



‘Gobbledygook’ Sculptures created using the letters in the word gobbledygook

‘Gobbledygook’

Making Dyslexia Visible

What do Albert Einstein, Cher, Tom Cruise, Jamie Oliver, Richard Branson and Steven Spielberg all have in common? They are all dyslexic and yet this hasn't held them back from incredible achievements and accomplished careers. However, despite their openness about their disability, there is still much social stigma around the condition. This can manifest as negative perceptions, misconceptions and prejudice, bringing emotional and practical difficulties for individuals with dyslexia which may even lead to withdrawing from society or developing mental health issues, further distancing them from neurotypical people.

My own story

I was diagnosed with severe dyslexia in secondary school and struggled to read until I received specialist tuition. Consequently, my work predominantly uses visual language to convey my ideas. I still struggle with the written word.

After studying at Newcastle School of Art, I was employed as a creative for the London advertising agency CDP at the age of 19. My concepts received industry awards from D&AD, the Cannes Advertising Festival and the Creative Circle. I worked on iconic campaigns, including posters for Benson & Hedges cigarettes, Hamlet cigar TV ads and The Economist magazine, to name but a few.

Originally studying photography at 16, I returned to it in my 30s as an advertising photographer, transforming campaign ideas into images. My personal work also gained recognition and awards from Creative Review, the Association of Photographers and the

Royal Photographic Society. In 2022, I decided to focus on art and completed my MA in Fine Art while working on my sculptures and collaborating with other artists.

While studying, for the first time I found the courage to start talking about my dyslexia and my inability with language. I began looking for creative, positive solutions to help other dyslexics and from this came the Gobbledygook Project.

Dyslexia

Key Facts

- What it is: a learning difference that mainly affects reading, writing and spelling.
- How common: around 1 in 10 people have dyslexia, 4% severely.
- Brain differences: dyslexic brains process language differently, often using alternative pathways.
- Genetics: dyslexia often runs in families.

Strengths

- Creative and original problem-solving.
- Strong visual-spatial thinking (3D and big-picture skills).
- Good verbal reasoning and storytelling abilities.
- Innovative approaches in art, design and business.

Challenges

- Difficulty with reading fluency, spelling and word recognition.
- Trouble with short-term memory and sequences.
- Extra effort needed for reading and writing which can cause fatigue.

What is the Gobbledygook Project?

A project designed to make dyslexia visible. It's a series of 3-metre-high red 'Gobbledygook' sculptures, created using the letters in the word gobbledygook. The word, hidden within the tangled typography, will appear in significant public spaces to stimulate discussion and active engagement by neurotypical and neurodivergent audiences alike.

These thought-provoking sculptures will encourage audiences to embrace the innovative ways neurodivergent individuals interpret the world. Characterised by fused and intertwined letters, these intricate artworks invite viewers to actively engage with the pieces. This work showcases the creative potential inherent in diverse cognitive processes, sparking meaningful conversations about how neurodivergent thinking enriches society.

These artworks inspire and encourage a shift in perception, recognising dyslexia not as a challenge to be overcome but as a source of creative strength and original thought. The impact of the artwork goes beyond aesthetic appreciation, fostering introspection and dialogue about the value of cognitive diversity in driving cultural and intellectual growth.

Further events

Alongside the sculptures there are opportunities for host venues to create events that would add significantly to the conversation surrounding dyslexia and cognitive diversity:

- Hosting a lecture on neuroscience, complemented by workshops focusing on practical strategies.
- Panel discussions on how education is evolving to become more inclusive.
- Seminars or case studies exploring how commercial organisations can embrace cognitive diversity to their advantage, particularly as we step into the AI revolution.
- Creative sessions, such as storytelling workshops with Q&A sessions.
- Networking events and support group meetings.

Badge



A small pin badge to be worn: Making Dyslexia Visible.

This is a badge but not a label, something that is a statement and to be proud of. It is more than an emblem; it represents identity and the path travelled. It isn't superficial, it is a powerful declaration of how those with dyslexia think.

It's intention is for it to be worn with pride—not because it defines dyslexia, but because it reflects the strengths of those who are dyslexic. It is also a powerful symbol of support.

Images and other versions of Gobbledygook sculptures

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Working with existing champions

The project may also work in tandem with organisations and individuals already championing the understanding of dyslexia, from the British Dyslexia Association's training programmes and e-learning modules to Jamie Oliver's 'Dyslexia Revolution'. The project has the potential to become a social and cultural movement. The wearing/use of emblematic versions of the Gobbledygook are a powerful representation of dyslexia, evoking an emotional response and acting as a symbol for people to signal their support.

How will this happen?

Following an initial meeting, the Arts Council have signalled their willingness to fund the project (i.e. the creation and provision of the sculptures), once evidence of support is provided.

At this stage I am looking for letters of intent from a small number of premium institutions who recognise the benefits of hosting the sculpture(s), to allow me to complete the funding application process.

I am also seeking support from individuals, relevant authorities, and educational institutions to promote the locations and events, specifically in areas of social deprivation, to highlight the problem at both ends of the social spectrum.

Who else will be involved?

I am actively seeking support from people in positions of power or influence by approaching personalities, business leaders, academics and politicians to ask them to support and add more weight to the project by displaying badges, providing locations or offering their influence to show support and to make a statement.

Project Team

Jon Raine: Artist and Maker.

Key Team Members:

Louise Howell (Finance Manager / Production Coordinator), Nicki Shepherd (Project Manager), Rachael Shepherd (Researcher / Writer).

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Overall time frame

Sculptures constructed during 2026, public display 2026-2027.