

Title: Representation, archive and activism. How the information we receive in our everyday lives influences the way in which we see ourselves and others.

Student Number: 1707770

BA course title: Fine Art

Word count: 2236 Words

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Module: Research in practice (ADAD5004)

Representation, archive and activism.

How the information we receive in our everyday lives influences the way in which we see ourselves and others.

The proposal for next year's dissertation is a continuation of my previous essay *'The anti-isms:*

A new art and social movement', an essay that explored the ways in which art and media can be

used as a tool for social change.

The agenda of the 'anti-isms' will be a political and inquisitive one, of counter-acting

inequality and the established canon. No more white, upper class males representing

upper class male needs

The dissertation and proposal will follow the criteria and critical approach of the anti-isms, understanding that what we give our attention or 'our time to is what we give our power to or take from' (Olle, 2019). The research will be focusing, not only on a critique and analysis of the current available media, entertainment, literature and curriculums in education, but it will also focus on projects, artists and literature that are creating change by giving a voice to the people whose voices are usually silenced or dismissed.

The article will also analyse the ways in which the outdated and exclusionist information, depictions, representations (or therefore lack of), affect people's perception of themselves and others. (To further reference areas of the research please refer to Annex 1)

The dissertation will be divided into 3 chapters: Representation, Archive and Activism; each chapter will analyse the topics in relation to the media aforementioned.

REPRESENTATION

This chapter will assess the different ways in which representation and inclusivity are monitored in media, literature and the national education curriculum and how effective those methods are.

This research will not only be an evaluation on how inclusive the available materials are, but an investigation into how the media available, that is considered inclusive, represents those groups that are often dismissed. This investigation will also look into ways in which the bodies, psyche and personalities of individuals and groups are reinterpreted, manipulated and shown on those mediums when the narratives created are biased.

The analysis will be structured by audience: children and adults. It will then be analysed by marginalised groups or groups that are often misrepresented or dismissed altogether: POC (People of Colour), BAME (Black and Minority Ethnicities), disabled people, LGBTQI+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersexual and other identities), sex-workers, homeless people, women and elderly people. This research will be accomplished through the lenses of intersectional feminism, taking into account the multiple identities that individuals

can have within their identity. For example: a person from an ethnic minority might identify as their race, their ethnic identity, the place where they grew up... they might also have other identities such as: disabled, queer, female, transgender...

