

Visual Essay

# Shades of Identity: Navigating Society as a Mixed-Heritage Individual

By Jessie Orville



Fig. 1: A. Adesunloye, Dudley O'Shaughnessy for the film *White Colour Black*, 2016.



## Synopsis

This visual essay argues that mixed-heritage individuals face unique challenges of exclusion and identity negotiation. Through the thoughtful use of symbols, materials, layout, and community involvement, inclusive design can foster a sense of belonging in public spaces.

Through a combination of photographs, art, interviews, surveys, secondary research, and case studies, the visual essay examines key themes such as cultural sharing across generations, the complexities of cultural identity, physical appearance, the political significance of hair, universal design versus cultural representation, cultural appropriation versus cultural representation, virtue signalling, and the role of inclusive design.

This visual essay contributes to discussions on inclusivity by offering new insights into the mixed-heritage experience. Focusing on community and beauty spaces, it explores how design can either reinforce or challenge exclusionary practices. Aimed at designers, urban planners, educators, and beauty space creators, the work seeks to influence design practices and raise awareness about the unique needs of mixed-heritage individuals, encouraging more inclusive and representative approaches to public and commercial spaces.

# Contents

List of Figures .....	6
Introduction .....	8
Chapter 1: Celebrating Mixed-Race Identity: The Richness of Diversity .....	10
a. The Richness of Navigating Two Cultures.....	10
b. The Role of Mediator.....	14
c. The Fluidity of Mixed-Heritage Identity.....	16
Chapter 2: Negotiating Identities: The Challenges of Exclusion and Acceptance .....	18
a. Caught in the Middle: The Challenge of Cultural Identities .....	18
b. Feeling Rejected From Both Sides .....	20
c. The Fluidity of Mixed-Heritage Identity .....	26
Chapter 3: Society Spaces: Community Building or Design Exclusion? .....	32
a. Designing Inclusive Community Centres .....	32
b. The Role of Design in Fostering Inclusion .....	36
c. Fighting Beauty Stereotypes: Guaranteeing Beauty Spaces for All.....	42
Conclusion .....	48
Bibliography .....	50
Appendix 1 .....	56
Appendix 2 .....	57

## List of Figures

Fig. 1: A. Adesunloye, Dudley O'Shaughnessy for the film *White Colour Black*, 2016. Photograph.

Fig. 2: John Holyfield, *Soul Found*, 1992. Lithograph. The Black Art Depo.

Fig. 3: David Lang, *Meal Triptych Drawing*, 2024. Charcoal on paper. Saatchi Art.

Fig. 4: Theo Gould, *MIXED Project*, 2020–ongoing. Series of photographs. Ph Museum.

Fig. 5: Jeannie Phan, *All Mixed-Up*, 2016. Print. *All Mixed Up: What Do We Call People Of Multiple Backgrounds?* NPR.

Fig. 6: Emma Taonga, Front page of *Mixed Race Matters*, 2021. Photograph Collage. *People In Harmony*.

Fig. 7: Kip Fulbeck, *The Hapa Project*, 2009–ongoing. Portraits. Kip Fulbeck Website.

Fig. 8: Karl Bates, *Beauty is in the Ear of the Beholder Too*, 2016. Photograph Collage. Duke Research Blog.

Fig. 9: Michael McMillan, Reproduction of a 1960 US advertisement for wigs, 2003. Poster. *Mixed-Race, Post-Race Book*.

Fig. 10: Adrian Piper, "Mythic Being" Series, 1973–1975. Performance Art Poster. New York Times.

Fig. 11: Shani Crowe, *The Breath We All Share*, 2023. Print. Shanicrowe Website.

Fig. 12: Nakeya Brown, *Hot Comb and Mitten*, 2014. Photograph. The Washington-Post.

Fig. 13: Bill Gaskins, *No Name*, 2003. Photograph. *Mixed-Race, Post-Race Book*.

Fig. 14: Len Garrison, *Black British Activists at FEPAC in Nigeria, wearing 'traditional' hairstyles*, 1977. Photograph. *Mixed-Race, Post-Race Book*.

Fig. 15: Peter Clark, *A Being Mixed Potluck*, 2022. Photograph. Greater Govanhill.

Fig. 16: Saudatu Bah, *The Taiwan-Reyhanli Centre for World Citizens – Community Activities*, 2024. Photograph. Dezeen.

Fig. 17: Robert Dettman, *The Salt Lake City Public Library*, no date. Photograph. Location Scout.

Fig. 18: Wendy Gold, *Inclusive Water Feature Design in Toronto Leitchcroft Park*, 2019. Photograph. Project For Public Spaces.

Fig. 19: *Paper Monument, Participatory, Temporary Public Space Displays That Detail the (Often Difficult) Histories of a City or a Park*, 2019. Photograph. 2019. Project For Public Spaces.

Fig. 20: Alice Morgan, *How We Can Learn From Appropriation in Design*, 2020. Print. House Beautiful.

Fig. 21: Tanyel Mustafa, *Sea of Beige*, 2022. Photograph. Metronews.com.

Fig. 22: Jessie Orville, *Fake Inclusivity*, 2024. Photograph.

Fig. 23: No Name, *Fenty: Golden Hour Pop-Up*, 2024. Photograph. Impact Retail.

Fig. 24: No Name, *Fenty Golden Hour Mirror*, 2024. Photograph. Impact Retail.

Fig. 25: Jessie Orville, *Shades Project*, 2025. Sketches. Personal Project.



# Introduction

For my final year interior design project, I am designing an inclusive beauty shopping experience for mixed-heritage individuals, addressing the lack of diverse beauty representation in retail. Growing up as a mixed-heritage individual, I often struggled with feelings of exclusion, a challenge many others share. Conversations with peers suggest that many mixed-heritage individuals feel under-represented in beauty shops, leading to invisibility. These personal experiences reflect broader cultural and social contexts.

The number of mixed-heritage individuals is growing rapidly. Professor Kaufmann, an expert in politics and social sciences, predicts that 30% of the UK will be mixed-race by 2100 and 75% by 2150,<sup>1</sup> signalling a demographic shift that calls for rethinking public spaces. Mixed-heritage individuals often navigate complex identity landscapes. Duveen, leading figure in social psychology, argues that “identity is as much about the process of being identified as it is about the process of identification,” meaning our sense of self is shaped not just by how we see ourselves, but also by how society views us, often resulting in marginalization.<sup>2</sup>

This essay uses the term “mixed heritage” to describe identities shaped by both biological and cultural factors. This term reflects the fluidity of identity, in contrast to terms like “mixed-race” or “biracial,” which reinforce rigid racial categories.<sup>3</sup>

The central question of this essay is: How can design influence mixed-heritage individuals’ experience of identity and belonging?

Theories from Professor Ali’s *Mixed-race, Post-race*<sup>4</sup> and academic research by Lukate and Foster on identity performance<sup>5</sup> provide a framework for understanding the social and cultural challenges faced by mixed-heritage individuals.

<sup>1</sup> Eric Kaufmann, *Whiteshift: Populism, Immigration, and the Future of White Majorities* (Penguin UK, 2020), p. 221.

<sup>2</sup> Gerard Duveen, ‘Identity and Knowledge’ (Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 259 cited in Lukate, Johanna M., and Juliet L. Foster, “‘Depending on Where I Am...’ Hair, Travelling, and the Performance of Identity among Black and Mixed-Race Women,” *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 61.3 (2023), <<https://doi.org/10.1111/bjso.12584>> [accessed: 16 December 2024] pp. 425-438.

<sup>3</sup> Walter Stephan, *The Social Construction of Race* (Routledge, 1992), p. 133.

<sup>4</sup> Suki Ali, *Mixed-race, Post-race: Gender, New Ethnicities, and Cultural Practices* (Routledge, 2020), p. 45.

<sup>5</sup> Johanna M. Lukate and Juliet L. Foster, “‘Depending on Where I Am...’ Hair, Travelling, and the Performance of Identity among Black and Mixed-Race Women,” *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 61.3 (2023), < <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjso.12584> > [accessed: 16 December 2024] pp. 425-438.

Additionally, Peinhardt and Storrings’ non-profit work on inclusive design offers insights into how these challenges can be addressed through thoughtful design in public and retail spaces, focusing on cultural representation and collaborative design.<sup>6</sup>

This essay incorporates visuals to express the emotional experiences of mixed-heritage individuals and illustrate design concepts. Art will convey feelings of exclusion and under-representation, helping the reader empathize with the narrative. Case study images will show real-world design solutions, demonstrating how inclusive design can improve representation in retail spaces.

To deepen the academic analysis and add an authentic touch, I conducted five interviews with mixed-heritage individuals from diverse backgrounds, skin tones, and degrees of privilege. This qualitative approach was supplemented with a survey of 24 participants, ensuring a nuanced representation of experiences. Both methods will be explored in the following chapters.

This essay argues that mixed-heritage individuals face unique challenges of exclusion and identity negotiation. Through the thoughtful use of symbols, materials, layout, and community involvement, inclusive design can foster a sense of belonging in public spaces.

<sup>6</sup> Kirsten Peinhardt and Nicholas Storrings, ‘Inclusive by Design: Laying a Foundation for Diversity in Public Space’, *Project for Public Spaces*, 2019 <<https://www.pps.org/article/inclusive-by-design-laying-a-foundation-for-diversity-in-public-space>> [accessed 20 December 2023].

## Chapter 1: Celebrating Mixed-Heritage Identity

### a. The Richness of Navigating Two Cultures

One of the greatest advantages of being a mixed-heritage individual is the richness that comes from experiencing the world through multiple cultural lenses. Motoyoshi, an educator and writer on interracial marriage and multiculturalism, argues in a non-fiction chapter 'The Experience of Mixed-Race People' that immersion in multiple cultures broadens one's world-view. This cultural richness is evident in how mixed-heritage individuals connect with and engage in the traditions of their diverse backgrounds.<sup>7</sup> This cultural richness is evident in the ways mixed-heritage people connect with and participate in the traditions of their diverse backgrounds.

Food is a powerful way to transmit culture across generations. In *Mixed-Race, Post-Race*, a non-fiction book focusing on inter-ethnic families, sociology professor Ali explores the complexities of mixed-race identity, noting how Sheila, a key figure in her research, preserved her cultural heritage by maintaining her mother's culinary traditions.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, one of my interviewee shared, 'As a kid, I've always been open to trying many cuisines... Especially Indian food, which used to be too spicy and heavy for me. But after trying one dish, I thought, "Oh, I feel Indian! I am from two places."' <sup>9</sup>

Although she hadn't grown up in India, food allowed her to connect with her Indian heritage. These stories highlight how food serves as a bridge for mixed-heritage individuals, helping them preserve cultural practices and stay connected to their diverse roots—a concept that aligns with Motoyoshi's argument on the cultural richness and broader world-view that come with mixed-race identities. This idea is visually represented in [Fig.2], where a multi-generational family shares a meal together, surrounded by warm colours and diverse patterns that evoke the richness of cultural traditions and intergenerational connections.

