

Julia Cassim

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Royal College of Art, Helen Hamlyn Centre

Academic and Professional background

Julia Cassim studied Fine Art and Art History, at Manchester College of Art and Design and then at Tokyo University of Fine Arts and Music as recipient of a Japanese Ministry of Education (Mombusho) postgraduate sculpture scholarship. She has an MPhil from the International Centre for Heritage Studies, University of Newcastle upon Tyne. From 1971-1998, Julia was resident in Japan. She was arts columnist of The Japan Times, wrote widely for other publications and founded Access Vision, a non-profit organisation for visually impaired people engaged in research on alternative modes to access and interpret museum collections of art and artefacts. She also curated and designed award-winning exhibitions for audiences with visual impairments and learning disabilities. 'Into the Light - Museums and their Visually Impaired Visitors', her book published by Shogakkan in 1998, draws on this experience. Her activity in this area has continued alongside her work in inclusive design with a further focus on the curation and design of exhibitions of work by visually impaired artists. 'The Insightful Eye' - a film she directed on this subject was commissioned for the [Singapore Fringe Festival 2007](#).

Research Interests

Julia joined the Helen Hamlyn Centre in 2000. Her main research focus since then has been the development of creative partnerships between critical users (i.e. those with severe disabilities) and designers; ways to involve them in the design process to encourage innovative, inclusive thinking and the development and dissemination of knowledge transfer methodologies on inclusive design to the design and business communities.

She organises the annual DBA Inclusive Design Challenge, Challenge workshops and Inclusive Design Challenges of shorter duration based on the model. In these, disabled people are partnered with professional design teams in live design projects to develop innovative products and services for the mainstream market. The aim is to develop and disseminate replicable examples of inclusive design and appropriate methodologies to enable designers, design managers, engineers

and marketing personnel understand the principles, practice and creative and commercial rationale for inclusive design and readily use that knowledge in their work. Julia is visiting professor at the User Science Institute of Kyushu University, is a trustee of the charities Mobility Choice and Ricability and co-chair of the Inclusive Worlds initiative in the RSA Design Directions awards awards. She serves as a consultant on inclusive design to the Natural History Museum She lectures widely on inclusive design in the UK and internationally to diverse organisations in the business, academic and voluntary sectors.

Current Projects

Julia organises Challenge workshops of differing iterations and lengths in academic, corporate and design contexts in the UK and overseas. To date, these have been run in the UK in collaboration with the College of Occupational Therapists, in Japan with the Universities of Kyushu, Kyoto and Tokyo and in Israel with the Holon Academic Institute of Technology as well as with Reckitt Benkiser, Nokia, TOTO and Roche.

In September 2007, she organised a successful 48 Hour Inclusive Design Challenge at Tokyo University as part of the Design Innovation Forum 2007 to celebrate the 20th anniversary of Nikkei Design, Japan's leading design magazine. It involved teams of designers from leading Japanese companies and Tokyo University interaction students. This was followed in October 2007 by a second workshop on the theme of wearables for the College of Occupational Therapists involving OTs, designers, clothing manufacturers and disabled users.

She is currently organising similar Challenges in Hong Kong, one for the Norwegian Design Council, a Challenge workshop on the theme of rheumatoid arthritis for a multinational company and one to launch DesignUK 2008 in Tokyo. Julia is a member of the [i~design project](#). The i~design research seeks to provide tools that enable industry to design products and services that can be used effectively by the population as a whole, including those who are older or disabled. The team includes academic and sector partners including the University of Cambridge and the Design Council.

Julia's role has involved the writing-up of inclusive design case studies drawn from the HHC Research Associates Programme and the DBA Inclusive Design Challenge. She is co-author with John Clarkson, Roger Coleman and Hua Dong of the Design for Inclusivity be published by Gower in 2007. She is also involved in the development of a database of users, user personas and accompanying user-centred methodologies and protocols.