

CREATIVE & POSSIBILITIES

Supporting Neurodiversity Celebration Week

Written by Keith McKenzie

I have never accepted the old saying that you are only as good as your previous project or client. Not so fast. Unless you have the ability to showcase other qualities beyond client projects, you will never truly experience or discover a creative person's full potential. Creativity is not only about what you have delivered or achieved with clients, but also about the potential that exists beyond those outcomes.

Background

Before I was diagnosed as neurodivergent on the autistic spectrum, I faced several barriers to accessing further and higher education in art and design for many years. I had to take simple but strategic risks in order to pursue my ambitions. This eventually enabled me to access further and higher education in graphic design at locations more than 20 miles away, including Herefordshire, which ultimately led to graduating in Northampton.

Many decades later, after being diagnosed on the autistic spectrum, barriers still remain. So-called disability support programmes can sometimes mislead or interfere by attempting to downgrade creative aspirations rather than support them.

As a result, this led to the development of our family of awareness projects, activities and campaigns for over 25 years, with creativity at the heart of the initiative. Now, in an era of multi-skilled expectations and artificial intelligence, I have adapted my strategy to connect with different communities where creativity plays an important role.

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1. Active

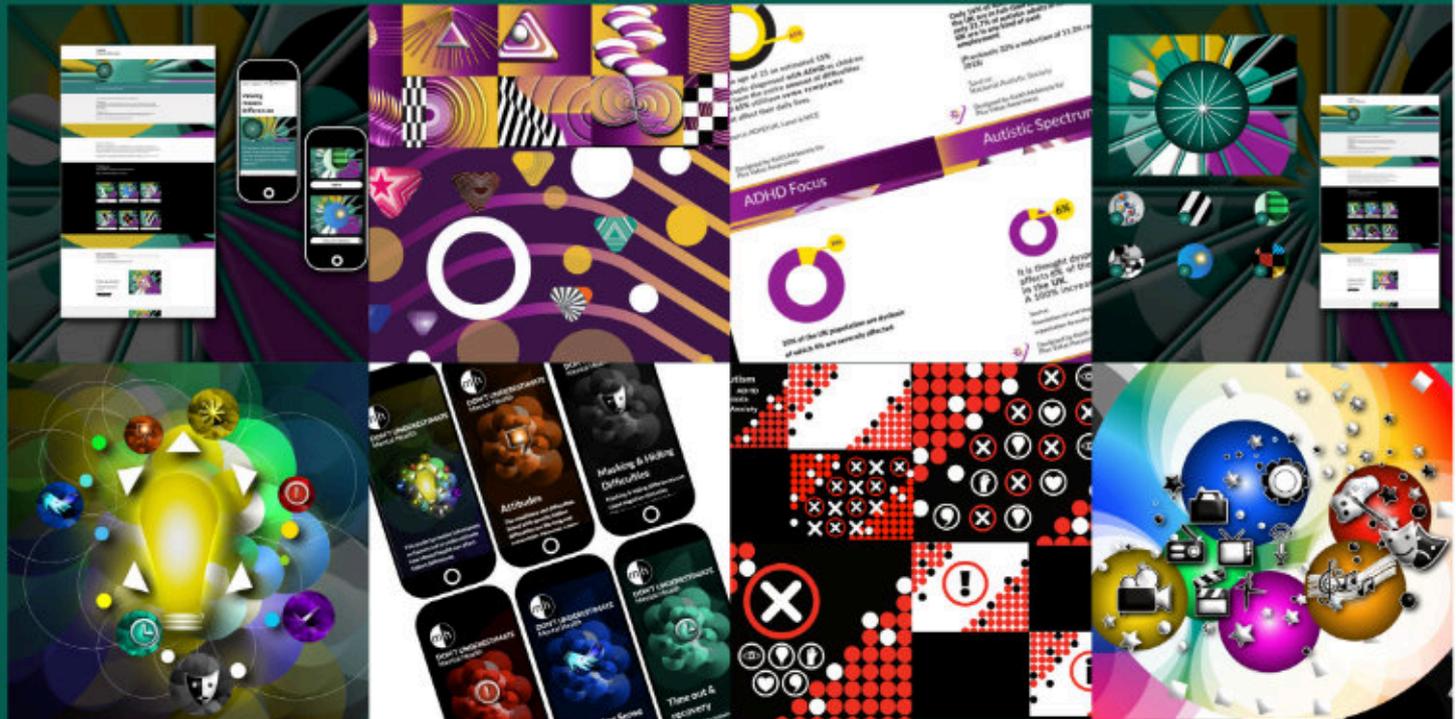


I use a vibrant and inviting approach to community-based dance class that I also actively participate in. The development of marketing for dance classes has evolved over the past eight years, and very recently a major revamp introduced new colours and a stronger, more vibrant direction.