<sup>7</sup> Michelle M. Motoyoshi, 'The experience of mixed-race people: some thoughts and theories', in *Adaptation, Acculturation, and Transnational Ties Among Asian Americans* (Taylor & Francis, 1998), pp. 173–185.

<sup>8</sup> Suki Ali, *Mixed-race, Post-race: Gender, New Ethnicities, and Cultural Practices* (Routledge, 2020), p. 45.

<sup>9</sup> Interviewed by Jessie Orville, "Interviews for Visual Essay" (Glasgow, 18 October 2024).

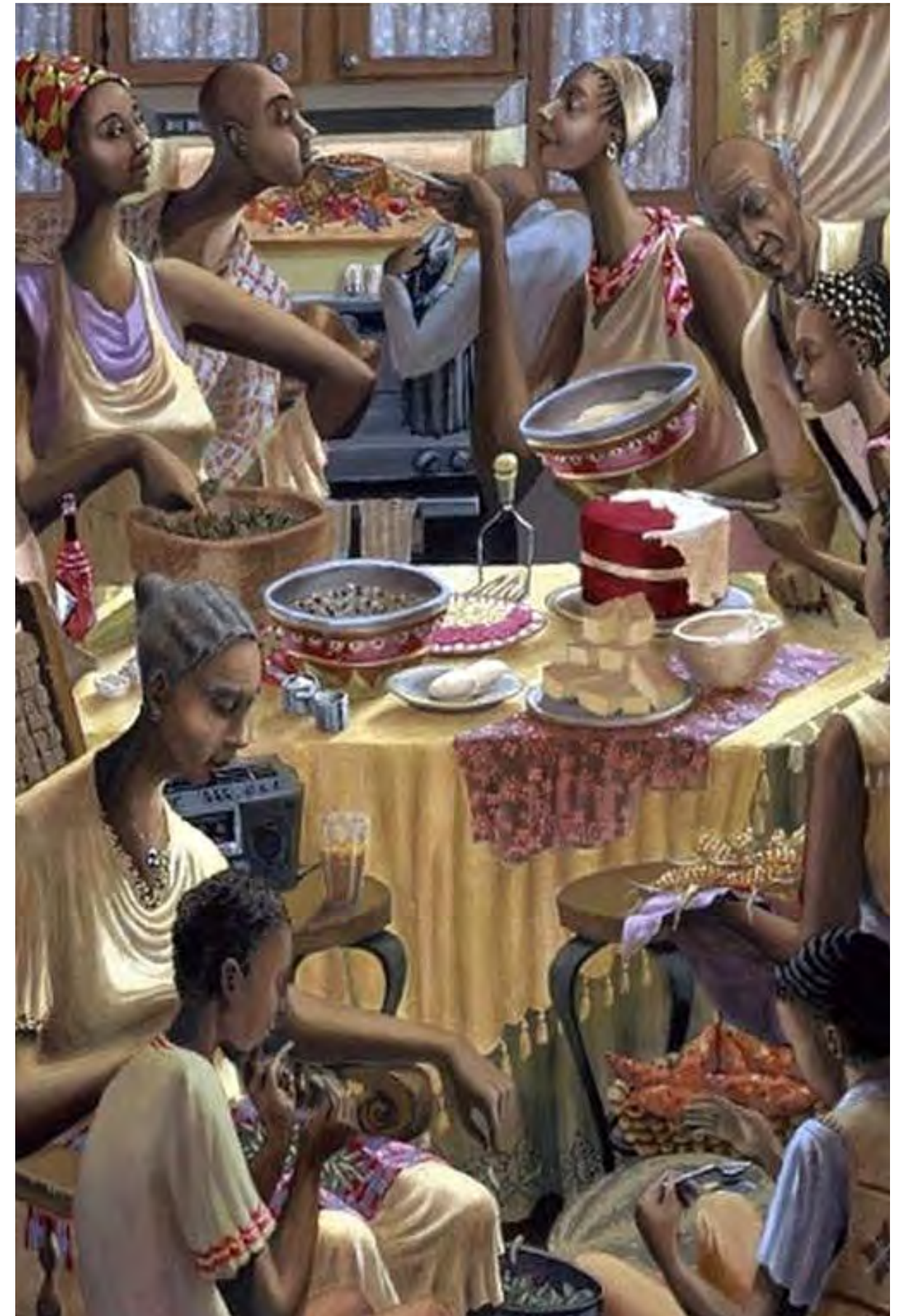


Fig. 2: John Holyfield, *Soul Found*, 1992.





Fig. 3: David Lang, artist, *Meal Triptych Drawing*, 2024.

Like food, music bridges cultural gaps and connects individuals to their heritage. Two of my interviewees expressed pride and connection when listening to music from their cultural backgrounds. One said, 'My dad used to DJ at this world music festival every year... Enjoying the music from our culture was always really nice... Whenever I hear that music, I think about it.'<sup>10</sup> Here, music not only serves as a reminder of one's culture but also as a means of sharing it. Another interviewee explained, "I share my culture with my partner. I have a lot of Black artists constantly playing around my house... You wouldn't see that same cultural impact anywhere else".<sup>11</sup> Finally, family holidays also serve to connect with one's heritage, offering opportunities to blend traditions. One interviewee shared how Christmas helped her appreciate her mixed background: "We got to experience two very different types of Christmas family celebrations, and it was magical to have something that a lot of my friends didn't necessarily have".<sup>12</sup> These occasions can also create new rituals that reflect a unique cultural identity. These experiences align with Ali's argument in *Mixed-Race, Post-Race*, that many mixed-heritage families celebrate Christmas "not just for its religious meaning," but to assert their cultural identity by merging elements from different heritages.<sup>13</sup>

Being a mixed-heritage individual allows one to live "in the spaces between" cultural identities. In her non-fiction book *The Multiracial Experience*, scholar and psychologist Root explores how these "spaces in between" reflect cultural fluidity, offering the flexibility to draw from multiple cultural worlds and merge them into a singular, diverse identity.<sup>14</sup> This fluidity fosters connections with various communities, expanding a sense of belonging and deepening understanding of diverse social worlds.

<sup>10</sup> Interviewed by Jessie Orville, "Interviews for Visual Essay" (Glasgow, 31 October 2024).

<sup>11</sup> Interviewed by Jessie Orville, "Interviews for Visual Essay" (Glasgow, 14 October 2024).

<sup>12</sup> Interviewed by Jessie Orville, "Interviews for Visual Essay" (Glasgow, 14 October 2024).

<sup>13</sup> Suki Ali, *Mixed-race, Post-race: Gender, New Ethnicities, and Cultural Practices* (Routledge, 2020), p. 45.

<sup>14</sup> Maria PP. Root, *The Multiracial Experience: Racial Borders as the New Frontier* (Sage, 1999).

### b. The Role of Mediator

The diverse cultural backgrounds of mixed-heritage individuals often position them as mediators between different communities, fostering understanding and empathy. Interviewees shared that having a mixed heritage made them “more open-minded”,<sup>15</sup> highlighting how exposure to multiple cultures broadens perspectives on ethnic and cultural issues, thereby positioning mixed-heritage individuals as bridges between groups. This aligns with Motoyoshi’s finding that one interviewee helped resolve conflicts between two ethnic groups by sharing each group’s views<sup>16</sup>. These examples resonate with Root’s argument, that mixed-heritage individuals have the right to identify with and feel loyalty to more than one group, which enhances their ability to promote unity and understanding across cultural boundaries.<sup>17</sup>

However, this mediating role is also shaped by how mixed-heritage individuals are physically perceived, which can either open or close doors to different social spaces.

Understanding. Loyal. Open-minded.  
ed. United. Understanding. Loyal.  
Open-minded. United. Understand-  
ing. Loyal. Open-minded. United.  
Understanding. Loyal. Open-minded.  
ed. United. Understanding. Loy-  
al. Open-minded. United. Under-  
standing. Loyal. Open-minded.  
United. Understanding. Loyal.  
Open-minded. United. Understand-  
ing. Loyal. Open-minded. United.  
Understanding. Loyal. Open-minded.  
ed. United. Understanding. Loyal.  
Open-minded. United. Understand-  
ing. Loyal. Open-minded. United.  
Understanding. Loyal. Open-minded.  
ed. United. Understanding. Loyal.  
Open-minded. United. Understand-  
ing. Loyal. Open-minded. United.

<sup>15</sup> Interviewed by Jessie Orville, “Interviews for Visual Essay” (Glasgow, October 2024).

<sup>16</sup> Michelle M. Motoyoshi, 'The experience of mixed-race people: some thoughts and theories', in *Adaptation, Acculturation, and Transnational Ties Among Asian Americans* (Taylor & Francis, 1998), pp. 173–185.

<sup>17</sup> Maria P.P. Root (ed.), *The Multiracial Experience: Racial Borders as the New Frontier* (Sage, 1999)



c. The Fluidity of Mixed-Heritage Identity

One advantage of having a mixed heritage is the ability to navigate different social spaces without being limited by stereotypes. As Motoyoshi points out, many mixed-heritage individuals don't fit the typical image of either of their racial backgrounds<sup>18</sup>, making it harder for others to categorize them. This lack of immediate assumptions allows them to be seen as individuals, reducing the likelihood of racial profiling. In an article of the Stanford Daily, where he discusses the challenges of being a mixed heritage student, Mettias describes mixed-heritage individuals as “social chameleons” due to their ambiguous appearance<sup>19</sup>. According to Mettias, this helps them blend into diverse cultural and social environments and connect with people from various backgrounds. Mixed heritage individuals are perceived to represent aspects of each group's heritage.<sup>20</sup>

This phenomenon is often referred to as the Barack Obama effect.

While the ability to engage with multiple cultures offers richness and diversity, navigating multiple identities can also bring challenges, such as exclusion, disconnection, and confusion. These complexities will be explored further in the next chapter.



Fig. 4: Theo Gould, *MIXED Project*, 2020–ongoing.

<sup>18</sup> Michelle M. Motoyoshi, 'The experience of mixed-race people: some thoughts and theories', in *Adaptation, Acculturation, and Transnational Ties Among Asian Americans* (Taylor & Francis, 1998), pp. 173–185.

<sup>19</sup> Matt Mettias, 'Challenges and benefits of growing up mixed-race', The Stanford Daily, 8 January 2020, in 'stanforddaily.com', < <https://stanforddaily.com/2020/01/08/challenges-and-benefits-of-growing-up-mixed-race/> > [accessed: 11 December 2024]

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*



## Chapter 2. Negotiating Identities: The Challenges of Exclusion and Acceptance

### a. Caught in the Middle: The Challenge of Cultural Identities

Sociology senior lecturer Tate, in her non-fiction book *Black Skins, Black Masks*, explores the common experience of feeling caught between cultures and not fully belonging to either—a challenge faced by many mixed-heritage individuals<sup>21</sup>. This aligns with the experiences shared by some of my interviewees. For instance, one interviewee explained, “I feel like other Filipinos don’t see me as Filipino because I can’t speak the language, and I don’t look Filipino. This creates a distance, a barrier”.<sup>22</sup> This reflects Tate’s argument that mixed-heritage individuals often struggle with the sense of not belonging to either culture, despite ties to both. Another interviewee expressed, “Sometimes I feel like because I have been brought up in one culture more than the other, I don’t feel valid enough in the other one, even though through my blood I am”.<sup>23</sup> This sense of being “not valid enough” in one’s own cultural identity is echoed by many of my interviewees. One participant further shared, “Even though I have friends from both cultures, I feel like I don’t fit with either and can’t integrate fully into either group.”<sup>24</sup> These experiences resonate with Tate’s findings, suggesting that the sense of cultural “in-betweenness” is a shared phenomenon among mixed-heritage individuals.

