

# DIVERSITY BY DESIGN

## INTRODUCTION

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.

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

**As stated by Gerbner and Gross, "representation in the fictional world signifies social existence, absence means symbolic annihilation" (1976; 178).**



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.



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.

Furthermore, the figures produced are of finite quantity and are therefore limited; it is important for this collection to be expanded on further by future designers so to enrich and further diversify the catalogue of accessible human figures.

## 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.



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

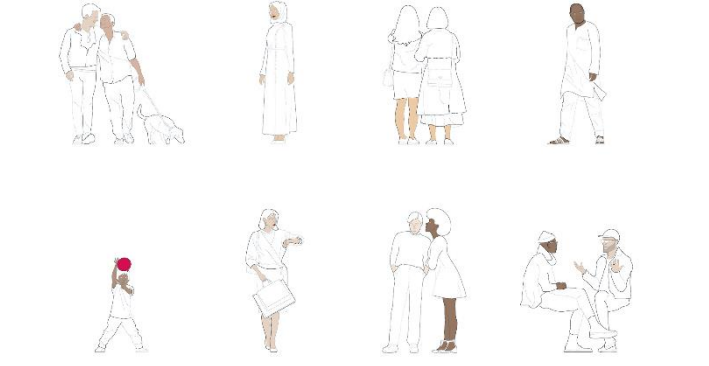


Figure 1.4. Selected figures produced by Josh Haynes, with a primary focus on 'Ethnicity' and 'Marriage/Civil Partnerships'.



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'.

## 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]

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