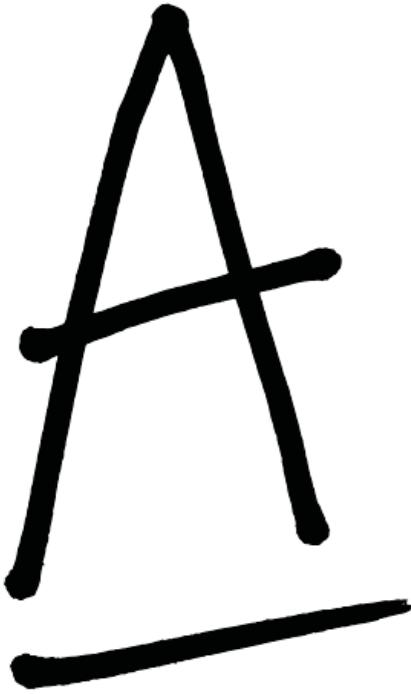# DIVERSITY MATTERS

Design is dominated by white, able-bodied men. But it doesn't have to be. **Laura Snoad** examines what discourages people from entering the industry, and what we can all do to encourage more inclusivity

ILLUSTRATIONS: Guillaume Kashima www.guillaumekashima.com

recent report issued by the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport made for rather depressing reading. Despite the good news that design in the UK is thriving, employing 57 per cent more people in 2016 than 2011, it revealed that the industry is mostly white, male and from 'more advantaged groups'. Compare the figures to the national UK working population (UKWP), and the results are even more unsettling. While the UKWP has almost equal numbers of males and females, the UK creative industries is made up of 63 per cent males and 37 per cent females.

The report, did however, reveal some cause for optimism. Between 2015 and 2016, the number of designers from black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds increased by a whopping 49 per cent, while the amount of women increased by 22 per cent, the second highest increase across all of the nine creative industries sub-sectors, after advertising and marketing. The number of EU nationals working in design also increased by almost 24 per cent in the same period.

But why does diversity matter? Aside from the ethical reasons arguably too obvious to outline, inclusivity is also good for business. Diverse teams mean new approaches and new markets, and have been proven to be better at problem-solving. This is something that Hana Tanimura,

who leads Google's Creative Lab in London, has seen in practice. "It's true that very different people working together on a project can sometimes require putting in a little extra time to achieve the kind of shorthand understanding that comes quickly with people from similar backgrounds," she says, "but from my experience, it's precisely that light 'friction' that enables new kinds of thinking and new ideas to flourish."

Marianne Waite, a disability activist who founded Think Designable – a collective that aims to better society's relationship with disability – agrees. "If design agencies aren't inclusive internally, they limit their ability to have a positive

## MONEY AND CULTURE
There are several hurdles that prevent people from entering the design industry. "From my [West Indian] ethnic and cultural background, parents know the challenges their children will face in the workplace, so they encourage them to go into practices that are more likely to yield results," says Greg Bunbury, who runs Bunbury Creative. "Parents are very cautious about pushing their kids into creative fields."

Unpaid or poorly-paid internships and the London-centric industry are also likely to put off potential candidates. "If you look at what it costs to live in London now, it's hugely prohibitive," says Ansel Neckles, co-founder of Let's Be Brief – a platform



## "IF DESIGN AGENCIES AREN'T INCLUSIVE INTERNALLY, THEY LIMIT THEIR ABILITY TO HAVE A POSITIVE IMPACT"
MARIANNE WAITE

impact – the better the insight, the more accurate the output," she says. "People with disabilities are often experts in adaptation, creative solutions and hacking."

Having a diverse team could also help tap into groups you may have previously overlooked. For example, the UK's black and minority ethnic population has an estimated spending power of £300 billion and Gov.uk puts the spend of disabled people and their families at £212 billion.