This internalized exclusion is compounded by the external rejection that mixed-heritage individuals often face from both sides of their cultural divides, a theme that will be explored further in the next section.

<sup>21</sup> Shirley A. Tate, *Black Skins, Black Masks: Hybridity, Dialogism, Performativity*, (Routledge, 2017).

<sup>22</sup> Interviewed by Jessie Orville, “Interviews for Visual Essay” (Glasgow, 29 October 2024).

<sup>23</sup> Interviewed by Jessie Orville, “Interviews for Visual Essay” (Glasgow, 18 October 2024).

<sup>24</sup> Interviewed by Jessie Orville, “Interviews for Visual Essay” (Glasgow, 31 October 2024).



Fig. 5: Jeannie Phan, *All Mixed-Up*, 2016.

Am I enough?



Who am I?





b. Feeling Rejected From Both Sides

Despite the broader sense of identity that enables mixed-heritage individuals to act as bridges between cultural and ethnic groups, they often still face rejection from both sides. While racialization—the process by which a group of people is defined by their ‘race’—in predominantly white societies subjects them to discrimination, mixed-heritage individuals can also feel alienated from their own ethnic communities.

For example, one of my interviewees, who is mixed black and white, shared: “I am very passionate about talking about Black issues, but I have a lot of privileges because I am half White, so I sometimes wonder if it’s my place to talk about this”.<sup>25</sup> This illustrates the internal conflict that mixed-heritage individuals experience regarding their identity. Another interviewee described a painful experience: “All my life, I grew up in a white-dominant society, and everyone at school used to tell me, ‘You’re Black.’ I would face exclusion because of it. During my trip to the Caribbean, I was surprised when Black kids from my family there said, ‘You’re not Black, you’re White.’ It made me feel like I didn’t belong to any side of my family, like I was just going to be different from everyone forever.”<sup>26</sup>

These experiences reflect a broader phenomenon, the instability and uncertainty of ethnic identity, discussed by Sociology professor Hall in his essay *Cultural Identity and Diaspora*<sup>27</sup>.

Rejection from both cultural and ethnic communities is not limited to Western societies. Lukate, a scholar specialising in Ethnic Diversity, notes in her journal article on identity performance that women visiting their ancestral African countries often face rejection, labeled as “oboronyi” or “mzungu,” terms that emphasize their perceived foreignness.<sup>28</sup> This experience further challenges their sense of belonging.

<sup>25</sup> Interviewed by Jessie Orville, “Interviews for Visual Essay” (Glasgow, 31 October 2024).

<sup>26</sup> Interviewed by Jessie Orville, "Interviews for Visual Essay" (Glasgow, 19 October 2024).

<sup>27</sup> Stuart Hall, 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora' in *Identity, Community, Culture and Difference*, ed. by Jonathan Rutherford (Lawrence and Wishart, 1990), pp. 222–237.

28 Johanna M. Lukate and Juliette L. Foster, “‘Depending on where I am...’ Hair, travelling and the performance of identity among Black and mixed-race women’, *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 62:1 (2023), < <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjso.12584> > [accessed: 11 December 2024] pp.342–358

I am Me. You are Black. I am Black.  
No, you are White. I am White. No,  
you are Black. I am Black. No, you  
are White. I am White. No, you are  
Black. I am Black. No, you are White.  
I am White. No, you are Black. I am  
Black. No, you are White. I am White.  
No, you are Black. I am Black. No,  
you are White. I am White. No, you  
are Black. I am Black. No, you are  
White. I am White. No, you are Black.  
I am Black. No, you are White. I am  
White. No, you are Black. I am Black.  
No, you are White. I am White. No,  
you are Black. I am Black. No, you  
are White. I am White. No, you are  
Black. I am Black. No, you are White.  
I am White. No, you are Black. I am  
Black. No, you are White. I am White.  
No, you are Black. I am Black. No,  
you are White. I am White. No, you  
are Black. I am Black. No, you are  
White. I am White. No. I am Me.



Fig. 6: Emma Taonga, *Front page of Mixed Race Matters*, 2021.



In research, Black and mixed-Black populations are often treated as a homogeneous group, with little distinction between Black and mixed-race experiences<sup>29</sup>. However, within Black communities, there can be exclusion, particularly due to colourism—the privileging of lighter skin over darker skin. Rooted in Caribbean slavery, where lighter-skinned individuals, often the result of relationships between White slave owners and enslaved women, received more privileges than their darker-skinned counterparts.<sup>30</sup> This history still affects mixed-heritage individuals today, who might face rejection from both Black and White communities. Ethnicity lecturer Campion, in her article “You think you’re Black?” explores “horizontal hostility,” a phenomenon where members of a marginalized group, expected to have solidarity, direct hostility toward each other. In this case, lighter-skinned mixed-heritage individuals are seen as “too privileged” by darker-skinned Black peers, while also facing exclusion from White society.<sup>31</sup> Colourism intersects with gender, particularly for Black women. Historically, White men were placed at the top of the social hierarchy, while Black women were at the bottom. Tate explains that lighter-skinned women were (and still are) considered more feminine and sexually desirable, creating tensions over sexuality and femininity between dark- and light-skinned women within the Black community. This horizontal hostility is linked to patriarchy, and lighter-skinned mixed-race women may feel alienated, caught between beauty standards and sexual desirability.<sup>32</sup>

For Black and mixed-race men, horizontal hostility often manifests through verbal exchanges. According to sociology scholar Joseph-Salisbury, in peer groups, darker skin may be valued as a form of capital—a concept that refers to the social assets or advantages one possesses conferring higher social status or authenticity in Blackness.<sup>33</sup> Lighter-skinned men may also face exclusion, perceived as less authentically Black or too privileged.

Mixed-heritage individuals navigate the complexities of both racialized and predominantly White spaces, often feeling too privileged for some communities while not fully accepted in others, which further complicates their sense of identity and belonging. This external rejection is compounded by how their physical appearance is perceived in social spaces, as their bodies can simultaneously be sites of discrimination and markers of complex identities.

<sup>29</sup> Shirley A. Tate, *Black skins, Black Masks: Hybridity, dialogism, performativity*, (Routledge, 2017).

<sup>30</sup> Paulette M. Caldwell, ‘A hair piece: Perspectives on the intersection of race and gender’, *Duke Law Journal*, 2 (1991), <<https://doi.org/10.2307/1372731>> [accessed: 11 December 2024] pp. 365–396.

<sup>31</sup> Karis Campion, “You think you’re Black?” Exploring Black mixed-race experiences of Black rejection’, *Ethnic and racial studies*, 42:16 (2019), <<https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2019.1642503>> [accessed: 11 December 2024] pp. 196–213

<sup>32</sup> Shirley A. Tate, *Black skins, Black Masks: Hybridity, dialogism, performativity*, (Routledge, 2017).

<sup>33</sup> Joseph-Salisbury, Remi, ‘Black Mixed-Race Men, Perceptions of the Family, and the Cultivation of ‘Post-Racial’ Resilience’, *Ethnicities*, 18.1 (2018), 86–105.





I am a person of color.  
I am not half- "white".  
I am not half- "Asian".  
I am a whole "other".

☒ Other



I am a challenge  
for the simple mind  
to try to make sense of  
with labels, prejudice, & stereotypes.

Fig. 7: Kip Fulbeck, *The Hapa Project*, 2009–ongoing.

c. Cultural Perceptions of Mixed Heritage Body Image

While mixed-heritage individuals often benefit from a certain level of physical ambiguity that allows them to move between different social, cultural, and ethnic spaces, their physical appearance can also expose them to discrimination.

First, their ambiguous look can put people in the confusion, and they want to absolutely put them in a box. One of my interviewees mentioned that people keep asking her where she is “really” from, even when they just have met her.<sup>34</sup> This mirrors broader trends, where mixed-heritage individuals are pressured to adopt a singular identity, as Mettias notes.<sup>35</sup>

Secondly, these individuals can be fetishized due to their ethnicity. One interviewee described being objectified by men who romanticized her mixed background as “exotic”.<sup>36</sup> This experience points to Tate’s argument that this “exoticism”, or the perception of non-white traits, is often deemed more acceptable when mixed with white traits, tying into broader issues of White supremacy and beauty standards.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Interviewed by Jessie Orville, “Interviews for Visual Essay” (Glasgow, 18 October 2024).

<sup>35</sup> Matt Mettias, ‘Challenges and benefits of growing up mixed-race’, The Stanford Daily, 8 January 2020, in ‘stanforddaily.com’, < <https://stanforddaily.com/2020/01/08/challenges-and-benefits-of-growing-up-mixed-race/> > [accessed: 11 December 2024]

<sup>36</sup> Interviewed by Jessie Orville, “Interviews for Visual Essay” (Glasgow, 19 October 2024).

<sup>37</sup> Shirley A. Tate, *Black skins, black masks: Hybridity, dialogism, performativity*, (Routledge, 2017).

Finally, mixed-heritage individuals may also face beauty-related discrimination. One interviewee recalled being told, “Oh, you’re Thai? But you don’t look Thai!” and expressed feeling “not petite enough” compared to other girls in her Thai community.<sup>38</sup> These beauty standards are further reflected in workplace diversity issues. As scholars Koval and Rosette mention in their journal article, mixed-heritage individuals with natural, afro-textured, or curly hair often face bias in job recruitment, as these hair types are perceived as less professional and less attractive than straight hair.<sup>39</sup>

These biases stem from the opposition of Blackness and textured hair to “Whiteness, beauty, femininity, and professionalism”, reinforcing discriminatory standards.<sup>40</sup> Feminist scholars, like Candelario, argue that these standards significantly affect women’s and professionals’ experiences of identity.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Interviewed by Jessie Orville, “Interviews for Visual Essay” (Glasgow, 18 October 2024).

<sup>39</sup> Christy Zhou Koval and Ashleigh Shelby Rosette, ‘The natural hair bias in job recruitment’, *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 12:5 (2021), < <https://doi.org/10.1177/1948550620937937> > [accessed: 11 December 2024] pp. 741–750.

<sup>40</sup> Maxine Leeds Craig, ‘Race, beauty, and the tangled knot of a guilty pleasure’, *Feminist Theory*, 7:2 (2006), < <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464700106064414> > [accessed: 11 December 2024] pp. 159–177.

