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Interior design students set to influence North East bar scene

Four interior design students from Northumbria University, Newcastle, have been named winners in a competition run by North East hospitality business, The Apartment Group.

The competition, which could also see the students' creative concepts influence the Newcastle bar and restaurant scene, was set up by Apartment Group Owner, Duncan Fisher, in conjunction with Northumbria Senior Lecturer, Al Brown.

The Apartment Group, which owns and manages a number of high profile

venues across the North East including As You Like It, House of Smith, Mr Lynch and Newton Hall, asked second year students to respond to a brief to transform the upper bar within its Sunderland establishment, Liberty Brown. Lizzie Cronin, Emma Howson, Alfie Johnston and Abi Hancock were chosen as winners following a shortlisting process that saw the students pitch their ideas to the Apartment Group board.

Emma, 20, said: “It was a really exciting project to work on. I had presented to professionals before but never as part of a live project, where there is an opportunity of actually seeing your ideas brought to life.”

Duncan Fisher, Owner, Apartment Group, said: “I have always enjoyed the concept and design work that goes into opening a new venue – but it’s often the hardest part. It’s about creating a world around the venue in terms of brand and marketing and you have to get it right. That’s where the students came into it.

“Being able to tap into the talent that is being nurtured at Northumbria was a great opportunity for us, to bring fresh ideas to the table, and we have been incredibly lucky to uncover lots of work – some of which I am hoping to use within one of our venues.”

Al Brown, Senior Lecturer, Northumbria University, added: “Not only does this kind of collaboration provide businesses in the region with new ideas; it also gives our students the opportunity to get a taste of what the business of design is all about. Pitching ideas is something that every designer will experience on a regular basis, and allowing our students to gain this experience early on really sets them up for a successful career, ensuring they graduate not just with a competitive CV, but also with the confidence to take their ideas out to the market. They all did fantastically well.”

The four winners were awarded cash prizes of £500 each by the Apartment Group to help with their studies. Emma said: “Our third year project will be all about critical design analysis, so having the extra funds to travel and see a wider variety of interior design examples will be a huge help for this. I am also thinking of heading to London now this summer to see the Free Range graduate shows and check out the competition!”

For more information about studying Interior Design at Northumbria University, Newcastle, visit www.northumbria.ac.uk/design or sign up for its open days on 27 and 28 June by visiting www.northumbria.ac.uk/openday.

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