But with such a multitude of issues at play when it comes to diversity, the topic can be a tricky one to address head on – where do you start? We spoke to industry experts about some of the reasons why design isn't already inclusive, and what you can do to tackle this.

that aims to upskill and champion creative entrepreneurs. A Londoner by birth, Neckles says that he would never have been able to get into advertising were it not for his family home in the capital.

How can we address the creative industries' image problem and show that design can be a rewarding – and lucrative – career choice? Both Bunbury, who didn't meet another black graphic designer until well into his 30s, and Neckles, believe that visibility and role models are integral. "The design industry can be a closed-loop environment," says Neckles. "Knowing where those doors are generally comes from a knowledge of folks on the inside of those spaces. If you have no idea who to speak to, you can forever remain looking through

the window wondering 'how do I get in?'" Helen Fuchs, design director at Shoreditch agency ustwo, agrees. "Go out to a local comprehensive, just to show them that your career is there," she says. "If you don't know anyone, or have a designer in your family, you won't know how to get in."

Although there's probably not much (aside campaigning) you can do about greater wealth inequality or the undervaluing of the creative industries more widely, studios can make sure there are routes in for less privileged talent. You can start by paying interns the Living Wage (see Ogilvy & Mather's new scheme The Pipe), and could consider developing an apprenticeship scheme. And everyone can support organisations aiming to widen access to creative careers, such as Pitch It, Let's Be Brief and We Are Stripes with time, money or, even better, both.

### ROUTES INTO DESIGN
Another hurdle can be people not taking non-traditional qualifications seriously,

says Haydn Corrodus, founder of We Are Stripes – which aims to address ethnic diversity imbalance in the creative industries. "If we are being honest, a lot of roles you can learn on the job, but job specs oversell what you need to have done."

Bunbury agrees: "Everything I learned from how to set up a grid to how to pitch, I learned on the job." When working for a larger agency, Bunbury spent every Friday afternoon holding portfolio reviews as an alternative way of spotting potential hires. "It takes a lot of time, but the results are worth it," he says. A policy of hiring on 'potential' rather than 'proof' also helps combat gender bias. Research by Hewlett-Packard found that women only apply for jobs when they feel they're a 100 per cent match, whereas men only feel they need to meet 60 per cent of the requirements.

"If you really want to find talented people, you need to start having conversations in places that you don't normally have them," says Neckles. Building relationships with networks

## THE GLASS CEILING
### WHY ARE THERE SO FEW FEMALE CREATIVE DIRECTORS?

Around 70 per cent of UK design students are women, but just 12 per cent of London creative directors are female. Here, five creatives reflect on the hurdles that female designers face...

### HEIDI SHEPHERD
*Senior designer, GBH*
"Women who display leadership qualities in the workplace are often labelled as mean and unlikeable. Women are told they should be nurturing, nice and altruistic. When we have these gender qualities engrained in us, it's hard to brush them off. Recent campaigns like Ban Bossy have helped, but more needs to be done to allow women to display leadership qualities."

### KATH TUDBALL
*Design director, The Partners*
"Many young women simply do not see creative careers as compatible with raising a young family, and are making early choices accordingly. The fact that the youngest women in our industry already feel that their future selves will not be able to reach leadership level because they might one day have a family is depressing and ambition crushing."

### OTEGHA UWAGABA
*Founder, Women Who*
"I think it's the result of systemic issues and male-dominated workplaces. It's resulted in a scenario where women are conditioned to be happy with what they've got. One of the things I wanted to do with my Little Black Book [a handbook for working women] was shine a light on what you should be doing, what you should expect, and what you should be asking for."

### HELEN FUCHS
*Design director, ustwo*
"A lot of business still happens at the pub. When you're balancing a family, there's not a lot of time for hanging out, and if you've got men making decisions on who to promote, out-of-work relationships might come into play. I've benefitted from Women into Leadership, which holds people to account and encourages them to be ultra-transparent in how they hire."