<sup>41</sup> Ginetta Candelario, ‘Hair race-ing: Dominican beauty culture and identity production’, *Meridians*, 1:1 (2000), < <https://doi.org/10.1215/15366936-1.1.128> > [accessed: 11 December 2024] pp. 128–156.

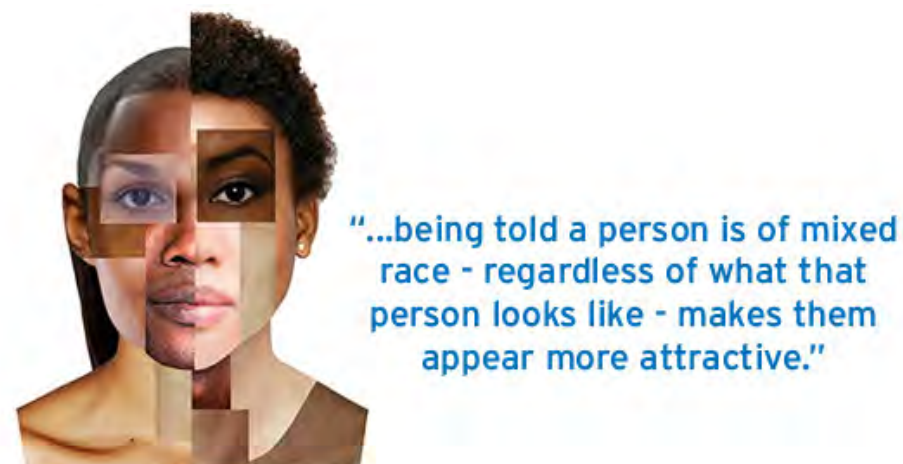


Fig. 8: Karl Bates, *Beauty is in the Ear of the Beholder Too*, 2016.



Fig. 9: Michael McMillan, Reproduction of a 1960 US Advertisement for Wigs, 2003.



Fig. 10: Adrian Piper, "Mythic Being" Series, 1973–1975.



The Halo Collective advocates for the acceptance of natural Black hair in professional and educational spaces, highlighting the discrimination mixed-heritage individuals face due to their appearance. Harvard psychology scholar Chiao found that mixed-heritage individuals' identities shift based on racial context.<sup>42</sup> Hair is a powerful tool for negotiating identity, as one of my interviewees illustrates: "Hair is a big part of who I am because it's always the first thing that people see."<sup>43</sup> In her research article on *biracial identity*, psychology and neuroscience assistant professor Gaither notes that mixed-heritage individuals "code-switch" to fit into different cultural environments.<sup>44</sup>

Many interviewees recalled straightening their hair in adolescence to meet beauty standards, as Twine discusses in *Brown Skinned White Girls*, where she argues that some girls of African descent constructed "White" identities before embracing their mixed heritage.<sup>45</sup> [Fig. 13] depicts a woman undergoing chemical hair straightening, concealing her discomfort behind a light smile, while her polished appearance contrasts with her fried, unnatural textured hair. This captures the emotional toll of conforming to Eurocentric beauty norms. As one interviewee shared, "I straightened my hair all throughout high school. It was like it was necessary, you know, to be pretty."<sup>46</sup> This reflects Lukate's argument that "blending" helps avoid drawing attention to cultural differences, underscoring the internal conflict mixed-heritage individuals face.<sup>47</sup>

To avoid misrecognition or hostility, mixed-heritage individuals may alter their hair to fit racial categories, as Champion notes.<sup>48</sup> Hairstyles like braids can help individuals perform their identity and connect with their heritage in an "authentic" way.

Hairstyles like braids help assert identity and connect with heritage. [Fig. 14] shows a Black British activist in Nigeria wearing African braids, smiling in a supportive environment. This evokes a sense of belonging and aligns with Lukate's view that hair is both a personal choice and a protest against Eurocentric beauty standards, asserting cultural pride and visibility.<sup>49</sup>

While mixed-heritage individuals navigate the complexities of their appearance across social spaces, the design of these spaces can either support or challenge their sense of belonging, shaping their experiences of inclusion or exclusion. This will be explored further in the next chapter.

<sup>42</sup> Joan Y., Chiao, and others, 'Priming race in biracial observers affects visual search for Black and White faces', *Psychological Science*, 17 (2006), < doi: 10.1111/j.1467-9280.2006.01717 > [accessed: 11 December 2024] pp. 387–392.

<sup>43</sup> Interviewed by Jessie Orville, "Interviews for Visual Essay" (Glasgow, 14 October 2024).

<sup>44</sup> Sarah E., Gaither, and others, 'Sounding black or white: Priming identity and biracial speech', *Frontiers in Psychology*, 6(2015), < https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2015.00457 > [accessed: 11 December 2024] pp. 1–11.

<sup>45</sup> France Winddance Twine, 'Brown skinned white girls: Class, culture and the construction of white identity in suburban communities', *Gender, Place & Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography*, 3:2 (1996), < https://doi.org/10.1080/09663699650021891 > [accessed: 11 December 2024] pp. 205–224.

<sup>46</sup> Interviewed by Jessie Orville, "Interviews for Visual Essay" (Glasgow, 19 October 2024).

<sup>47</sup> Johanna M. Lukate and Juliette L. Foster, "'Depending on where I am...' Hair, travelling and the performance of identity among Black and mixed-race women", *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 62:1 (2023), < 10.1111/bjso.12584 > [accessed: 11 December 2024] pp. 342–358

<sup>48</sup> Karis Champion, "'You think you're Black?' Exploring Black mixed-race experiences of Black rejection", *Ethnic and racial studies*, 42:16 (2019), < https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2019.1642503 > [accessed: 11 December 2024] pp. 196–213.

<sup>49</sup> Johanna M. Lukate and Juliette L. Foster, *Ibid*

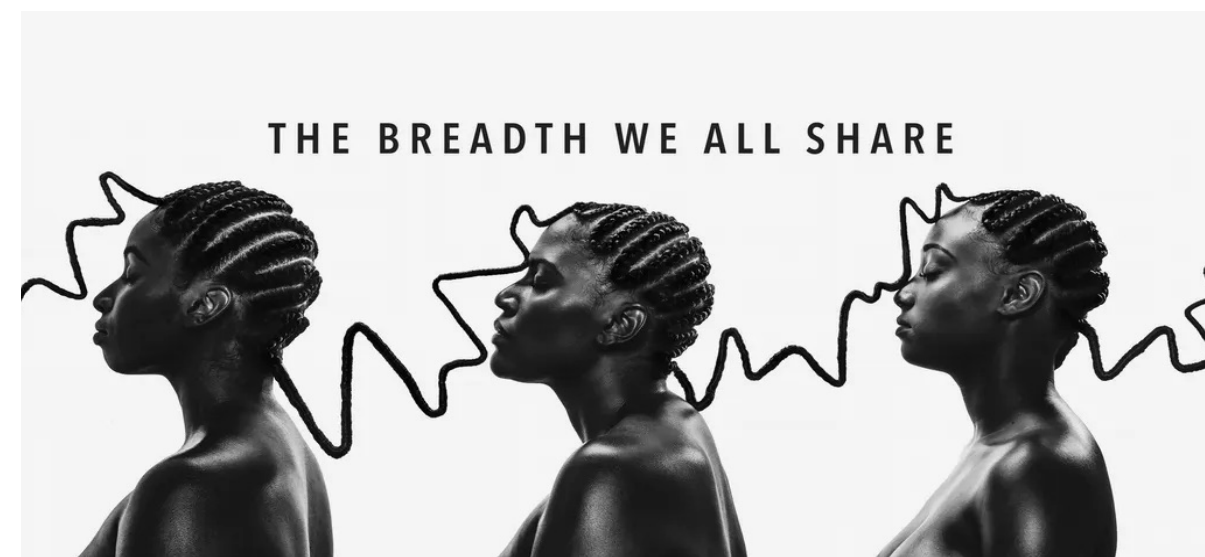


Fig. 11: Shani Crowe, *The Breath We All Share*, 2023.



Fig. 12: Nakeya Brown, *Hot Comb and Mitten*, 2014.



Fig. 13: Bill Gaskins, *No Name*, 2003.

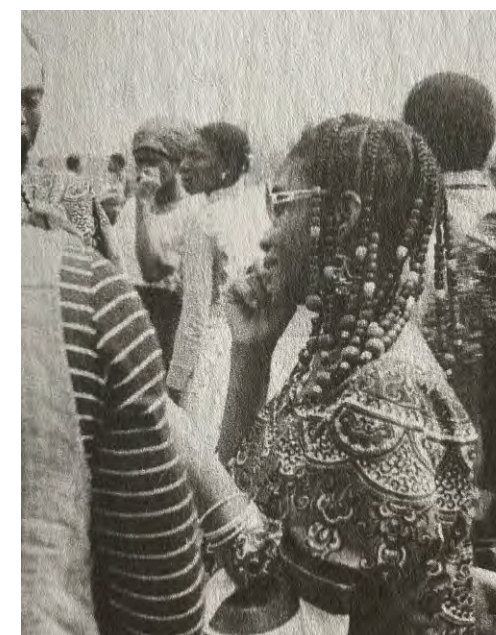


Fig. 14: Len Garrison, *Black British Activists at FEPAC in Nigeria, wearing 'traditional' hairstyles*, 1977.



## Chapter 3: Societal Spaces: Community Building or Design Exclusion?

In Chapter 2, I discussed how mixed-heritage individuals often face exclusion due to lack of representation and cultural belonging. Chapter 3 builds on this by exploring how thoughtful design elements—like warm lighting, diverse materials, and flexible layouts— can counteract exclusion, creating spaces that foster a sense of belonging and community. These design choices not only promote comfort but also represent diverse cultures, offering a sense of identity for people with mixed backgrounds.

### a. Designing Inclusive Community Centres

Creating inclusive environments for mixed-heritage individuals requires societal evolution. Peter Aspinall, a leading researcher of mixed race studies in the UK, has made progress, such as the introduction of mixed-heritage categories in census data.<sup>50</sup> Community centres are one promising solution, offering spaces where individuals can reconnect with their heritage and build supportive networks. For example, one interviewee shared that working in a Filipino restaurant allowed her to engage with Filipino culture and rediscover her roots.<sup>51</sup>

However, many cities, including Glasgow, lack such spaces, making it difficult for mixed-heritage individuals to find support or feel “valid enough” to join cultural groups.<sup>52</sup> While initiatives like the Being Mixed Society exist, they are not widespread. [Fig.15] illustrates this initiative, where members gather for a potluck. The warm, rich colours evoke the comfort of community building, and the happy expressions of the individuals capture the sense of belonging that such spaces foster. This reflects scholar Estrella’s argument in her literature review, that community centres can create connections through activities, promoting engagement and cultural immersion.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>50</sup> Peter J., Aspinall, ‘The conceptualisation and categorisation of mixed race/ethnicity in Britain and North America: Identity options and the role of the state’, *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 27:3 (2003), <[https://doi.org/10.1016/S0147-1767\(03\)00012-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0147-1767(03)00012-9)> [accessed: 11 December 2024], pp. 269–296.

