

‘Gobbledygook’: Making Dyslexia Visible



Formed from the letters of the word “gobbledygook.” The typography is fused and intertwined so the word is hidden within its own structure.

‘Gobbledygook’ is a public art project that seeks to transform how society understands dyslexia — shifting the narrative from deficit to strength, from stigma to visibility, and from isolation to collective recognition. At its core, the project is about mental health, identity and the societal value of cognitive diversity.

Dyslexia affects approximately one in ten people, with around 4% experiencing it severely. Despite its prevalence, it remains widely misunderstood. Too often it is framed solely in terms of difficulty: problems with spelling, reading fluency, sequencing or short-term memory. For many individuals, especially within traditional education systems, this framing can lead to shame, lowered self-esteem and a sense of inadequacy. The cumulative emotional impact can be profound. Dyslexia is not a mental health condition, yet the stigma and misunderstanding surrounding it can contribute to anxiety, depression and withdrawal from participation.

Gobbledygook addresses this gap between lived experience and public understanding.

The project consists of a series of three-metre-high red sculptures formed from the letters of the word “gobbledygook.” The typography is fused, layered and intertwined. The word is present but obscured. Viewers must move around the sculpture to decipher it, experiencing language as something spatial and effortful rather than instantly legible. In this physical act of decoding, audiences momentarily encounter what it means to navigate language differently.

The word “gobbledygook” is deliberately chosen. It is commonly used to describe language that is confusing or incomprehensible. For many dyslexic people, written language can feel exactly that way. By monumentalising the word, the project reclaims it. Confusion becomes structure. Frustration becomes form. What appears chaotic reveals coherence when approached differently.

The work is deeply personal. I was diagnosed with severe dyslexia at secondary school and struggled significantly with reading and writing. Written language was a barrier, and like many dyslexic students, I internalised the belief that difficulty equated to lack of intelligence. Over time, I developed a visual language to compensate — a way of thinking in images, composition and

spatial relationships rather than text. That visual orientation shaped my career in advertising and photography, leading to recognition from organisations such as D&AD, Cannes and the Creative Review.

However, for much of my life I avoided speaking openly about dyslexia. The stigma remained internalised. It was only while completing my MA in Fine Art that I began addressing it directly in my practice. *Gobbledygook* emerged from that turning point — from the recognition that silence perpetuates misunderstanding.

The mental health dimension of dyslexia is rarely discussed publicly. In education systems that prioritise speed, spelling accuracy and written performance, dyslexic students often expend significantly more cognitive energy simply to keep pace. This sustained effort can result in fatigue and heightened stress. Without early identification or supportive environments, young people may disengage from learning altogether. Over time, repeated experiences of perceived failure can erode confidence and identity.

By making dyslexia visible in public space, *Gobbledygook* interrupts this narrative. Visibility reduces shame. Public recognition challenges stigma. When a cognitive difference is acknowledged and respected within cultural space — rather than hidden within private struggle — its emotional burden shifts.

The sculptures function as catalysts for dialogue. Installed in prominent civic or institutional locations, they invite both neurodivergent and neurotypical audiences to engage. The scale and bold red colour demand attention; the complexity invites curiosity. Viewers must slow down. They must look carefully. In doing so, they experience a small shift in perspective: comprehension requires effort. This embodied encounter fosters empathy, not through explanation but through experience.

Alongside the sculptures, the project proposes public programming including lectures on neuroscience, panel discussions on inclusive education, seminars for business leaders exploring the advantages of cognitive diversity, and creative workshops that celebrate alternative ways of thinking. These events extend the artwork into social practice. They connect art, education and enterprise, emphasising that embracing dyslexia is not only compassionate — it is strategically intelligent.

Societally, the benefits of reframing dyslexia are significant.

When dyslexic thinking is embraced rather than marginalised, innovation flourishes. Dyslexic individuals are often strong visual-spatial thinkers, capable of seeing patterns and connections others may overlook. Many demonstrate entrepreneurial instincts, narrative fluency and big-picture reasoning. When education systems and workplaces adapt to include diverse cognitive styles, problem-solving capacity expands.

Greater inclusion also reduces mental health strain. When individuals no longer feel compelled to mask or hide their difference, anxiety decreases and participation increases. Early validation and visible role models help dismantle the association between struggle and inadequacy. A culture that recognises different forms of intelligence supports resilience and wellbeing across communities.

There are economic implications as well. A society that nurtures diverse cognitive strengths benefits from broader leadership representation, more inventive design solutions and greater adaptability in the face of technological change. As artificial intelligence reshapes industries, human capacities such as lateral thinking, conceptual imagination and integrative reasoning become increasingly valuable — capacities often associated with dyslexic cognition.



Gobbledygook also includes a small red pin badge reading “Making Dyslexia Visible.” The badge is not a label; it is a declaration. It allows individuals to signal pride and solidarity. It invites allies to show support. In its simplicity, it extends the project beyond the sculpture into everyday life, transforming visibility into a shared cultural gesture.

Ultimately, this project argues that cognitive diversity is not a niche issue but a societal asset. By shifting perception from deficit to strength, we alleviate unnecessary psychological burden and unlock creative potential. We move from a model of remediation to one of recognition.

Gobbledygook transforms a word associated with confusion into a monument to difference. It makes visible what has often been hidden. It opens space for conversation where silence once existed. And in doing so, it seeks to improve not only awareness, but wellbeing — for individuals, for institutions and for society as a whole.

The question at the heart of the work is simple:

What changes — culturally, economically and emotionally — when we stop asking dyslexic people to adapt to the system, and instead allow the system to recognise the value of how they think?

Contact Details

Jon Raine
Email: gobbledygook@jonraine.com
Phone: +447793962211