DIVERSITY BY DESIGN

The project is a collaboration with the school of design, school of psychology, and interior design students. The two workshops focus on understanding unconscious bias, resulting in a range of diverse figures for use in interior visuals. The first workshop was for one day and the second project ran from July – December 2020.

"Representation in the fictional world signifies social existence; absence means symbolic annihilation." (Gerbner & Gross, 1976)

Visual from before the unconscious bias workshop to highlight the initial issue

Initial Issue: Workshop One

• People in display visuals are generally only reflective of the student's own characteristics

• Student projects and available image banks do not reflect the wider diversity inherent within the UK population

• To date, the visuals available for use in design projects offer little in the way of diversity or inclusivity

Our Aim:

• The delivery of a conference style event for UG / PG IAD students exploring unconscious bias and the principles of EDI

• This workshop will introduce our students to novel concepts, establish EDI as an important principle with the University, and allow students to apply this knowledge to the development of innovative figures that will then be critiqued

• To Counter Unconscious Bias and Increase Awareness of EDI

Figures produced by Lauren Glass for the Undergraduate Research Opportunities Scheme

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Intervention:

• Speakers from the Students Union, School of Design, School of Psychology and the University EDI Committee will give presentations on the effects of Unconscious Bias

• Following the talks, students will develop 1-2 figures in their own artistic style, which represents the broader society of the UK, or the wider global community

• Feedback from the tutors will be provided to the students after the workshop

Outcome:

• Production of a more diverse and inclusive representations of people for display visuals

• Establishing EDI as a necessary consideration within both the School of Design and the University

• Broadening student understanding within a new subject-area
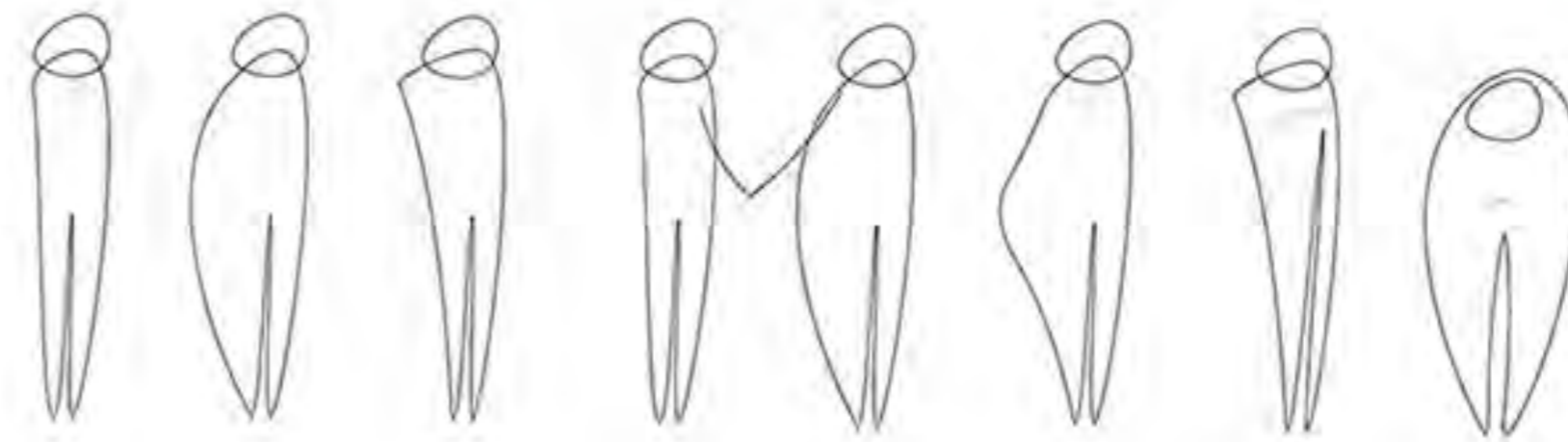
"Having not been aware of the issue beforehand, the research presented was eye-opening and triggered a change in my perception

"Through participating in a group workshop discussing the psychological concept
of unconscious bias, I immediately developed an interest into the innate abilities

"Upon hearing of this research project, I was shocked to reflect upon my own work thus far"

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INTRODUCTION

Undergraduate Research Opportunity Scheme - funded project with four interior design students
Winners of 'the people's choice award'

Reference to the human form is an invaluable tool within architecture, providing a reference for the scale, atmosphere, and function of spatial environments. However, due to the important representative role of these figures, a lack of visual inclusivity of specific population groups within architectural visuals may portray a space to be exclusive or inaccessible for these user groups.