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1. Active



Through my awareness initiative, I have developed a variety of projects to help change perceptions around neurodiversity and to focus on the human aspects — including valuing and validating individuals.

Beyond simply providing information, I have also introduced an expressive and creative angle to encourage more open-minded thinking.

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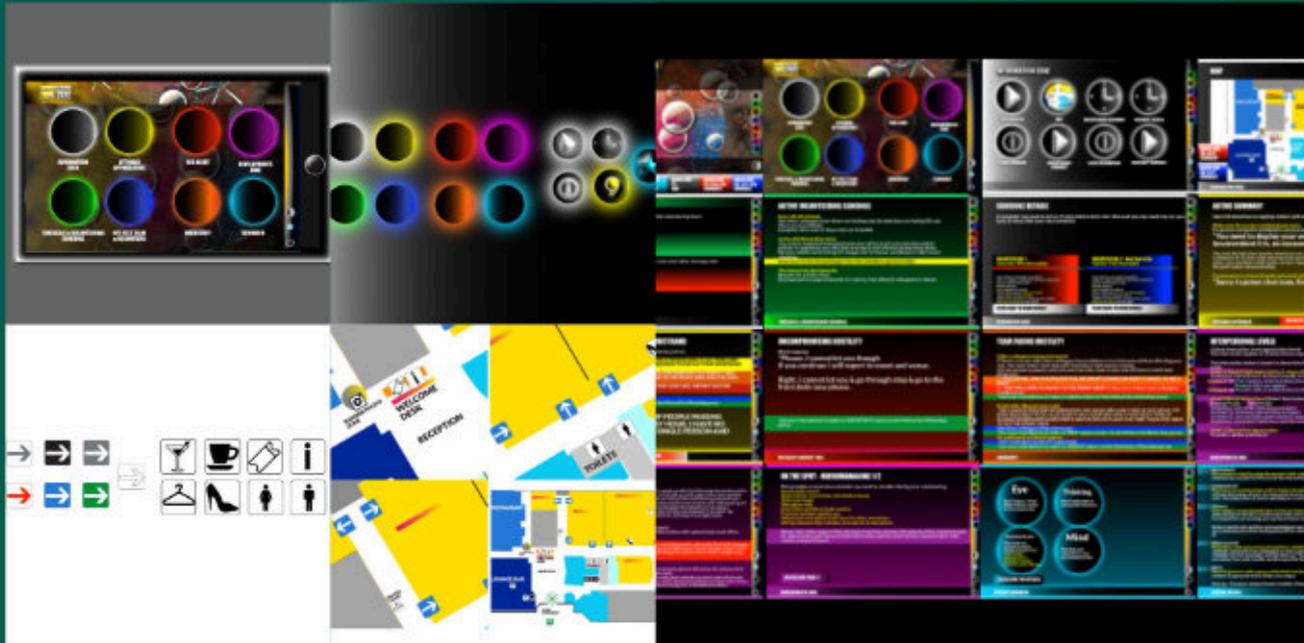


Through my participation in dance, and after several dance-related awareness projects, I have also worked to promote inclusivity regardless of ability or difficulty.

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2. Possibilities



Innovation does not always mean technology or science. It is also about smarter thinking and having a vision.

For example, I developed an interactive “touchpoint” organiser document that allows people to access information, guidance and tips instantly at the touch of a button — without the need for programming or online dependency. This was an innovative solution when I was volunteering for a major Latin dancing festival.

Previously, we relied on double-sided printed organisers, which created challenges. The new solution helped prevent information overload and allowed users to quickly access what they needed without exceeding coping limits.

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2. Possibilities



When I took part in a creative competition to promote and showcase Birmingham beyond its role as host city of the Commonwealth Games, I had the opportunity to develop a world-class concept that captured the city's positive energy and cultural fusion. Although I was not shortlisted, the work received strong commendation from several people within the design industry.

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With the rapid changes in technology, including artificial intelligence making design more accessible, I still believe it is important to move beyond what is simply accessible and strive to be original, innovative and one step ahead — developing ideas that nobody else could imagine.

This approach also connects to wider themes such as social responsibility and climate change.

It is the same mindset I apply to other areas of creativity, including themes of love and relationships, seasonal occasions such as summer and the festive season, and even the arrival of the new year.

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Conclusion



To enable the very best creativity in businesses and communities, we must embrace people from all backgrounds and abilities.

Without that inclusivity, we will not achieve true innovation, smarter solutions, or inspiration beyond what already exists.

Rather than closing doors (something I have experienced myself) it is time to be smarter and more open-minded.

You do not need to be a mathematical scientist to work that one out.

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