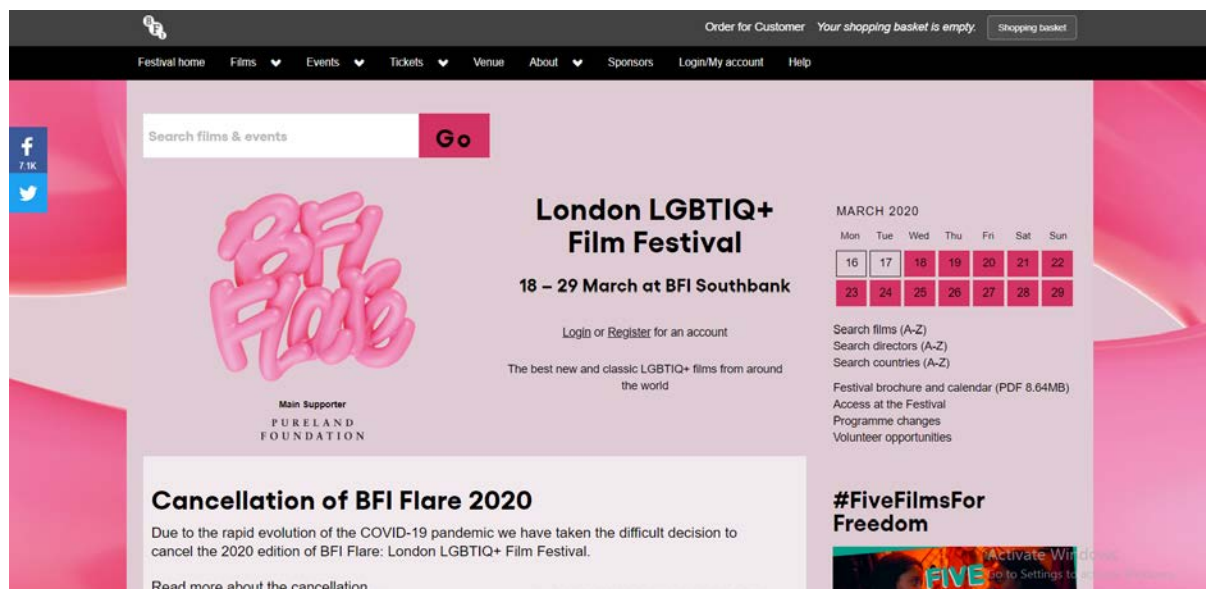


Figure 1: Snapshot from BFI Flare festival website

The research into the effectiveness of inclusivity and diversity monitoring will be based on the publicly funded media available in the UK, focusing on the BFI and BBC. Some of the documents available that will be used for this research are: *Diversity and inclusion strategy* (BBC, 2016) by the BBC, *the BFI Diversity Standards Criteria 2016-2020* (BFI, 2019) for

strategies and criteria within these two institutions and the results of the survey *Diversity and equal Opportunities in television. In-focus report on ten major broadcast* (Ofcom, 2019); a report made by Ofcom ‘the regulator and competition authority for the UK communications industries’ (Gov.uk), to examine which parameters they have used to analyse the data and whether the parameters themselves are exclusionist.

By 2020, we want to have reached the point where diverse thinking and inclusive action are elemental parts of the BBC.

We want to be using our privileged position as the Nation's broadcaster to ensure that both our own processes and those of our suppliers and partners are truly open and have diversity embedded in them from the start.

And, beyond that, we want to see these changes continue to drive cultural and creative changes within the whole organisation. If we get this right, by 2020, the BBC will have:-

- a workforce at least as diverse, if not more so, than any other in the industry;
- met portrayal targets that cover a much wider range of diversity than any other broadcaster; with a bigger impact for audiences across a wider range of programmes; and
- hardwired diversity in what we do, making it an issue that everyone at the BBC understands and all those who make programmes for us supports.

If we keep working hard to make real change in this area then we will move away from a focus on numbers and on targets, and move towards a truly open BBC, at all levels: a BBC that looks like the UK and which speaks for the UK, in all its different voices.

Here is a summary of our 2017 and 2020 Targets

Workforce (All staff and leadership levels)	2017 Target	2020 Target
Women	n/a	50%
Disability	5.3%*, 5%**	8%
Black Asian and ethnic minorities	14.2%*, 10%**	15%
LGBT	n/a	8%

*All staff **Leadership

Onscreen Portrayal	2017 Target	2020 Target
Women on screen, on-air and in lead roles	n/a	50%
Disability on screen and in some lead roles	5%	8%
Black, Asian and ethnic minorities on screen, on-air and in lead roles	15%***	15%
LGBT on screen and in some lead roles	n/a	8%

***Portrayal only

Figure2: Extract from the Diversity and inclusion strategy document from the BBC

This research will also include a section about media accessible through streaming websites, such as YouTube, Netflix, Amazon and a section in literature available through online shops and libraries.

The final section of the analysis on representation will concentrate on the national Welsh and British curriculum. The study will focus on inclusivity in the curriculum, decolonisation and feminism; evaluating the inclusion of LGBTQI+ history and LGBTQI+ within RSE (Relationships and Sex Education), as well as black history within the curriculum.

Some of the topics that will be examined are the ways in which the curriculum is already exclusionary of the LGBTQI+ community as it showed in the Birmingham case, where a school stopped LGBTQI+ lessons after parents protested (Parveen, 2019), and the ways in which, since then, the government has tried to solve the conflicts by updating the curriculum.

The assessment about inclusivity of black history will look into black history month, the current curriculum and the initiative *The Black Curriculum*, project started by Lavinya Stennett, with the aim to make black history mandatory in schools, with a renewed curriculum that is not racially biased.