Contemporary online figure archives accessible to designers demonstrate a common lack of diversity and inclusivity of figures representing minority groups within the UK's population, thus increasing the likeliness of visuals which inaccurately reflect the diverse composition of our local communities.

Moreso, figures applied within these visuals are commonly only reflective of the designer's characteristics and their unconscious assumptions of society and normative societal roles.

Figure 1.1. Lexis collage surrounding the 2010 Equality Act's protected characteristics.

AIMS & OBJECTIVES

- To establish Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) and unconscious bias as important principles for consideration within visual representation media

- To apply learned knowledge of EDI and unconscious bias to produce a collection of human figures focussing on diversity and inclusivity of all members of the UK population

- To provide accessible material to counter unconscious bias and stimulate an increased awareness of EDI for future projects.

RESEARCH / METHODOLOGY

- Initial research undertaken into the 2010 Equality Act's list of Protected Characteristics.

age	disability	gender reassignment
marriage/civil partnership		pregnancy/maternity
race	religion/belief	sex	sexual orientation

Figure 1.2. List of Protected Characteristics (Equality Act 2010)

- Student researchers analysed examples of own previous visuals, identifying characteristics that had or had not been included/considered

- Production of figures using Adobe Suite, showcasing a diverse range and inclusivity of protected characteristics

RESULTS

Throughout the production process, designs were moderated by supervisors and peer-reviewed to assess their suitability in representing their individual characteristics. Each student successfully produced a collection of figures of varied characteristics in bespoke artistic styles (see Figures 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 1.6).

Whilst statistical data was gathered to provide a quantitative reflection of UK population groups (e.g. percentage splits of age and ethnic groups), this data did not affect the quantity of figures produced to represent each user group, so to ensure less common members of the population were not intentionally less able to be represented.

Despite fulfilling the criteria of the first two project aims; we cannot conclusively state the projects' success at this stage. Future research must now be undertaken to assess the figures effectiveness in informing future users of the principles of EDI and unconscious bias, and whether the produced material informs a greater diversity of user representation in future architectural visuals.

DIVERSITY BY DESIGN

Figure 1.3. Selected figures produced by Lauren Glass, with a primary focus on 'Disability' and 'Pregnancy/Maternity'.

Figure 1.4. Selected figures produced by Josh Haynes, with a primary focus on 'Ethnicity' and 'Marriage/Civil Partnerships'.

Figure 1.5. Selected figures produced by Wiktoria Rabij, with a primary focus on 'Sex' and 'Sexual Orientation'.

Figure 1.6. Selected figures produced by Charlie Wootton, with a primary focus on 'Age' and 'Religion/Belief'.

CONCLUSION

- The project aims were fulfilled in highlighting the principles of EDI and unconscious bias and their relevance within architecture and design.

- Educating the student researchers on the topic in the project's early stages informed an active response and a greater awareness of contemporary issues of misrepresentation.

- Applying this knowledge alongside our own independent research into the diversity of the UK population informed the production of a series of holistic figures to enable a greater representation and diversity of communities within future architectural visualisations.

REFERENCES

GERBNER, G. & Gross, L. (1976) Living with television: The violence profile. *Journal of Communication*. 26, 178. SUSTAINABLEBUSINESSCONSULTING (n.d) *Diversity and Inclusion: The Journey to Value*. Seattle: Sustainable Business Consulting. Available at: https://sustainablebizconsulting.com/uncategorized/diversity-and-inclusion-the-journey-to-value/ [Accessed 01 October 2020]. EQUALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION (n.d) *The Equality Act 2010*. Available at: https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/equality-act/equality-act-2010 [Accessed 01 October 2020]