### SAIRAH ASHMAN
*CEO, Wolff Olins*
"It's really hard to be what you can't see. I don't just mean that in a gender sense. When I was a lot younger, I'd look up at people in leadership positions and see the way they'd be forced to behave, and feel it didn't represent who I was or wanted to be. There's a job to be done championing different types of leadership and different types of role model."

## LEGAL MATTERS

**FIVE THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT HOW THE EQUALITY ACT 2010 WORKS**

You probably know the basics: there are nine 'protected characteristics' on which employers cannot discriminate. These are age; whether you have a disability; your race; your sex; your sexual orientation; if you are undergoing gender reassignment; religion or belief; pregnancy or maternity; and your marital status. But some of the Act's intricacies are complex...

### DIRECT VS INDIRECT

Direct discrimination seems pretty clear. You can't, for example, be sacked for coming out or for getting pregnant, but 'indirect' discrimination can also be illegal. An example of this could be disciplining a person because of poor attendance that's caused by a disability.

### POSITIVE ACTION

It's not illegal to positively discriminate, but there are a few caveats. You can help under-represented people overcome their disadvantage by offering targeted internships or placements, but when it comes to recruitment, you can only take a protected characteristic into account if candidates are equally qualified.

### EQUAL PAY

If you have two people of different genders doing similar jobs then it's illegal to pay them different salaries. And if you want to discuss your salary with other employees in order to find out if there's a pay gap, the Act means your boss can't take action. Pay also includes bonuses, and new legislation coming in next year requires employees with more than 250 staff to report their pay gap, including bonuses.

### TALKING HEALTH

Employers can only ask interviewees about their health for four reasons: to establish whether they can carry out a function essential to the job, to take 'positive action' to assist disabled applicants, to confirm that a candidate has a disability if it's necessary for the role, or to monitor diversity.

### MAKING ADJUSTMENTS

If you have a disability, your employer is duty-bound to change their way of working so you can do your job in the same way a non-disabled person would be able to. This can mean allocating work to a colleague if your disability means you can't meet targets, giving you extra breaks, or making what are called 'reasonable adjustments' to the office (see page 42 for more info).

## "IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT RECRUITMENT, IT'S ABOUT RETENTION TOO – AND THAT'S SOMETHING YOU NEED TO WORK AT CONSTANTLY

HELEN FUCHS

▷ such as Pride AM, People of Creativity, Open Inclusion and Advertising and Disability, can help make sure your job ads are reaching a broad spectrum of people. And think outside the box, for example, Let's Be Brief has a show about creativity on radio station NTS, whose motto is 'Don't Assume'. "Find people in the places that matter to them, you can't assume they'll gravitate towards you," adds Neckles.

### RECRUITMENT PROCESS

Diversity recruitment goals can help. Digital agency ustwo has an agreement with its recruiter than 50 per cent of candidates must come from under-represented groups. "I'm sure that got me on an interview list," says Fuchs. Evaluate your current process: is your recommendation scheme just bringing in identikit designers? Are your interview questions standardised to make for fair comparison? How gender neutral is the wording of your ad? Starting a conversation about the language you use can lead you to interesting places. Social media platform Buffer changed the wording of its job ads from 'hacker' to 'developer', for example, in a bid to attract more women.

"The problem with bias," says Wolff Olins' Ije Nwokorie, "is that we all want to think we're not. But we're all human beings and we all form biases." Organisations such as Altogether Different, Equality and Diversity UK and Creative Equals all offer unconscious bias training, which helps staff identify where those prejudices might come into play. Given that research from totaljobs finds almost one in five hiring managers make a decision on a candidate within a minute of meeting them and 44 per cent decide after just 15 minutes, making sure

your team is as open as possible is integral. You could also consider implementing blind portfolio reviews or using an organisation such as GapJumpers, which strips applications of identifying info.

Your interview process may also be discouraging or discriminating against talented candidates, including those with disabilities. "It may be worth deviating from the standard interview process altogether and instead, providing a work trail or test instead," suggests Waite. "Hypothetical or obscure industry terminology can be challenging to some people, as can questions that require overly imaginative answers," she explains.

