

Non-graphic Graphic Design

WRITTEN RESPONSE

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Methods of Contextualizing

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Our exploration on recontextualizing a medium we commonly use has brought a lot of reconsiderations when it comes to designing for disabled people. As a designer, taking for granted in a visually dominated context, it was an interesting challenge to graphically design without graphics for the visually impaired, a non-graphic graphic design practice. Much discussion with the group members also challenged the responsibility as a designer not to exclude and discriminate graphic design from the visually impaired. The practice should and can be taken further with this demographic into consideration. Without the graphic elements, I was forced to explore different senses such as smell, touch, hearing, and taste. These non visual elements are how blind people see things and open up new possibilities of graphic design forms.

The other challenge was to forget every instinct I had when approaching the solutions I would usually come up with and rethink it from the "eyes" of the blind, rethinking communication tools from scratch with totally different elements than visual. Like the initial idea of making an underground map, thinking it would be convenient for the blind to use in a pinch during commute, turned out to be completely useless based on our interview with our target user.

Annotated Bibliography

Wong, A. (ed.) (2020) Disability Visibility: First-Person Stories From the Twenty-First Century. New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group

Alice Wong's book, "Disability Visibility", contained first-hand stories from the often overlooked experience of disabled and neurologically diverse people. Most people experience a great deal of shame and discrimination as a result of their disabilities. At the same time, the society of able-bodied people has as much rights and dignity as disabled people. This particular reading was instrumental in our project because it gave the medium we use a purpose to communicate about. The context of shame, suffering, and discrimination of disabled people who internally are the same as anyone else moved us to want to raise awareness of this injustice and create empathy from sighted people. We thought, by raising and celebrating the lives of blind people in particular in a form where they and sighted people can interact with will bridge communication between them. This

also particularly revealed the political side of accessible design, we need to realize our responsibility as designers, who we are excluding and including when we design something.

McLeod, L. (2017), 'Ep 3: Assisted Technology', Disability Visibility Project [Podcast]. 1 October 2017. Available at: <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ual/detail.action?docID=6073786> (Accessed 10 February 2025)

The Disability Visibility Project Podcast hosted by Alice Wong with several other disabled people as well as caretakers was quite insightful. The podcast poured out the sentiments they felt about the accessibility of assistive technology for communication. These tools in their opinion should be affordable for all who need it due to its importance. It revealed the struggle it takes for disabled and neurodiverse people to be a reckoned force in a working society. The particular thing that made me realize about assisted technology, is that it is the only way disabled and neurodiverse people can communicate. This crucial tool reframes my understanding of the tools these people use from a mere tool to get by life, but something much more. It is a tool of self manifestation, self actualization, a tool to express ideas and perspectives otherwise lost in a visually able environment. In the modern era today, technology plays a crucial role in enriching the social fabric with more voices that could potentially chip into humanity's progress.

Grewal I., Joy S., Lewis J., Swales K., Woodfield K. (2002). 'Disabled for life?': Attitudes towards, and experiences of, disability in Britain. Corporate Document Services: Leeds, UK.

Forming the context, these are two of the references we compiled. The first one, a report of research carried out by the National Centre for Social Research on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions explored general attitude towards disability in Britain.

"and then your parents when you see somebody in a wheelchair, walking along as a kid with your parents saying don't stare, don't stare, it's not good to stare, and so it's this disconnection that makes things [difficult] generally people, when you become young adults or adults, it's an awkwardness, it's not necessarily they're not normal but it's an awkwardness of I don't really know how to approach this person so therefore I will steer clear of the situation and I think it's a personal awkwardness rather than I think that this person is abnormal. And it all stems from a lack of interaction." (p.47)"

The study reveals how much of the public in Britain have a rather apathetic, even discriminatory response toward the disabled. This is caused by bad parenting and bad responses from the parents that transferred generational. Parents treating disabled people as "different", like overblown reactions on particular disabilities, will signal to children that they are different and need to be treated differently. This creates an environment that makes it harder for disabled and neurodiverse people to fit in the social mold. It just comes to say how important it is to create campaigns or examples on how to treat people with V.I. with the same dignity we give anyone else.

RNIB, Guide Dogs, and TPT (2022). VI lives - an in-depth understanding of the experiences of people living with vision impairment (VI) in the UK. London, UK: RNIB, Guide Dogs, TPT.

Furthermore, a survey by RNIB, Guide Dogs, and TPT, in the context of V.I., found that 769 blind and partially sighted people aged 13 and over, 38% had experienced discrimination. More generally, people with V.I. may be **more likely to experience discrimination** than people with other disabilities. This reality rather paints a pretty bad picture of a good amount of people with V.I.. There is a substantial amount of bad experiences suffered by them which most people don't know about. The survey confirms the discrimination experienced, and the need to bring empathy by clearing up the prejudice built by unhealthy responses parents teach unknowingly to their children. We think this could be done by explicitly showing the life, joys and struggle of V.I. people in its entirety.

Clarke, R. (2021) Clarke Reynolds. Available at: <https://www.windowsofthesoul.art/clarke-reynolds> (Accessed: 28 February 2025).

There are some example artists using the medium of painting/poster utilizing braille. One such artist is Clarke Reynolds, a blind artist suffering from Retinitis pigmentosa. Reynolds uses colorful braille in his paintings. His works use huge braille sizes and color codes to help sighted people to be able to learn braille. His approach of using artworks to talk to two different people at once is something beautiful to see. He got the illness that blinded him at the age of 6. He can see in a very limited way, as he puts it, seeing from many tiny holes. He remembers color and he currently sees them not as vibrant. His resilience in creating his artworks inspired us to make the poster. Connecting people through art, and mutual understanding by learning from each other's languages and perspectives.

Its Nice That (2018) Democratising art: how the art world is opening up to blind and partially sighted visitors. Available at: <https://www.itsnicethat.com/features/brenda-sjahrial-blindness-art-270718> (Accessed: 28 February 2025).

The article discusses breaking conventions between art galleries and the blind. The idea of democratising art by way of including blind and partially sighted visitors to painting inspired us to do the same. Blind people have the same emotions and expect the same things in art as any other, the difference is the method they use to enjoy the visual. Just like the hair installation mentioned, textures make a rich experience for people who can't see the artwork in all its glory. Interacting with an installation solely by touch opens up a whole new dimension of how an artwork can be enjoyed. Upon further reflection, to me it just comes to show how powerful art, or anything else in that matter, can get once it is democratized to a wider, more diverse audience. Blind people do enjoy the visual they touch, then visualize in their minds, but the new perspective it adds on how the texture feels, every groove and bumps, simply adds to the experience of the art in a new enriching way.