<sup>51</sup> Interviewed by Jessie Orville, “Interviews for Visual Essay” (Glasgow, 29 October 2024).

<sup>52</sup> Interviewed by Jessie Orville, “Interviews for Visual Essay” (Glasgow, 31 October 2024).

<sup>53</sup> Michelle Paez, and others, ‘The Interior Design of Cultural Centers: The Effect on Users in Relation to Socialization, Youth, and the Arts’ review of The Original Copy: Moises Valcarcel Gonzalez, *Gonzalez Florida International University*, 5937, Spring 2017



Fig. 15: Peter Clark, *A Being Mixed Potluck*, 2022.



Fig. 16: Saudatu Bah, *The Taiwan-Reyhanli Centre for World Citizens – Community Activities*, 2024.



To make spaces truly welcoming, we must prioritize both safety and inclusivity. This helps mixed-heritage individuals feel more connected to their cultural roots. Paez states that community spaces should inspire confidence, embrace cultural diversity, and welcome all members.<sup>54</sup> Certain design features can enhance this environment. In addition to academic research, I conducted a survey on what makes a space feel welcoming, with common responses including “soft, warm lighting,” “comfortable seating,” and “soft furnishings”.<sup>55</sup> These elements reflect principles found in Paez work. For instance, warm lighting creates an atmosphere of comfort and security, reducing anxiety.

The Salt Lake City Public Library, as seen on [Fig.17], exemplifies this approach. Using culturally meaningful materials, such as natural wood or textiles from diverse traditions, can honour the community’s heritage. By thoughtfully selecting these elements, designers can cultivate a sense of belonging, ensuring the space is visually inviting and emotionally connected to individuals with mixed backgrounds.

The debate between universal and culturally specific design centres on how to create inclusive spaces. Marketing professors Patrick and Hollenbeck advocate for flexible, universal features—design elements that can adapt to a wide range of users and needs,<sup>56</sup> while Peinhardt and Storning emphasize the need for culturally reflective elements, or design features that honour and represent the cultural identities of specific communities.<sup>57</sup> In community centres, I believe both approaches can coexist—combining adaptable design with cultural features to foster inclusivity and belonging.

While community centres are key to fostering cultural reconnection, the principles of inclusive design extend beyond these spaces. Applied to schools, public areas, or beauty salons, these design choices can create environments where people from all backgrounds feel equally represented and supported.

<sup>54</sup> Michelle Paez, and others, ‘The Interior Design of Cultural Centers: The Effect on Users in Relation to Socialization, Youth, and the Arts’ review of The Original Copy: Moises Valcarcel Gonzalez, *Gonzalez Florida International University*, 5937, Spring 2017

<sup>55</sup> Survey by Jessie Orville, “Survey for Visual Essay” (Glasgow, 20 October 2024).

<sup>56</sup> Vanessa M. Patrick, and Candice R. Hollenbeck, ‘Designing for All: Consumer Response to Inclusive Design’, *Society for Consumer Psychology*, 31:2 (2019), <<https://doi.org/10.1002/jcpy.1225>> [accessed: 12 November 2024], pp. 360-381.

<sup>57</sup> Katherine Peinhardt, and Nate Storning, ‘Inclusive by design: Laying a foundation for diversity in public space’, *Projects for Public Spaces*, 1:4 (2019), <<https://www.pps.org/article/inclusive-by-design-laying-a-foundation-for-diversity-in-public-space>> [accessed: 09 November 2024], pp. 1-8.

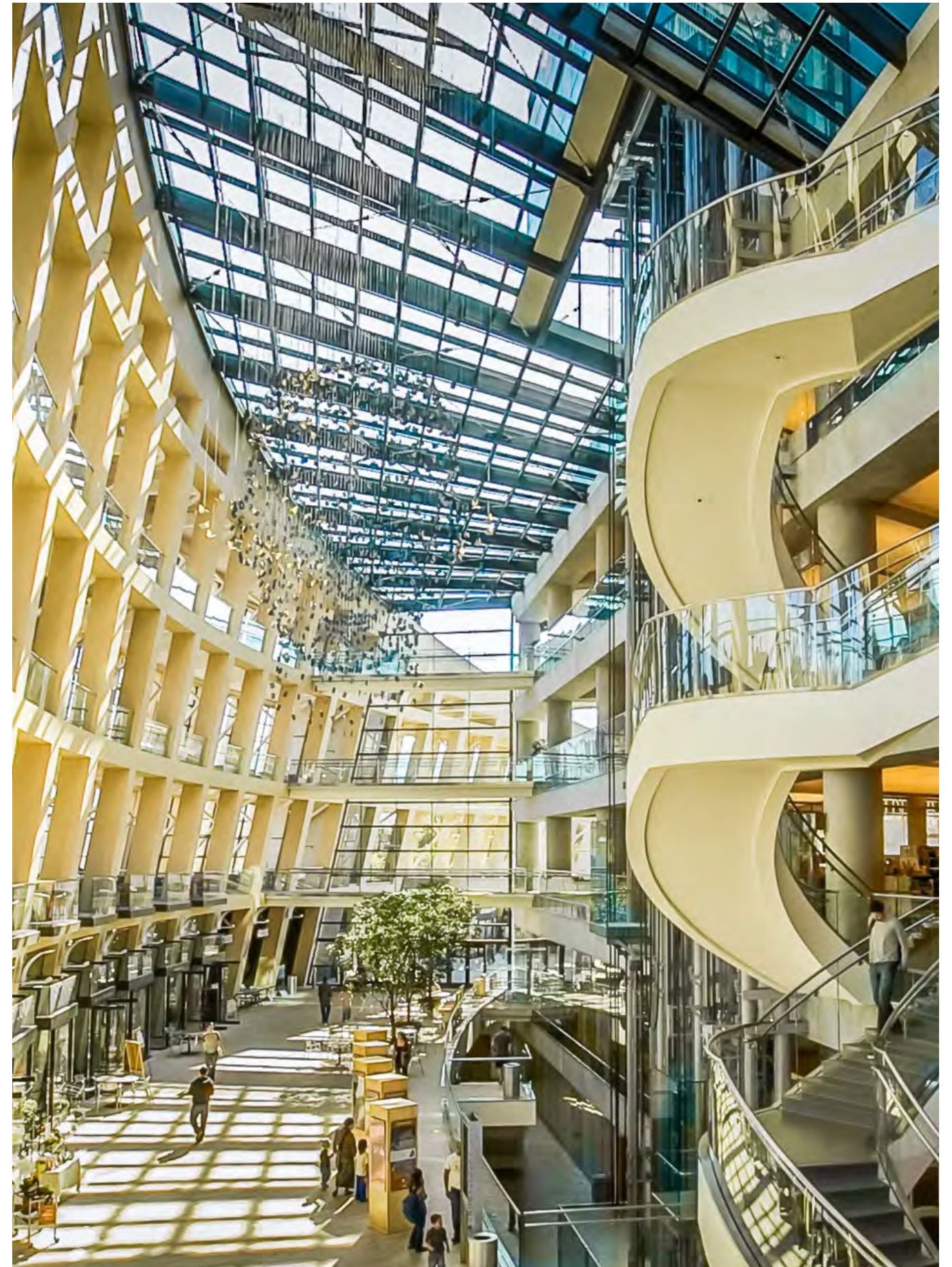


Fig. 17: Robert Dettman, The Salt Lake City Public Library, no date.



b. The Role of Design in Fostering Inclusion

Thoughtful design choices play a crucial role in creating inclusive spaces across environments, from schools and campuses to public parks. By integrating diverse elements, these spaces can help individuals from mixed-heritage backgrounds feel represented, fostering a sense of belonging.

Seating arrangements, such as round tables in classrooms, can make spaces more inclusive. Circular seating promotes collaboration and reduces hierarchies, creating a more egalitarian and emotionally connected environment.<sup>58</sup>

Psychology professor Gaither argues in her research article *Sounding Black or White* that design can transmit cultural meanings and celebrate multiculturalism. Incorporating art, flags, and signage that reflect diverse cultures reinforces the value of diversity,<sup>59</sup> making individuals feel represented and emotionally secure.<sup>60</sup> Flags on campuses, for example, are often used to symbolize a commitment to multiculturalism, helping students feel seen and included.<sup>61</sup>

However, some critics argue that these symbols can be seen as virtue signalling—actions primarily aimed at improving moral image rather than driving meaningful social change.<sup>62</sup> While scholars, like philosophy associate professor Westra, view these gestures as advancing moral progress and promoting positive values,<sup>63</sup> others, such as economics scholar Tosi and philosophy scholar Warmke, argue they may hinder real progress.<sup>64</sup>

In the context of universities, while flags signal diversity, institutions must go beyond symbolism by implementing concrete policies and initiatives that protect and uplift diverse communities, especially international and ethnically diverse students.

<sup>58</sup> Michelle Paez, and others, 'The Interior Design of Cultural Centers: The Effect on Users in Relation to Socialization, Youth, and the Arts' review of The Original Copy: Moises Valcarcel Gonzalez, *Gonzalez Florida International University*, 5937, Spring 2017

<sup>59</sup> Sarah Gaither, and others, 'Sounding Black or White: Priming identity and biracial speech', *Frontiers in Psychology*, 6 (2015), < <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2015.00457> > [accessed: 15 December 2024], p. 457.

<sup>60</sup> James H. Banning, and Sharon Bartels, 'A taxonomy: Campus physical artifacts as communicators of campus multiculturalism', *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*, 35:1 (1997), <<https://doi.org/10.2202/1949-6605.1032>> [accessed: 16 December 2024], p. 1-9.

<sup>61</sup> Rabia Faizan, 'Campus Design and Multicultural Competencies of Students: A Mixed Method Study to Examine the Relationship and Collect Design Guidelines for Multiculturalism on Campus' (Published PHD dissertation, Michigan State University, 2022), p. 80-112. vember 2024), pp. 1-8.

<sup>62</sup> Evan Westra, 'Virtue signaling and moral progress', *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, 49.2 (2021), <<https://doi.org/10.1111/papa.12187>> [accessed: 23 December 2024], pp. 177.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 55.

<sup>64</sup> Justin Tosi, and Brandon Warmke, 'Moral grandstanding', *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, 44.3 (2016), <<https://doi.org/10.1111/papa.12075>> [accessed: 23 December 2024], pp. 197-217.

Symbol of commitment or Virtue signalling?

Cultural Representation or Moral Exhibitionism?

Advances Moral Progress or Hinders Real Progress?

Celebration of Diversity or Self-Righteous Hypocrisy?

Symbol of commitment or Virtue signalling?

Cultural Representation or Moral Exhibitionism?

Advances Moral Progress or Hinders Real Progress?

Celebration of Diversity or Self-Righteous Hypocrisy?

Symbol of commitment or Virtue signalling?

Cultural Representation or Moral Exhibitionism?

Advances Moral Progress or Hinders Real Progress?