### ACCESSIBILITY AND DISABILITY

"It's not just about recruitment, it's about retention too – and that's something you need to work at constantly," says Fuchs. Luckily, many strategies for making sure people from under-represented groups thrive in the studio make the workplace better for everyone. Karwai Pun, an interaction designer at Government Digital Service, who has been improving digital services for users with all types of disabilities, says: "Having people with disabilities on staff brings greater insight into usability testing, accessibility training and design discussions. Smarter ways of working such as remote working, home working or flexitime offer useful alternatives for all colleagues, not just those with disabilities." Similarly, many adjustments to your space – introducing height-adjustable desks or areas for quiet concentration – give greater flexibility to all staff. "Start by auditing your space to identify where the blockers are," says Waite. "Invite some specialists in for the day to ▷

# Q&A: PALI PALAVATHANAN
## THE FOUNDER OF TEMPLO ON THE IMPORTANCE OF REAL-WORLD IMPACT

**Formerly at IDEO and Johnson Banks, Pali Palavathanan founded five-strong London studio TEMPLO to work on projects with real-world impact. The studio has helped shed light on human rights violations in Sri Lanka, totally overhauled the UN's brand communications to be more human-centric and counts Amnesty International, London School of Economics and Plymouth College of Art as some of its clients.**

**What barriers did you face entering the design industry?**
My parents are both from Sri Lanka, they emigrated in 1963 for work. Being second generation is interesting – there's a lot of stigma within my culture, especially around creative subjects. There's a myth that you won't make any money and worries about how you're going to survive. I chose graphic design and rocked the boat massively. Once there, there were very few role models for me to look up to, to think: 'I could be that'.

**How has your experience at other studios influenced how you decided to run things at TEMPLO?**
When I left Johnson Banks I was frustrated that the design community was turning a blind eye to certain issues that didn't correlate with their interests. For example, when the Japanese tsunami happened, every single graphic designer started designing a poster, but it felt like that was to enter it into design awards or tick a box internally. It wasn't on-the-ground help. With TEMPLO, I wanted to approach things differently, creating real change and disrupting spaces that I was not supposed to be in. That's tied in with my cultural heritage, because I know for a fact that I have to try harder than most to justify that what I do is relevant.

**How have you tried to build a diverse team of people at TEMPLO?**
We didn't think, 'We need to have one person from East Asia, one person from the African continent.' It's not a United Colours of Benetton approach. People







**Top:** Banners for a recruitment campaign for Plymouth College of Art, which was inspired by octopus skin.

**Middle:** TEMPLO's #StopTorture campaign is focused on human rights violations in Sri Lanka. The logo works in both Tamil and Sinhala, Sri Lanka's native languages.

**Bottom:** Part of a refreshed brand approach for the UN, which uses the wreath to frame and contextualise the human stories at the heart of the UN's work.

don't want to be employed just to be a statistic. But the work we do attracts a mix of people and inclusivity more generally. For example, we worked on a project called Brit-ish – which was a cultural diversity celebration at Somerset House – which was open and invited everyone to be involved. Also, a lot of the work we do is self-driven. Our #StopTorture campaign, which got us banned from Sri Lanka, caught a lot of people off-guard. The #StopTorture logo is, in essence, me – two cultures that are fused together.

**What can the design industry do to become more inclusive?**
There's already some interesting stuff happening. We worked with The Sorrell Foundation on Creative Journeys, which talks to a diverse range of people about how they got into the industry to encourage GCSE students not to drop art and design subjects. You can put energy into projects like that and think about ways of showing what is possible. Also, be braver in your decision making, whether that's reflected in the staff you employ or the type of work do – the projects that won't necessarily bring you the hard cash, but connect with other people and other cultures.
www.templo.co.uk

## HOW TO TAKE ACTION
HOW YOU CAN HELP MAKE THE
WORKPLACE BETTER FOR ALL

### DYSLEXIA
Dyslexia can cause difficulty reading
and writing, as well as affecting time-
management and the ability to keep track
of information. To help: give instructions
verbally; provide text-to-speech or
speech-to-text software; allow meetings
to be recorded; use easy-to-read fonts
(for example, Verdana, Arial or free
specialist font Open Dyslexic); and
provide written information on coloured
paper and using screen tints.