ARCHIVE



Figure 3: Monument of Columbus in Barcelona

The next topic of exploration will be archive, the role of archive as a way to create collective memory, glitches in the archiving process, ethos, biases of the archivist and archive as a tool for challenging the status quo.

When talking about archive we will be referring not just to the historical archive in which society has accumulated information about the past, but also the revisionism that needs to take place in order to revisit biased narratives and to decolonise them. Part of the research will be focused in archive within media, art and literature; the same topics which were explored in the chapter for representation. This chapter will also evaluate how those mediums

create a psychological archive, a cognitive map in the psyche of society, which is then reinterpreted and reinvented depending upon one's experiences, education and critical capacity of factual analysis.

Some of the contemporary archives which will be analysed that are re-writing the narratives and subverting the status quo are:

The podcast *The guilty feminist*, a podcast that might not exist today if it wasn't for other media like the pioneering *Woman's Hour*, a podcast that started as a radio show in 1946 and that is currently still on air.

The guilty feminist is a Podcast centred on intersectional feminism with mostly female identifying guests from a variety of backgrounds, from activists, to filmmakers, authors, comedians and much more. *The guilty feminist* engages in topics related to the historical and contemporary oppression and explores the ways in which privilege is expressed.

The invited guests are most often creating media or projects to fight for equality, to create representation, changing laws and making peoples voices heard. An example of this is the guest Sarah Mardini (Guilty Feminist, 2019). Mardini is a volunteer in the refugee camp in Lesbos who was a refugee herself living in the same camp where she now volunteers. Mardini is facing up to 25 years in prison for saving a refugee's life (Amnesty international, 2019). Mardini went to the podcast to talk about her experience as a refugee and volunteer, as well as creating awareness of the situation on the Greek camp.

Another guest that embodies the podcasts content is Gina Martin who changed the voyeurism offences bill last year which means that thanks to her, upskirting is now a crime.

Stories like these are empowering. Seeing somebody doing what you thought was inconceivable, opens the doors to unending possibilities.

ACTIVISM

In this section there will be practical examples of how people and collectives have challenged the status quo and used media to create change.



Figure 4: The qweens speech by Zhang and Knight.

The qweens speech by the collective Zhang and Knight is a fierce, queer alternative to The Queens speech. The short film is a call for action and a message of hope for the queer

community, in which queer famous personalities give a message to humanity about the LGBTQI+ achievements, and also demand for change of all those issues that are yet to be dealt with, like gender recognition acts and LGBTQI+ being still illegal in over 70 countries (Mendos, 2019)

The message and the way in which the queer community is portrayed through this film is empowering, resilient, strong and confident. The video also portrays a diversity of queer identities, as well as racial diversity. The depictions of those identities in this work is not only varied but also positive and dignified, breaking stereotypes and showcasing the identities of the queer community by the queer community.



Figure 5: Performance Collective WOOF

The performance collective WOOF creates cabaret performances with a trans cast. The project aims to show the diversity of trans bodies and their beauty.

This is a very poignant project in terms of representation for the trans community, which are very often misrepresented. This project focuses on claiming the diversity of trans and non-binary bodies, creating an archive never seen before. The collective is showing trans people, in a position of power, empowerment and joy within the medium of cabaret.

As Chiyo, one of the members of the collective explains in an interview, it is very rare to see trans pre-operation bodies on media or porn. For example, representation of trans women with male genitalia and no breasts or trans men with breasts and female genitalia or non-binary bodies is not very often portrayed. Chiyo points out how media mostly portrays stories for a cis white male audience (Jones, 2019) and that most of those representations often exclude bodies and stories that don't fit with the mainstream narratives. The collective is taking a stand and creating their own content to start changing the narratives, the representation and perception of trans people and trans bodies.

This dissertation aims to bring together the terms of representation, archive and activism and their intersection within the framework of challenging current narratives that are often biased.



Figure 6: Caption from the film *Clash*. Directed by Amrou Al-Kahdi

Very often artists and works that speak about the truths of minorities are serving the three purposes which this dissertation will explore.

