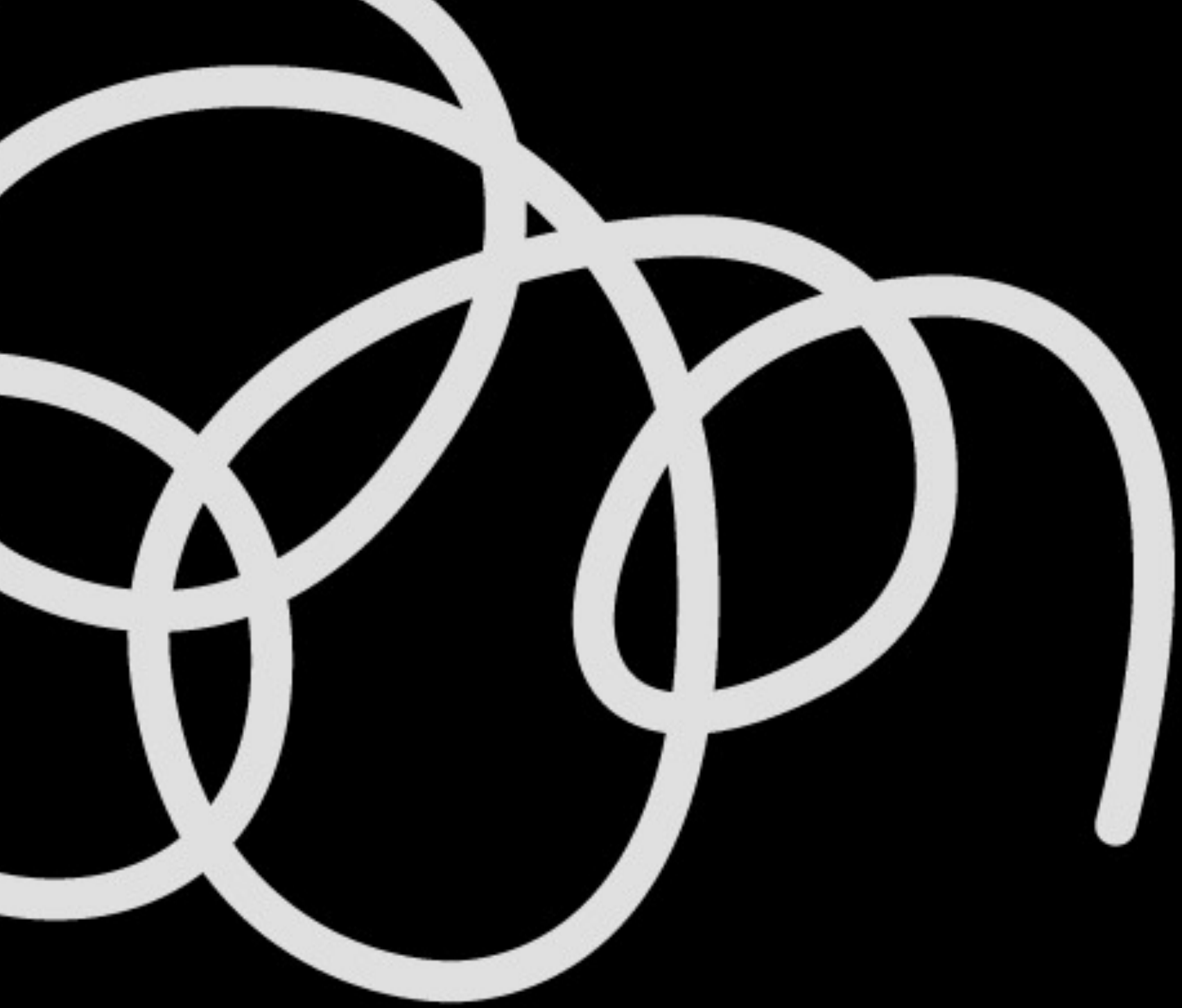
# About the Author

Leigh Davies is an award-winning Systems-Creative based in Wales - a creator of interactive sonic playspaces, delivering stories and designing experiences.

Over the last 10 years, Leigh has worked extensively as a creative director and producer within the world of interactive arts and experience design. His practice is focused on the conception, development, and construction of interactive audiovisual platforms, environments, and playspaces that present audiences with the opportunity to explore, learn, react, reflect, feel, respond, and discover.

Throughout his career, Leigh has worked in residence and in partnership with a wide range of organisations such as Tate, Wellcome Collection, London Symphony Orchestra, The MIDI Association, The Roundhouse, Cadw, National Trust, Wales Millennium Centre, Shakespeare's Globe, Something More Near, Chester Zoo, and many more.





Published by Leigh Davies, 2020.

[www.leighdaviescreative.com](http://www.leighdaviescreative.com)

 Creative Commons Attribution ShareAlike 4.0 International.