

Week 1 – Introduction

Greetings! Sending you a warm welcome as this marks the beginning of a journey filled with enriching learning and discoveries. My name is Christina Yang, my pronouns are She/Her/Hers. I am a visiting student majoring in Graphic Design from OCAD University located in Toronto, Canada. One big deciding factor that led me to choose Edinburgh as the place to study abroad is my curiosity in its forward-thinking initiatives, specifically in areas such as recycling, air quality, pollution levels, waste management, and the green spaces. In fact, Edinburgh has earned the distinguished title of “the greenest city in the UK” (The City of Edinburgh Council, 2020).



Example of Graphic Design Brochure from my portfolio. Design by Christina Yang.

What fuels my interest to take this course in Environmental Design is the notion that humans can coexist harmoniously with

nature, rather than exploiting it for our own gains. This curiosity has led me to explore indigenous practices that embody the wisdom of nature in sustainable ways. Additionally, I am eager to delve into the material aspects of environmental design, as I believe this knowledge will support my practice in graphic design, particularly in the context of packaging.

I'd like to shine a spotlight on an environmentally conscious design in the local Edinburgh community: the Union of Genius. This business has built its foundation on ethical principles, showcasing a commitment to sustainable practices, supporting local suppliers, recycling packaging, and engaging in initiatives that support the homeless. One standout feature is their take-out packaging and cutlery, crafted from plant starch by Vegware, a sustainability-focused company you can explore further at <https://www.vegware.com/uk-en>. This choice not only reduces environmental impact but also promotes the use of eco-friendly materials.



Soup from Union of Genius. Photo by Christina Yang.

The Union of Genius doesn't stop at packaging; they've also implemented a rewarding loyalty program that encourages reusability and composting. Customers earn loyalty stamps when they bring their own soup containers or return the take-out containers for composting. This program promotes a circular economy, reduces waste, and attracts returning customers.

Furthermore, the Union of Genius demonstrates its commitment to the environment by opting for carbon-neutral deliveries using cargo bikes for their cafes. This choice aligns with their environmentally conscious ethos, reducing emissions associated with traditional delivery methods. All this to say, Union of Genius is noted as an example for businesses to promote sustainability by benefiting both the environment and the community. Plus, the soup is delicious! So it's a win in

my books.

Reference list

The City of Edinburgh Council (2020) *Evergreen Edinburgh leads the way*, The City of Edinburgh Council. Available at: <https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/news/article/12744/evergreen-edinburgh-leads-the-way#:~:text=Edinburgh%20has%20been%20named%20'the,levels%20of%20disposable%20fashion%20consumption>. (Accessed: 23 September 2023).

Plant-based compostable foodservice packaging (2023) Vegware. Available at: <https://www.vegware.com/uk-en/> (Accessed: 23 September 2023).