Celebration of Diversity or Self-Righteous Hypocrisy?

Finally, ensuring the representation of diverse individuals in public spaces can be achieved through thoughtful design choices. A flexible approach, combined with a commitment to actively listening to different cultural perspectives, is essential in fostering authentic cultural exchange within these spaces.<sup>65</sup> In a non-profit article, urban affairs journalist Lorinc emphasizes the importance of flexibility in public space design, especially when drawing from various cultural traditions, such as those of indigenous peoples.<sup>66</sup> Designers should aim to identify common patterns across cultures without being overly literal in their representations. For example, the designers of Leitchcroft Park, seen in [Fig. 18], researched the cultural traditions of the newcomers (Chinese, Persian, and South Asian communities), who make up 60 percent of the population in Thornhill. They noted the significance of water, curving pathways, and circles as symbols of harmony (feng shui), and incorporated these elements through water features and curved designs.

<sup>65</sup> Katherine Peinhardt, and Nate Storing, 'Inclusive by Design: Laying a Foundation for Diversity in Public Space', *Project for Public Spaces*, 2019, <<https://www.pps.org/article/inclusive-by-design-laying-a-foundation-for-diversity-in-public-space>> [accessed 16 December 2024].

<sup>66</sup> John Lorinc, 'How inclusive public spaces invigorate hyper-diverse cities' *TVO Today* (2016), < <https://www.tvo.org/article/how-inclusive-public-spaces-invigorate-hyper-diverse-cities> > [accessed 16 December 2024].



Fig. 18: Wendy Gold, *Inclusive Water Feature Design* in Toronto Leitchcroft Park, 2019.



To navigate the fine line between cultural celebration and appropriation, designers must collaborate with cultural communities to ensure authenticity. Cultural appropriation involves taking elements from a culture within an unequal power dynamic, often leading to its “cannibalization” and erasure.<sup>67</sup> While inclusive design seeks to represent diverse cultures, there is a risk of reducing cultural symbols to superficial decoration if not approached carefully. This theme is explored in [Fig.20] featuring a world map with cultural symbols, some from indigenous communities, set against a red background.

In community centres for mixed-heritage individuals, this challenge is especially relevant—how can design embrace diversity without exploitation? A collaborative approach with cultural communities allows designers to authentically reflect cultural diversity, staying true to the goal of inclusivity.

For example, Monument Lab’s collaborative process advocates for “commemorative justice” by integrating elements like plaques, statues, and signs that recognize marginalized histories, ensuring all community members feel seen.<sup>68</sup> Similarly, Paper Monuments, seen in [Fig.19] creates temporary participatory displays to highlight complex local histories.

Thoughtful design in public spaces can also promote economic equity. At Union Market in Mankato, Minnesota, flexible space allows cultural food vendors to share their heritage while reducing financial risks, fostering inclusivity for mixed-heritage individuals.<sup>69</sup>

Finally, inclusive design should extend to personal spaces, like beauty salons and makeup counters, which often uphold narrow beauty standards. These spaces can be crucial in ensuring mixed-heritage individuals feel represented and valued.



Fig. 19: Paper Monument, Participatory, Temporary Public Space Displays That Detail the (Often Difficult) Histories of a City or a Park, 2019.

<sup>67</sup> Hans Peter Hahn, ‘Cultural Appropriation. Power, Transformation, and Tradition’, in *Travelling Goods, Travelling Moods. Varieties of Cultural Appropriation (1850–1950)*, ed. by Christian Huck and Stefan Bauernschmidt (Campus Verlag, 2012), pp. 15–35 (p.19).

<sup>68</sup> Katherine Peinhardt , and Nate Storrington, ‘Inclusive by Design: Laying a Foundation for Diversity in Public Space’, *Project for Public Spaces*, 2019, <<https://www.pps.org/article/inclusive-by-design-laying-a-foundation-for-diversity-in-public-space>> [accessed 16 December 2024].

<sup>69</sup> *ibid*

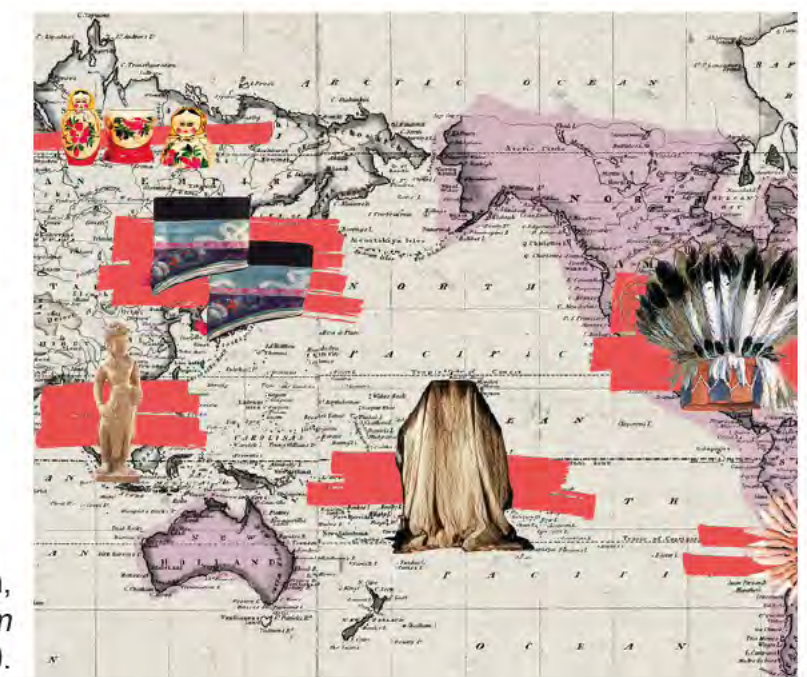


Fig. 20: Alice Morgan, *How We Can Learn From Appropriation in Design*, 2020.



c. Fighting Beauty Stereotypes: Guaranteeing Beauty Spaces for All

Mixed-heritage individuals often feel excluded from traditional beauty standards. This section explores how thoughtful design can challenge these narrow ideals and create more inclusive beauty spaces.

A common issue in retail is the lack of representation. My interviewees shared that finding makeup for their skin tones and suitable hairdressers was challenging.<sup>70</sup> Traditional salons often fail to address Afro-textured hair, while specialized Afro salons can alienate mixed-heritage clients. These experiences illustrate a broader phenomenon, as noted by content strategist Fisher, who argues that narrow targeting can “accidentally exclude” individuals. This highlights the need for including diverse design perspectives.<sup>71</sup>

In beauty spaces, design plays a crucial role in shaping a sense of belonging. Interviewees described traditional salons as “accommodating” but still felt excluded, as these spaces often cater to white beauty standards, reinforced by images of white women with straight hair. Similarly, according to the Black Pound Report in 2022, makeup retailers frequently offer limited product options, with 40% of Black female shoppers struggling to find suitable shades.<sup>72</sup> [Fig.21] and [Fig.22] highlight these issues, with shelves dominated by lighter shades and darker packaging misleadingly containing white foundation.

When designers focus only on accommodation, they risk “Level 1 design,”<sup>73</sup> which lacks empathy and may lead to consumer backlash.<sup>74</sup> Beauty spaces should not only accommodate mixed-heritage individuals but actively involve them in design, creating experiences that genuinely reflect their needs.

<sup>70</sup> Interviewed by Jessie Orville, “Interviews for Visual Essay” (Glasgow, Oct. & Nov. 2024).

<sup>71</sup> Tyler Fischer, ‘Gears of war boss explains why diversity and inclusivity are important in game design’, *Comicbook*, 2020, < <https://comicbook.com/gaming/news/gears-of-war-gears-5-xbox-one-pc-diversity/> > [Accessed 17 December 2024].

<sup>72</sup> Tanyel Mustafa, ‘Why is budget makeup still failing ethnically diverse people?’, *Metro*, 24 May 2022, in ‘metro.co.uk’, < <https://metro.co.uk/2022/05/24/why-is-budget-makeup-still-failing-ethnically-diverse-people-16407052/> > [Accessed: 17 December 2024].

<sup>73</sup> Michael Schulson, ‘The flawed logic that makes flying a nightmare for wheelchair users’, *Undark*, 13 March 2019, in ‘undark.org’, < <https://qz.com/1760770/why-airplanes-are-barely-accessible-for-wheelchair-users/> > [Accessed: 17 December 2024].

<sup>74</sup> Vanessa M. Patrick, and Candice R. Hollenbeck, ‘Designing for All: Consumer Response to Inclusive Design’, *Journal of consumer psychology* 31:2 (2021), < <https://doi.org/10.1002/jcpy.1225> > [Accessed: 17 December 2024] p. 360-381.

← Light skin shades      Light skin shades too →



Fig. 21: Tanyel Mustafa, *Sea of Beige*, 2022.



Fig. 22: Jessie Orville, *Fake Inclusivity*, 2024.



Fenty Beauty, as seen on [Fig.23], exemplifies inclusive design with its 'Beauty for All' approach. Founded by Rihanna, it offers fifty makeup shades to cater to a broad range of skin tones.<sup>75</sup> As a person of colour, Rihanna's involvement in the brand's creation highlights the importance of engaging the target audience in the design process. Fenty's success pushed other brands to expand their offerings, setting forty shades as the new industry standard.

Fenty Beauty also illustrates how inclusive design can drive cultural change. By challenging traditional beauty standards and meeting the needs of diverse skin tones, it shifts industry norms and highlights the power of inclusive design to transform societal narratives.<sup>76</sup> This example shows how design not only enhances individual experiences but also reshapes cultural perceptions, making spaces and products more representative of diverse communities.

While Fenty Beauty has made significant strides in inclusive design by offering a broad range of makeup shades, one could argue whether it fully exemplifies the concept of inclusivity. Though the brand addresses diverse needs, its approach still treats inclusivity as a solution to a problem, suggesting that more profound changes might be necessary. This aligns with Patrick and Hollenbeck's idea of "Level 2 design," where the focus is on improving user experience without fully integrating empathy or deeper cultural understanding.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>75</sup> Funmi Fetto, 'How Fenty Beauty changed the state of play in the industry', *Vogue*, 2020 < <https://www.vogue.co.uk/beauty/article/rihanna-fenty-beauty-diversity> > [Accessed: 17 December 2024].

<sup>76</sup> Ibid

<sup>77</sup> Vanessa M. Patrick, and Candice R. Hollenbeck, 'Designing for All: Consumer Response to Inclusive Design', *Journal of consumer psychology* 31:2 (2021), < <https://doi.org/10.1002/jcpy.1225> > [Accessed: 17 December 2024] p. 360-381.



Fig. 23: No Name, *Fenty: Golden Hour Pop-Up*, 2024.

The third and highest level of inclusivity, empowered success, is based on positive design principles that promote human flourishing and seamless inclusion.<sup>78</sup> This concept has a curb-cut effect, which means that designs that serve specific needs also benefit the broader community.<sup>79</sup> In beauty salons, improvements to both space design and services will benefit mixed heritage individuals, but also any individual with different needs.

