



From l-r: Andrew Richardson, Franz Pancho, Alex Slack, Chang Shi Qian and Lars Erik Holmquist

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Bigg Market past and future reflected in design project

Design students from Northumbria University have joined forces with Newcastle Business Improvement District company NE1 Ltd, to create a series of innovative concepts, all designed to attract new audiences to the city's Bigg Market.

As part of NE1's £3.2 million National Lottery Heritage Funded Bigg Market regeneration scheme, final year students from Northumbria's Interaction Design BA (Hons) programme were given a live brief, inviting them to come

up with ideas for digital installations which would reflect the area's historic past, and attract new audiences.

The winning proposal took inspiration from the historic Winter Zoo, which saw tigers, lions, giraffes and even an elephant housed within the Bigg Market's now demolished Town Hall during the 1960s.

The concept, by students Franz Pancho and Chang Shi Qian, would see the animals return to the Bigg Market in the form of holograms, projected onto street furniture using their unique Virtual Hologram Box (VOX).

Alex Slack, Bigg Market Project Manager at NE1, said the students had been able to bring new ideas and a fresh perspective to the challenge of changing perceptions of the Bigg Market and bringing a daytime audience back to the area.

He said: "It was evident that the students were not entrenched in their own views of the area which gave them the freedom to think differently and creatively.

"All of their projects used innovative digital technology to look back at the history of the Bigg Market, combining the old with the new to give people a real sense of Newcastle's historic heart, which is exactly what we are aiming to achieve through NE1's Bigg Market regeneration project."

A total of 16 students took part in the live brief, with eight concepts and prototypes then presented to NE1. As well as VOX, another project which impressed the NE1 panel was Hear The Bigg Market by students Ethan John Stewart and Josh Humphreys.

Their project uses Audio Spotlighting technology to transport the public back to a bygone era, with sounds of the past played out on loud speakers when visitors moved into certain spots within the Bigg Market.

The live brief was led by Professor of Innovation Lars Erik Holmquist and Senior Lecturer Andrew Richardson, of the Northumbria School of Design, and formed part of the Collaboration and Professional Associations module of Northumbria's Interaction Design degree.

Professor Holmquist said the project had given students a valuable insight into working on a real-life brief which would give them an advantage when they entered the world of work.

He explained: “The project has let the students experience what it is like working with a real client. They were given a problem to solve and had to carry out research to come up with concepts which provided solutions to that problem.

“But it’s not just design experience they gained, it’s everything else that comes with a real-life project – deadlines, financial considerations, client meetings – they covered it all.

“Projects of this sort give them a real advantage once they graduate and go out into the world of work and at Northumbria we are very proud of the way we prepare our students for employment.”

Northumbria University and NE1 have collaborated on a number of projects in the past, with students from Graphic Design, Fine Art and Fashion Communications also involved in the Bigg Market regeneration scheme.

Professor Holmquist explained: “This type of collaborative working is beneficial for everyone – the students get to experience what it is like to work on a real brief which benefits them when they graduate, and the client, in this case NE1, benefits from the students’ creativity and fresh ideas, inspired by the latest technology and research.”

Alex Slack of NE1 added: “The Bigg Market regeneration brief with Northumbria has been a really positive experience. Our partnership with the University is continuing to develop and I hope we can work with staff and students on more exciting projects in the future.”

For more information about NE1’s Bigg Market regeneration project please click [here](#).

Find out more about [Northumbria School of Design](#) and the [BA \(Hons\) Interaction Design programme](#).

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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