



Dr Julie Trueman from Northumbria University, Becky Gordon from Interface and design expert, Oliver Heath.

Dec 15, 2021 15:41 GMT

Interior Design students work with global design expert

Final year Interior Design students at Northumbria University have been working on a live brief with global expert in biophilic design, Oliver Heath.

Oliver, who champions the inclusion of nature and natural processes when designing the spaces where we all live, work and learn, recently visited the University to host a workshop within the [School of Design](#) alongside Becky Gordon, who is Regional Sustainability Manager for Interface, a leading international brand specialising in sustainable flooring products.

[Oliver has built a global design practice](#) from teaching and researching ways to make living spaces support day to day life, while not taking resources from the planet. With a strong focus on nature, wellbeing and community in the workplace, the students were challenged to design a hybrid space for co-working, using the footprint from the site occupied by workspace and contract furniture specialists, [Workpattern](#), in Gateshead.

[Dr Julie Trueman](#), Senior Lecturer in Interior Design at Northumbria, said the brief students had been set was not only research driven, with valuable input from Paul Glaister and Hannah Naylor-Skeats from Workpattern, who have years of experience in providing evidence-based office solutions for the workplace, but also responds to the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals on health and wellbeing, decent work for all, and responsible production and consumption.

“Understanding the requirements of a ‘third space’ working destination to address the future requirements of the nomadic worker is crucial in terms of practical needs, but moreover it demands that a sense of community can be established through strong design principles,” she added.

“This of course has been heightened by the pandemic which has led to isolation and significant impacts on mental health for many. We have been extremely fortunate to have Oliver Heath and Becky Gordon work with our year group on campus to add a higher level of practical experience and research.”

Biophilia is a concept which proposes that human beings share an innate attraction to nature and natural processes, benefiting from its restorative presence. However, as more and more of the world's population congregate in built-up urban environments, our opportunities to interact with nature are rapidly decreasing. Biophilic design seeks to strengthen our connection with the natural world in the many spaces in which we live and work, in three key ways:

- direct forms of nature via visual, and non-visual means - gentle natural movement, access to natural light, the seasons and air movement.
- indirect representations of nature, such as natural colours, patterns, textures, materials and structures.
- our emotional response to spaces, helping us to use them more

effectively and in the way intended.

Oliver, said there was a growing body of research on how the use of biophilic design can help create more restorative, recuperative and energising environments in many building types, such as schools, hospitals, homes and offices.

“It’s been a pleasure discussing the rapidly evolving area of ‘health and wellbeing in the built environment’ with the interior design students at Northumbria University – in particular focusing in on how we can enhance the human connection with nature in those spaces that are so important in our lives – otherwise known as Biophilic Design,” he added.

“At a time when we have become so conscious about the human impact on the wider natural environment, the opportunity to investigate nature-based solutions is an essential topic. Live design brief and investigations such as this are an important part of preparing students for the real world where businesses and organisations are increasingly wanting to create spaces that benefit the triple bottom line of people, productivity and the planet.”

The students are now in the final stages of the brief, having produced full concept schemes through to detail construction level, with a strong focus on the responsible specification of sustainable materials. They have each made a short video to present their work, with an emphasis on the research that has informed their design process. A shortlist will be sent to Oliver, Becky and the team at Workpattern and their comments will be welcomed.

Becky Gordon, Regional Sustainability Manager for [Interface](#), said: “It was fantastic to be involved in the workshop with Northumbria students. I hope the session has reinforced the proven benefits of biophilic and sustainable design on productivity and creativity.

“Taking a sustainable approach to a project underpins everything that Interface does and I know students will now be considering the positive impact that design choices can have on the carbon footprint of their final scheme.”

The [Interior Design](#) programme at Northumbria focuses on designing innovative interiors within new architecture and via the adaptive re-use of

existing buildings and their exterior presence. Strong collaborative relationships with national and international brands have also allowed students to work on real life project briefs with companies including retail design firm Dalziel + Pow, international architecture, design and planning firm, Gensler and local companies such as Bernard Interiors. Find out more [here](#) about study options at Northumbria University.

Northumbria is a research-rich, business-focused, professional university with a global reputation for academic excellence. Find out more about us at www.northumbria.ac.uk --- Please contact our Media and Communications team at media.communications@northumbria.ac.uk with any media enquiries or interview requests ---

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