An example of this is Amrou Al-Kadhi, who is a writer and performer who explores questions of queer identity, religion and race and their intersection. Perspectives which are very often omitted when the stories have been written by an outsider.

Al-kadhi for instance explores the junction between Muslim and queer identity, as he explains in an interview:

In Islamic spaces my queer identity was an automatic red card of the arena, in many gay spaces a lot of which are very secular and overwhelmingly white, I was victim of racism and Islamophobia

(Al-Kadhi, 2019).

An example of their work is the short experimental documentary *Clash*, in which Al-Khadi invited queer people from different races and ethnicities to speak about how they feel about media representation within their own racial and queer identities, giving them a voice, as well as visibility.

Listening to stories like this, the audience understands the complexities of those identities and an alternative archive is created within the audience's psyche; making the audience have empathy for the other and an understanding of the common struggle and humanity, which in

turn, shifts the works into activism. The more alternative archives that are created, the more representation there is, the more normal and common the other realities will become, with the aim that ultimately there will be no sense of the 'other', only acceptance and an acknowledgement of the differences that make the world so diverse, wonderful and exciting.

Conclusion

Media, literature and the academic curriculum play a key role in the ways in which we perceive the world and its inhabitants and the ways in which we behave.

It is especially important for those mediums to be revised and to point out those inequalities within the produced materials. To critique the narratives when they are biased and to re-write them, especially in the current times where media is accessible through your own pocket and those voids that in the past were filled with boredom and creative thoughts, are now filled with information.

The concepts of representation, archive and activism can be used as barometers to see whether a medium is impacting society in a positive or in a negative way. They can be used as a tool to enquire by creative people, to ask themselves whether the work they are making is worth making, whether it is going to have a positive impact or not. They can be used by producers and editors, when reading through proposals for books, articles, films, whether those potential projects are worth investing in. They can also be used in the educational system, to assess whether the materials created for the curriculum, or the way in which the curriculum is used by the teachers is positive for society.

Creating tools for enquiry, ways in which to assess what is produced, ways to assess what we consume are the bases for global change, we need new ways to determine the value of a product, we need to leave behind capitalist benchmarks when it comes to production of media, literature and the curriculum. We, as a society, need creative people to forge new mechanisms to create awareness of the effects of the narratives created and tools for people and companies to take responsibility of what they produce. We need to acknowledge our

biases and challenge, question ourselves and others whose creations might be biased, exclusionary or showing a distorted reality.

We need guidelines, manifestos, analysis, tools to take action as individuals and groups to create change right now. To take responsibility in our own hands, to tackle inequality, fight for a better world.

Appendix

This research will be done through the next academic texts: television and the self (Ryan, 2013), ethnic minorities and the media (Cottle, s et al., 2000), postcolonial media culture in

Britain (2011), as well as articles like: The archival Sliver: Power, Memory and archives (Harris, 2002), Archive for all: Professional Responsibility and Social Justice (Jimerson, 2007), 'Promoting Inclusivity in the Archive: A literature review reassessing tradition through theory and practice reassessing tradition through theory and practice' (Wetli, 2019), 'Inclusive archives and recordkeeping: towards a critical manifesto' (Evans and Wilson, 2018), 'If you want the history of a white man, you go to the library: Critiquing our legacy, addressing our library collections gaps' (Bowers, et al., 2017).

Other projects in the section of archive that the dissertation will look into are:

Trans creative: A Creative company giving a voice to the transgender community through podcast, theatre productions and events.

Gal-dem: 'An online and print publication sharing perspectives from women and non-binary people of colour' (Gal-dem)

Variant space: A platform to show case women Muslim artist, through podcasts, events and online visibility

A selection of short documentaries made by the Catalan producer and tv channel tv3, which inspired me to think about media and archive as a way to break stereotypes:

La gran vellesa, Jo també vull sexe, Sabem acollir? (Refer to tv3 in the bibliography section).

Other resources within the activist section are:

Lydia X. Z. Brown

RevArte

Gran Fury

Collective Ip Gim

Fox Irving

The Vacuum Cleaner: Art and activist collective

In Plain sight: Artist collaboration against migrant detention.

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