Student: Lauren Glass, Joshua Haynes, Wiktoria Rabij, Charlie Wootton

Supervisor: Academics from the School of Design and The School of Psychology

Fig 1.8 and 1.9 Wiktoria Rabij's final design project - , using a combination of her own and Lauren Glass's figures
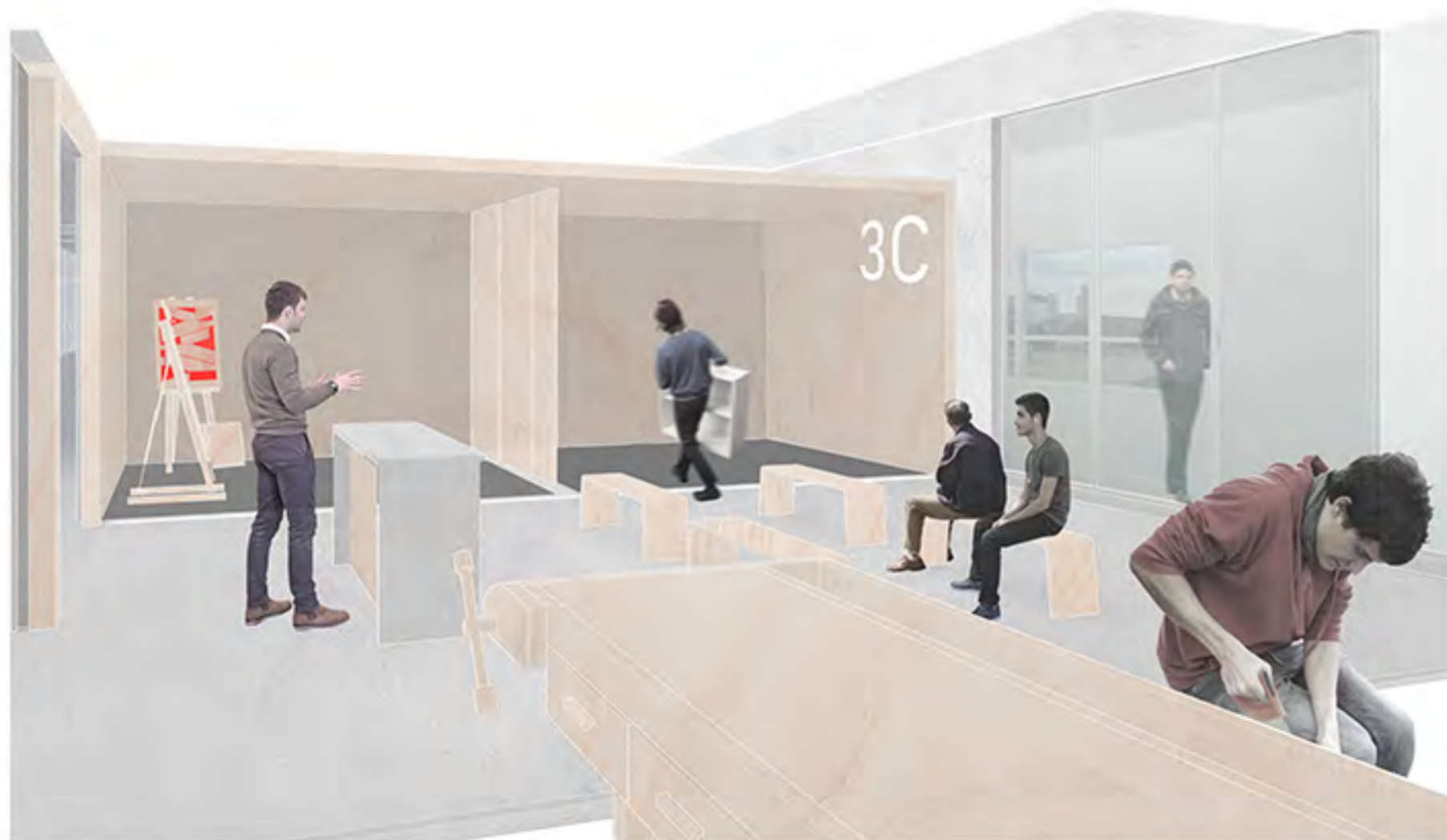
Fig 1.9

Fig 2 Charlie Wooton's 'before' image, produced prior to the research project

Fig 2.1 Charlie Wooton's 'after' image

Student: **Charlie Wooton**
Wiktoria Rabij