### HEARING IMPAIRMENTS
Adapting your studio for deaf or
hearing-impaired employees can include
some spatial and technological tweaks.
Rethink workspaces to situate regular
collaborators opposite each other
so lips and faces can be seen easily;
minimise background noise (particularly
in meeting rooms); video call rather
than conference call; provide hearing
aid-compatible phones (or an induction
loop); subtitle video content; and provide
recognition speech-to-text software or a
BSL interpreter if/when needed.

### MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES
One in four of us will suffer from some
sort of mental health issue in our lives.
Adaptability in the workplace, such as
working from home or flexible hours, can
help. Build mental health days into your
sick day allowance; offer mental health
training for line managers; encourage all
employees to make a Wellness Action
Plan; and keep an eye on a common
trigger – stress – with regular catch ups.

### AUTISM
Autism and Asperger's syndrome can
affect communication and the ability
to understand feelings and can make
meeting new people or adapting to new
routines challenging. To help, develop
a structured work day (with big tasks
broken down); avoid abstract language;
explain the etiquette and unwritten rules
of the workplace; give direct feedback;
and minimise sensory distractions.

### MOBILITY CHALLENGES
Depending on your employees' needs,
you can: install lifts and widen doorways;
offer height-adjustable desks; make
sure filing cabinets, kettles, printers,
etc, are within reach; remove obstacles;
offer nearby parking; and agree on an
emergency evacuation procedure if
staff members require assistance.

## "EMPLOYERS WANT THE BEST STAFF WORKING FOR THEM, AND IF THEY REALISE THEY'VE GOT A REP PROBLEM THEN THAT STARTS TO HAVE AN EFFECT"

OTEGHA UWAGBA

provide recommendations. It's crucial that you don't base changes on the experience of non-disabled employee assumptions."

### THE SECOND SEX
"The drop off in women in advertising and design is huge," says Casey Bird, president of SheSays, a networking organisation for women in the creative industries. "This is often because of a lack of support when it comes to motherhood and flexible work-life balance. This makes many women think, 'What's the point?' and sack it off." In 2015, SheSays launched its Who's Your Momma mentoring scheme (WYMM), which pairs female creatives at different levels of their careers, to provide a soundboard on challenges such as how to ask for pay rises or deal with gender bias. "Until I started working at SheSays, I could barely count the number of senior women I knew on one hand," recalls Bird. "Programmes like WYMM really help break the cycle."

Roshni Goyate, co-founder of The Other Box – a platform for increasing diversity in creative industries – agrees: "I specifically wanted a brown, female, working class, not privately educated senior person as a mentor," she says. "I asked everyone I knew, and most had basically never worked with another person of colour. It made me feel like I have no place in this industry. I honestly thought about quitting and starting a whole new career."

Mentoring schemes can also be run internally. King, the games company behind Candy Crush Saga, runs a scheme called Women@King, which promotes equal opportunities for women in gaming. King is also involved with RoyaLGBT & Friends, a global network that supports LGBT+ employees and allies.

Interestingly, King has recently started reframing 'diversity' as 'inclusion'. "With inclusion, we look as whether people feel respected and valued," says the company's diversity and culture manager Natalie Mellin, who also points out that people usually fit into more than one 'category'. "From an intersectional perspective, I'm not just a woman – I also have a sexual orientation, a skin colour, and so on," she says. "There will be different issues for gay women, for black women."