Salons should offer products and services that cater to various hair types and textures, with adaptable tools and styling stations for all clients. Features like adjustable chairs, well-lit mirrors can make all clients feel more accommodated. Warm and natural lighting can create a welcoming environment and helps customers see their true skin tones and hair textures. Golden Hour-lit mirrors, as seen on [Fig.24], work well to achieve this. Service stations should be equipped with different tools – such as de-tangling brushes for curly hair – to target diverse needs. Inclusive imagery and art featuring diverse skin tones and hair textures can help break narrow beauty standards, making the space more welcoming and functional. Finally, multi-language signage should promote inclusivity. To combat the stigma surrounding Afro-textured hair and challenge Eurocentric beauty standards discussed in Chapter 2, beauty spaces must go beyond mere accommodation, actively confronting these norms and becoming hubs for social activism.

By embracing inclusive design in all environments, we can create spaces that genuinely reflect the diversity of people's experiences. As seen in beauty salons, thoughtful design can help foster an atmosphere where individuals from different backgrounds and abilities feel welcome. However, true inclusivity goes beyond surface-level aesthetics. For instance, ensuring accessibility for people with disabilities involves more than just physical access; it also requires attention to sensory accommodations. To be truly effective, inclusive design must address the full range of diverse needs, not just visual or spatial considerations.

<sup>78</sup> Pieter MA Desmet, and Anna E. Pohlmeier, 'Positive design: An introduction to design for subjective well-being', *International journal of design*, 7.3 (2013) < <http://www.ijdesign.org/index.php/IJDesign/article/view/1666> > [Accessed: 17 December 2024] p. 5–19.

<sup>79</sup> Vanessa M. Patrick, and Candice R. Hollenbeck, 'Designing for All: Consumer Response to Inclusive Design', *Journal of consumer psychology* 31:2 (2021), < <https://doi.org/10.1002/jcpy.1225> > [accessed: 12 November 2024 ] p. 360–381.



Fig. 24: No Name, *Fenty Golden Hour Mirror*, 2024.



## Conclusion

This visual essay explores the experiences of mixed-heritage individuals, connecting theoretical concepts with lived experiences through images and interviews. It reinforces the argument that while mixed-heritage individuals benefit from multiple cultures, they also face challenges of exclusion and identity negotiation. Inclusive design can empower them, helping them feel seen, celebrated, and secure.

Chapter 1 examines the richness of connecting with multiple cultures, the role of mixed-heritage individuals as cultural mediators, and how their ambiguous physical appearance allows them to navigate different cultural groups, explored through paintings, photographs, interviews, and scholarly research.

Chapter 2 delves into the challenges of cultural ambiguity, exclusion, and identity negotiation—particularly in relation to hair—through prints, photographs, performance art, and interviews. The visuals used in these chapters powerfully convey the emotional experiences of mixed heritage individuals,

Chapter 3 discusses the power of spaces in fostering belonging, using case studies of community spaces, campuses, and retail environments, while addressing debates on universal design, virtue signalling, cultural appropriation, and inclusivity. The visuals allow the reader to get a clear vision of these concepts and design examples.

As we reflect on the importance of inclusive design, we must consider how, as individuals and designers, we can make spaces more welcoming and empowering for people of all backgrounds. How can we, in our own environments, ensure that mixed-heritage individuals and others feel truly seen and valued?

In my interior design project, I am creating an inclusive beauty shop designed to welcome mixed-heritage individuals and others. As shown in [Fig.25], the space will feature inclusive elements such as lighting for all skin tones, diverse representations of skin and hair types, cultural patterns, and accessible features like elevators and quiet areas. The design will actively involve the community, integrating their input.

By embracing diverse identities, these spaces challenge narrow beauty standards, foster belonging, and empower marginalized communities. As a reminder of the transformative potential of inclusive spaces, I leave you with the words:

“Beauty shops could have been a hell of a place to ferment a revolution.” — Mixed Race Post-Race<sup>78</sup>

<sup>80</sup> Suki Ali, *Mixed-race, Post-race: Gender, New Ethnicities, and Cultural Practices* (Routledge, 2020), p. 45.

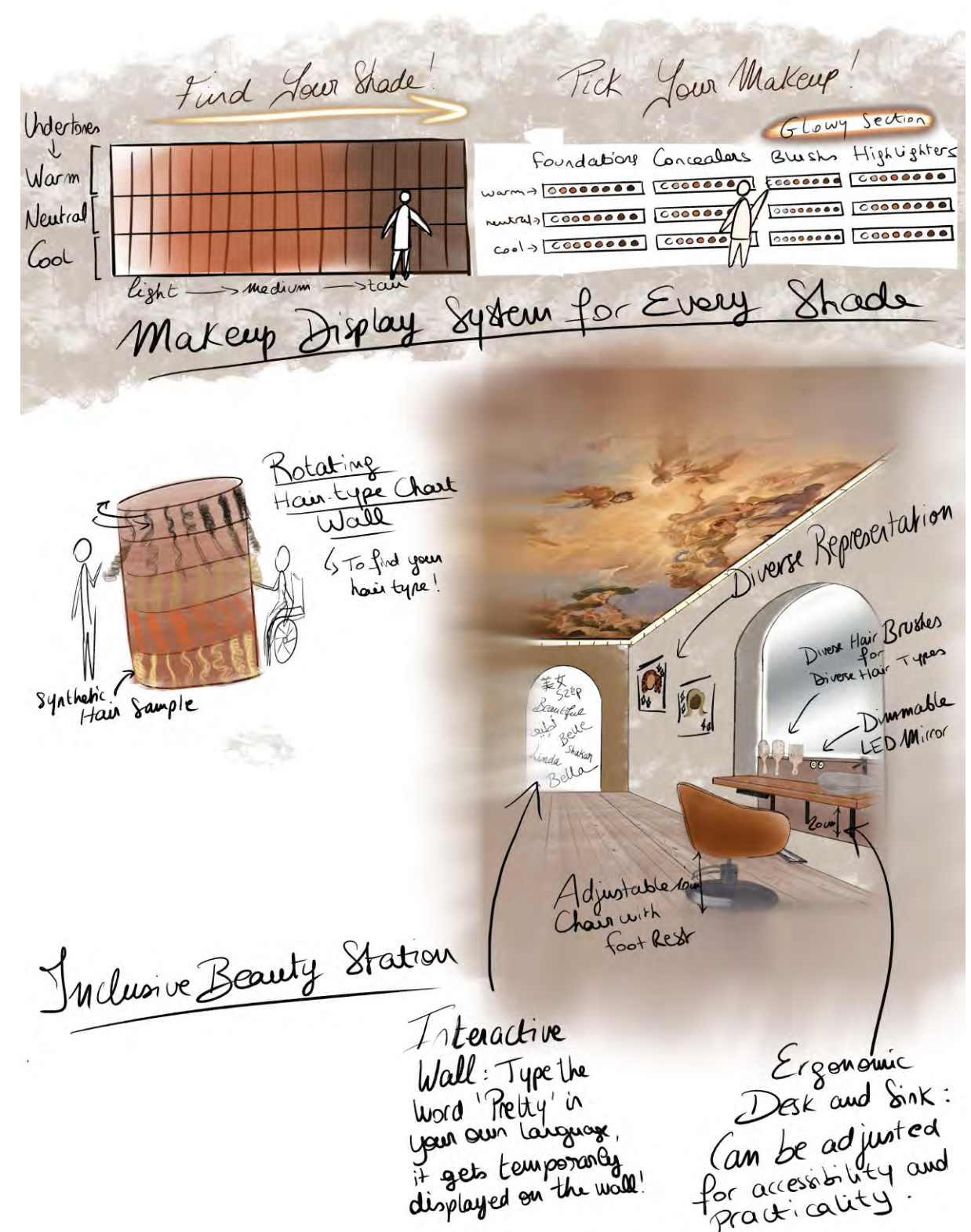


Fig. 25: Jessie Orville, *Shades Project*, 2025. Sketches. Personal Project.



## Bibliography

Ali, Suki, *Mixed-race, Post-race: Gender, New Ethnicities, and Cultural Practices* (Routledge, 2020).

Aspinall, Peter J., 'The Conceptualisation and Categorisation of Mixed Race/Ethnicity in Britain and North America: Identity Options and the Role of the State', *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 27:3 (2003), <[https://doi.org/10.1016/S0147-1767\(03\)00012-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0147-1767(03)00012-9)> [accessed: 11 December 2024], pp. 269–296.

Banning, James H., and Sharon Bartels, 'A Taxonomy: Campus Physical Artifacts as Communicators of Campus Multiculturalism', *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*, 35:1 (1997), <<https://doi.org/10.2202/1949-6605.1032>> [accessed: 16 December 2024], pp. 1-9.

Bruner, Edward M., 'Tourism in Ghana: The Representation of Slavery and the Return of the Black Diaspora', *American Anthropologist*, 98:2 (1996), <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/682888>> [accessed 11 December 2024], pp. 290–304.

Caldwell, Paulette M., 'A Hair Piece: Perspectives on the Intersection of Race and Gender', *Duke Law Journal*, 2 (1991), <<https://doi.org/10.2307/1372731>> [accessed: 11 December 2024], pp. 365–396.

Campion, Karis, "'You think you're Black?' Exploring Black Mixed-Race Experiences of Black Rejection', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 42:16 (2019), <<https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2019.1642503>> [accessed: 11 December 2024], pp. 196–213.

Candelario, Ginetta, 'Hair Race-ing: Dominican Beauty Culture and Identity Production', *Meridians*, 1:1 (2000), <<https://doi.org/10.1215/15366936-1.1.128>> [accessed: 11 December 2024], pp. 128–156.

Chiao, Joan Y., and others, 'Priming Race in Biracial Observers Affects Visual Search for Black and White Faces', *Psychological Science*, 17 (2006), <<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9280.2006.01717.x>> [accessed: 11 December 2024], pp. 387–392.

Craig, Maxine Leeds, 'Race, Beauty, and the Tangled Knot of a Guilty Pleasure', *Feminist Theory*, 7:2 (2006), <<https://doi.org/10.1177/1464700106064414>> [accessed: 11 December 2024], pp. 159–177.

Dabiri, E., *Don't Touch My Hair* (Penguin Books, 2019).

Davis, A. Y., 'Afro Images: Politics, Fashion, and Nostalgia', *Critical Inquiry*, 21:1 (1994), pp. 37–45.

Desmet, Pieter MA, and Anna E. Pohlmeier, 'Positive Design: An Introduction to Design for Subjective Well-Being', *International Journal of Design*, 7.3 (2013), <<http://www.ijdesign.org/index.php/IJDesign/article/view/1666>> [Accessed: 17 December 2024], pp. 5–19.

Duveen, Gerard, *Identity and Knowledge* (Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 259.

Faizan, Rabia, 'Campus Design and Multicultural Competencies of Students: A Mixed Method Study to Examine the Relationship and Collect Design Guidelines for Multiculturalism on Campus' (Published PHD dissertation, Michigan State University, 2022), pp. 80-112.

