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Turning design on its head

A Northumbria Design graduating student has been crowned Designer of the Year for his quirky range of upside-down mugs, double-hooked hangers and tiny stationery holders.

Henry Franks, who will graduate from Northumbria University with a BA 3D Design degree next week, has won first prize in the prestigious 2013 New Designers Awards for his dyslexia-inspired products.

The 23-year-old, originally from Oxford, impressed judges with his 'dyslexic objects' range which features Muglexia, inverted mugs designed to reference the inversion and flipping of letters and words that is common when

dyslexics read; Confused Coat Hangers with double-hooked heads; Coaster Plinth, an elevated coaster that keeps mugs out of harm's way; and Poor Memory Pen Pots, pots that hold only two pens at a time.

Henry, who is dyslexic, was inspired by his own condition to create unique redesigns of everyday products. He said: "I looked at the traits of dyslexia and applied them to objects. I've had problems with reading because of the letters inverting so I applied it to a redesign of mugs. The Muglexia products are more stable and balanced in the hand because the handle position is upside down and lower than normal. The inverted shape also keeps tea and coffee hotter for longer.

"Through these designs I wanted to provide alternatives to mundane products that don't often see new design innovation."

New Designers is an annual showcase of graduate projects from design schools around the UK. The show exhibits over 3,000 of the most talented, newly graduated designers from the country's leading universities.

The designs were judged by a panel of design and creative experts, including Ben Leedhan, Creative Director at Barclays, and Nina Jenkins, Senior Designer Manager at Virgin Atlantic Airways.

Judges commended Henry for 'reimagining everyday objects and joyfully combining utility with human behaviour, resulting in a clever, well-rounded collection.'

As winner of this year's award, Henry will receive £1,000 cash prize, advice from intellectual property lawyers Briffa as well as membership to their DesignProtect insurance service, advice from accountancy experts Rhodes & Rhodes, and access to a marketing and PR consultancy.

3D Design at Northumbria University has a reputation for producing informed, fluent communicators and highly skilled manufacturers who redefine everyday objects and make directional contributions to the design industry.

Famous design alumni include Apple's Sir Jonathan Ive, who leads the design team responsible for the iMac, iPod and the iPhone; and Warren Trezevant, of

Pixar, who has worked on movies including Finding Nemo, Monsters Inc, Toy Story and The Incredibles.

For more details about Henry Franks and his designs, visit www.henryfranks.net.

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Contacts



Rik Kendall

Press Contact

PR and Media Manager

Business and Law / Arts, Design & Social Sciences

rik.kendall@northumbria.ac.uk

07923 382339



Andrea Slowey

Press Contact

PR and Media Manager

Engineering and Environment / Health and Life Sciences

andrea.slowey@northumbria.ac.uk

07708 509436



Rachael Barwick

Press Contact

PR and Media Manager

rachael.barwick@northumbria.ac.uk

07377422415



James Fox

Press Contact

Student Communications Manager

james2.fox@northumbria.ac.uk



Kelly Elliott

Press Contact

PR and Media Officer

kelly2.elliott@northumbria.ac.uk



Gemma Brown

Press Contact

PR and Media Officer

gemma6.brown@northumbria.ac.uk