This thinking has also bled into King's products. In its workshop scheme called Crush The Norm, designers can identify ways they are portraying gender or race (even in squirrels) and learn to challenge stereotypes. "There's a growth in the type of people that are gamers today because of the mobile phone," explains Mellin. "We want everyone to feel included."

Agency ustwo has also made a conscious move towards gender equality. Designed to disrupt the statistic that only 12 per cent of creative directors in London are female, ustwo's new leadership programme for female employees involves women sitting in on all leadership meetings. "If you see how decisions are made, you're more likely to think, 'I can do that'," says Fuchs. In March, the studio announced that male and female employees can now both take the same maternity leave – six months paid leave – and in the past year they've reduced their gender pay gap from 13 per cent to 3.5 per cent by in-depth analysis of pay difference and why it happens. The studio regularly blogs about their diversity challenges and strategies – something Pun stresses is important. "Your accessibility and diversity champions should actively attend events and share stories on social media." This is

not bragging or virtue signalling, but a way to flag to designers from under-represented group that your company would be an inclusive place to work.

Both Sairah Ashman – Wolff Olin's newly appointed (and first female) CEO – and Ije Nwokorie, who she succeeds, suggest that part of overcoming the disparity between the number of female employees and female leaders is redefining what those top jobs look like. "You have to be honest enough to interrogate why women are not attracted to that position," says Nwokorie. Ashman adds: "I'm a relatively quiet person, you wouldn't hold me up as a poster woman for leadership, but at Wolff Olins, we've broadened the platform enough that you can pull up lots of different people and points of view."

To address this, employees could reconsider increasing employees' access to training and experiment with reverse mentoring, where the creative director shadows a junior employee to see where issues may be arising. Clear goals for progression and promotion can help and, in case things go wrong, make sure your HR support is as independent as possible.

### SELF-PROMOTION
Knowing your own value is also integral for those from under-represented groups. It can help to push the industry to value diversity more widely. "Embrace your cultural identity; it's not necessarily a barrier," says Bunbury. "In all things you do, you should be drawing from a wide creative cultural palette, it's the thing that will give you uniqueness and make your work stand out," he explains.