Fetto, Funmi, 'How Fenty Beauty Changed the State of Play in the Industry', *Vogue*, 6 April 2020 <<https://www.vogue.co.uk/beauty/article/rihanna-fenty-beauty-diversity>> [Accessed: 17 December 2024].

Fischer, Tyler, 'Gears of War Boss Explains Why Diversity and Inclusivity Are Important in Game Design', *Comicbook*, 2020, <<https://comicbook.com/gaming/news/gears-of-war-gears-5-xbox-one-pc-diversity/>> [Accessed 17 December 2024].

Gaither, Sarah E., and others, 'Sounding Black or White: Priming Identity and Biracial Speech', *Frontiers in Psychology*, 6 (2015), <<https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2015.00457>> [accessed: 11 December 2024], pp. 1–11.

Geertz, Clifford, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (Basic Books, 1973), pp. 3-30.

Hall, Stuart, 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora' in *Identity, Community, Culture and Difference*, ed. by Jonathan Rutherford (Lawrence and Wishart, 1990), pp. 222–237.

Hahn, Hans Peter, 'Cultural Appropriation. Power, Transformation, and Tradition', in *Travelling Goods, Travelling Moods. Varieties of Cultural Appropriation (1850–1950)*, ed. by Christian Huck and Stefan Bauernschmidt (Campus Verlag, 2012), pp. 15–35 (p.19).



Hill, Dominique C., and Durell M. Callier, 'Snip, Snip: Reflections on Hair, Loss, and Love', *Text and Performance Quarterly*, 34:4 (2014), < <https://doi.org/10.1080/10462937.2014.944565> > [accessed: 17 December 2024], pp. 404–408.

Hooks, Bell, 'Straightening Our Hair', in *Tenderheaded: A Comb-Bending Collection of Hair Stories*, ed. by J. Harris and P. Johnson (Pocket Books, 2001), pp. 111–116.

Joseph-Salisbury, Remi, 'Black Mixed-Race Men, Perceptions of the Family, and the Cultivation of 'Post-Racial' Resilience', *Ethnicities*, 18:1 (2018), pp. 86–105.

Kaufmann, Eric, *Whiteshift: Populism, Immigration, and the Future of White Majorities* (Penguin UK, 2020).

Koval, Christy Zhou, and Ashleigh Shelby Rosette, 'The Natural Hair Bias in Job Recruitment', *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 12:5 (2021), < <https://doi.org/10.1177/1948550620937937> > [accessed: 11 December 2024], pp. 741–750.

Lorinc, John, 'How Inclusive Public Spaces Invigorate Hyper-Diverse Cities', *TVO Today*, 23 June 2016, < <https://www.tvonews.org/article/how-inclusive-public-spaces-invigorate-hyper-diverse-cities> > [accessed 16 December 2024].

Lukate, Johanna M., and Juliet L. Foster, "Depending on Where I Am...' Hair, Traveling, and the Performance of Identity among Black and Mixed-Race Women,' *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 61.3 (2023), <<https://doi.org/10.1111/bjso.12584>> [accessed: 16 December 2024] pp. 425-438.

Mettias, Matt, 'Challenges and Benefits of Growing Up Mixed-Race', *The Stanford Daily*, 8 January 2020, in 'stanforddaily.com', <<https://stanforddaily.com/2020/01/08/challenges-and-benefits-of-growing-up-mixed-race/>> [accessed: 11 December 2024]

Motoyoshi, Michelle M., 'The Experience of Mixed-Race People: Some Thoughts and Theories', in *Adaptation, Acculturation, and Transnational Ties Among Asian Americans* (Fresno, California: Taylor & Francis, 1998), pp. 173–185.

Mustafa, Tanyel, 'Why Is Budget Makeup Still Failing Ethnically Diverse People?', *Metro*, 24 May 2022, in 'metro.co.uk', <<https://metro.co.uk/2022/05/24/why-is-budget-makeup-still-failing-ethnically-diverse-people-16407052/>> [Accessed: 17 December 2024].

Okazawa-Rey, Margo, Tracy Robinson, and Janie Victoria Ward., 'Black Women and the Politics of Skin Color and Hair', *Women & Therapy*, 6 (1987), <[https://doi.org/10.1300/J015V06N01\\_07](https://doi.org/10.1300/J015V06N01_07)> [Accessed: 17 December 2024], pp. 89–102.

Paez, Michelle, and others, 'The Interior Design of Cultural Centers: The Effect on Users in Relation to Socialization, Youth, and the Arts', *Review of Literature: The Original Copy: Moises Valcarcel Gonzalez* (Gonzalez, Florida International University, Spring 2017), pp. 10-19.

Patrick, Vanessa M., and Candice R. Hollenbeck, 'Designing For All: Consumer Response to Inclusive Design', *Journal of consumer psychology*, 31:2 (2021), <<https://doi.org/10.1002/jcpy.1225>> [Accessed: 17 December 2024], pp. 360-381.

Peinhardt, Katherine, and Nate Storrington, 'Inclusive by Design: Laying a Foundation for Diversity in Public Space', *Projects for Public Spaces*, 1:4 (2019), <<https://www.ppps.org/article/inclusive-by-design-laying-a-foundation-for-diversity-in-public-space>> [accessed: 09 November 2024], pp. 1-8.

Pohlmeyer, Anna E., 'How Design Can (Not) Support Human Flourishing', in *Positive Psychology Interventions in Practice*, ed. by Carmel Proctor (Springer, 2017), pp. 235-255.

Root, Maria PP., *The Multiracial Experience: Racial Borders as the New Frontier* (Sage, 1999).

Schulson, Michael, 'The Flawed Logic That Makes Flying a Nightmare For Wheelchair Users', *Undark*, 13 March 2019, in 'undark.org', <<https://qz.com/1760770/why-airplanes-are-barely-accessible-for-wheelchair-users/>> [Accessed: 17 December 2024].

Stephan, Cookie W., 'Mixed-Heritage Individuals', in *Racially Mixed People in America*, ed. by M. P. Root (Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1992), pp. 50–63.

Stephan, Walter, *The Social Construction of Race* (Routledge, 1992).

Tate, Shirley A., *Black Skins, Black Masks: Hybridity, Dialogism, Performativity* (Routledge, 2017).



Tosi, Justin, and Brandon Warmke, 'Moral grandstanding', *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, 44.3 (2016), <<https://doi.org/10.1111/papa.12075>> [accessed: 23 December 2024], pp. 197-217.

Twine, France Winddance, 'Brown Skinned White Girls: Class, Culture And the Construction of White Identity in Suburban Communities', *Gender, Place & Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography*, 3:2 (1996), <<https://doi.org/10.1080/09663699650021891>> [accessed: 11 December 2024], pp. 205–224.

Westra, Evan, 'Virtue signaling and moral progress', *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, 49.2 (2021), <<https://doi.org/10.1111/papa.12187>> [accessed: 23 December 2024], pp. 156-178.



## Appendix 1: Interviews for Visual Essay

This section presents the details of the 5 interviews conducted as part of the re-search, focusing on the views of mixed-heritage individuals about identity, belonging, and inclusive design. Before taking part, each participant completed a consent form, which is provided below, along with a summary of the questions asked.

### a. Consent Form

Jessie Orville, 4<sup>th</sup> Interior Design Student at the Glasgow School of Art

Email: [j.Orville1@student.gsa.ac.uk](mailto:j.Orville1@student.gsa.ac.uk)

Telephone: 0794 635 8842

#### Interview Consent Form within Design History and Theory

During my final year at the Glasgow School of Art, I will write a visual essay called 'Shades of identities: Growing up as a mixed heritage individual'.

The purpose of my visual essay is to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of individuals with mixed heritage in our society and regarding their identity.

Your insights will help shed light on the unique challenges and perspectives faced by mixed heritage individuals throughout different stages of life. This information will contribute to a broader discussion about inclusivity and representation within societies.

#### Purpose of the Interview

It is my intention to harness some commentary on your individual experiences and to also gather feedback on how being a mixed heritage individual may have affected your life.

The questions I will ask in the interview will include:

1. Can you share any memorable family practices or cultural traditions from your toddler years? How did they impact your sense of belonging?
2. What was your experience like discovering differences and similarities with your family? How did it make you feel?
3. School Years: How did you navigate friendships during your school years? Did your mixed heritage play a role in your relationships?
4. Can you describe any struggles you faced with your identity during your pre-teen/teen years? How did societal pressures, like straightening hair, affect you?
5. Teenage Years: In what ways did you explore self-expression through beauty and fashion during your teenage years? Did your mixed heritage influence your choices?

#### Confidentiality & Anonymity:

All participation is anonymous: the names will be changed to guarantee the anonymity.

All participation is confidential: During the project, the data will be stored and not shared to anyone. On completion of the essay/project, recordings and transcripts will be destroyed in line with current UK DATA PROTECTION.

Access to the final visual essay will be provided for anyone who wishes.

Please note, the participant remains the right to withdraw consent for use at any point during the study.

PARTICIPANT NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

PARTICIPANT SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE : \_\_\_\_\_



b. Interviews Questions

- 1. How has your mixed background shaped who you are?
- 2. What cultural influences from your family do you feel have impacted your identity?  
Have u ever felt different/distant from your family bc of your mixed culture?
- 3. Can you share a childhood moment that made you appreciate diversity?  
Can you share a childhood challenge towards your mixed identity?
- 4. How do you celebrate your cultures? Does it help you understand yourself better?  
If yes, how?  
Do you ever struggle with the feeling of belonging?
- 5. How has social media affected how you see yourself and beauty, especially with your mixed background?  
How was your secondary school experience/interaction with peers? Any remarks/ challenges towards your culture?
- 6. What challenges have you faced in accepting yourself because of your mixed her-itage? What did you do to accept yourself better?
- 7. How important is community support for you as you grow in your personal and professional life?
- 8. Have you ever faced stereotypes or discrimination at work/uni/romantic life? How did you deal with that?
- 9. What do you do to embrace your identity and promote inclusivity in your life?
- 10. What are your hopes for a more inclusive society, and how do you want to help make that happen?
- 11. What is your experience with hair salons?
- 12. What is your experience with makeup?
- 13.What are your challenges right now? What would you need (assistance with)?

Appendix 2: Survey

I conducted a survey on the social media Instagram, asking participants, ‘What makes you feel safe and welcome in a space?’ with a warning that responses would be anonymously used in my academic essay. A total of 24 people participated, and here are their responses:

Factor	Frequency
Lighting	15
Comfort	8
Space	6
People	6
Aesthetics	5
Direction/Clarity	2

Lighting (specifically warm, ambient, or natural lighting) was the most commonly mentioned factor for making a space feel welcoming and safe. Comfort (including seating and soft materials) was also frequently mentioned, high-lighting the importance of physical comfort. Space and People were mentioned with equal frequency, this points to a balance between physical environment and human presence. Aesthetics such as colours, plants, and scents also contributed to a welcoming at-mosphere. Direction/Clarity was mentioned fewer times but still considered important.