Self-promotion and putting yourself forward may also deter some people. "At the beginning of my career I struggled to speak out," says Roz Fraser, senior designer at GBH, "but I've been fortunate to work under both men and women who have pushed me, and now I feel a lot more confident at self-promotion." Alice Tonge, head of 4creative, agrees: "If someone shoots you down you've got to keep on going. Be resilient and relentless." Resources
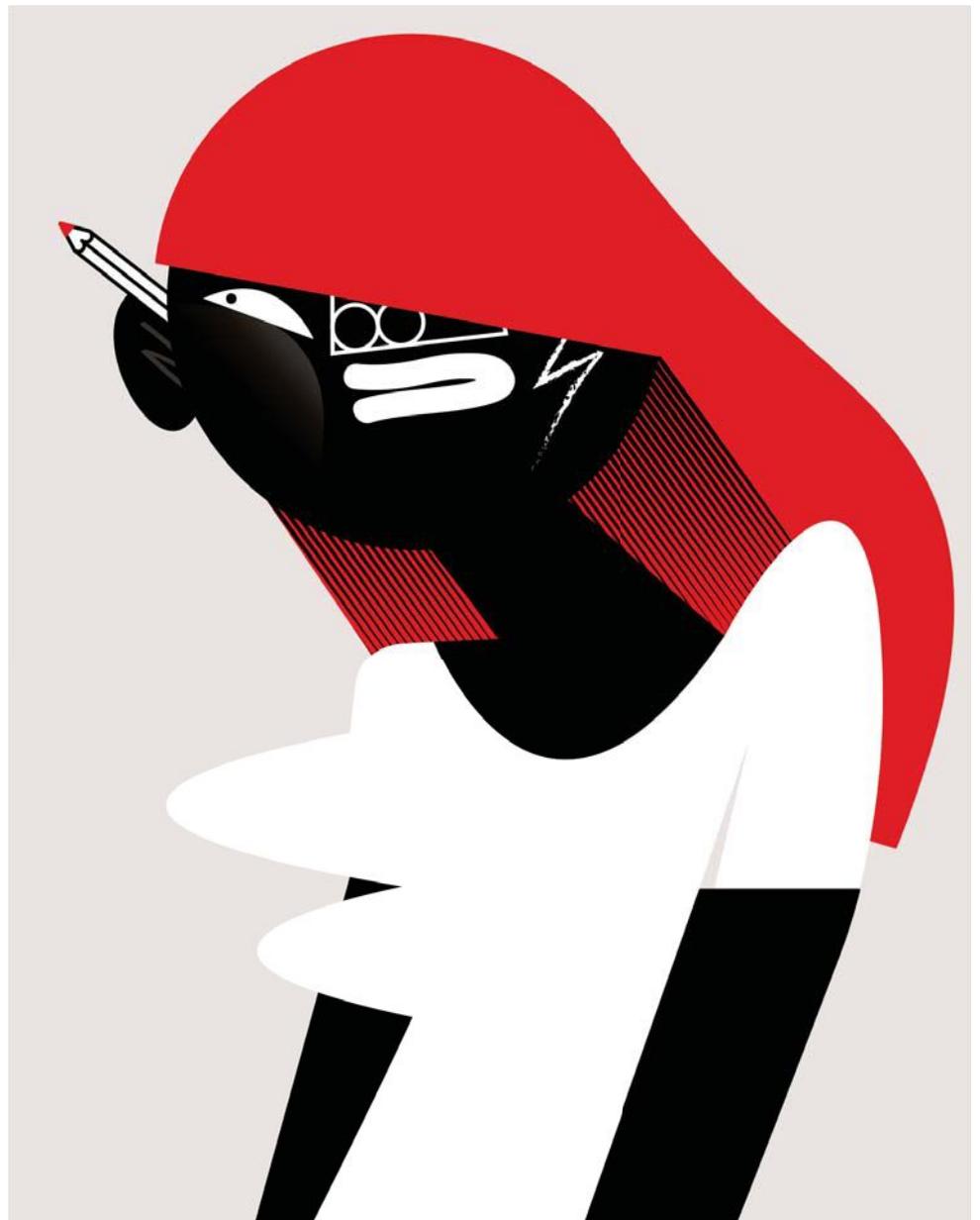
like Otegha Uwagba's new title Little Black Book are invaluable for creative women – and indeed all creatives – in developing strategies for things that hold them back.

### MAKING A DIFFERENCE
When you're not in a managerial role or are self-employed, it may feel like changing an industry-wide diversity issue is out of your grasp, but there are lots of things you can do. "Talk about it," says Kath Tudball, design director at The Partners. "Notice hidden biases and inequalities and speak up about them." From calling out offensive office 'banter' or refusing to sit on judging panels or give talks unless there's a representative mix of people to asking new employees whether they're okay with whatever pronoun you have assumed to use, being open and honest is a good way to start being an ally. Push clients to rethink their audience or include more diverse faces in their campaigns, and draw on resources like illustration network

Women Who Draw (where you can find female, LBTQ+ or people of colour specialist illustrators), racially diverse photo library Autograph Media and stereotype-bashing modelling agencies, such as Campbell Addy's Nii Agency.

Uwagba, who founded the creative networking platform Women Who, says that even freelancers have the ability to make a difference. "It's about the companies you endorse. Vote with your feet. Employers want the best staff working for them and if they realise they've got a rep problem then that starts to have an effect."

Neckles sums up why you should be addressing diversity: "If you're serious about existing, then you should be serious about widening the pool of people that you work with and learn from."

**FOUR ROUTES INTO FREELANCING**
*Insider advice for making the leap, whether you're laying the groundwork in advance or dealing with a redundancy.*

NEXT MONTH