



Northumbria Designer in Residence Joe Smith (right) greeting a visitor at the International Furniture Fair in New York

Jun 12, 2023 14:22 BST

## Northumbria named Best Design School at showcase New York Show

**Northumbria University has won a highly prestigious international award for the work of its globally recognised Design School.**

A team from the University travelled to New York recently to take part and exhibit alongside some of the world's leading design schools in the highly anticipated International Contemporary Furniture Fair ([ICFF](#)) – a showcase event for contemporary design held annually at the Javits Center. And at the show, the University was named Best Design School entry for its Tools for

Everyday Life project. Delivered by faculty designers in residence, recent graduates of the University's BA(hons) 3D Design Programme and academic staff, the Tools for Everyday Life project aims to create objects that treat people not as passive witnesses of design, but as skilled operators of rewarding products.

Judges at the event commented on Northumbria's ability for academic staff to work alongside recent graduates and praised the strength of the curation of the University's presentation.

Commenting on the Tools for Everyday Life project Senior Northumbria Design School lecturer Rickard Whittingham said: "Our starting point is to view people as skilled practitioners and everyday life as skilled activity. Designing products as 'tools' engages a craftsman's understanding of materials and processes in both the making and use of things. We are inspired by how good tools provide a model for how products both enable and reward skill development. Good tools meaningfully connect their operators with tasks."

He added: "As one of just two UK universities attending the ICFF, we were exhibiting alongside top design schools from across the world, which was an ideal platform for us to promote Northumbria's brand of industry-facing design education on the global stage. But just as importantly we went to meet up with other design schools and to share ideas with academic colleagues and other students to see what exciting things are happening in the industry.

"Our intention was also to profile raise and to help our recent graduates have those conversations with industry experts and contacts that can really help their careers, so winning the award was a surprise – but a very pleasant one. We were confident we had a strong collection of work, but you don't always know what the judges are looking for and we were up against some of the premier courses and design schools anywhere in the world. It helps keep Northumbria's name right up there with the best."

The Best Design School award was sponsored by well-known Italian-based international homeware brand, Alessi, with its chairman and globally renowned designer Alberto Alessi providing a foreword on why the category was important. Assistant Professor Whittingham added: "Alessi is a big name in the industry and to have this recognition from a designer as well regarded

as Alberto Alessi means a great deal.”

For more information on Northumbria School of Design please visit  
[www.northumbria.ac.uk/design](http://www.northumbria.ac.uk/design)

---

UNIVERSITY OF THE YEAR 2022 (Times Higher Education Awards)

Northumbria is a research-intensive university that unlocks potential for all, changing lives regionally, nationally and internationally. Find out more about us at [www.northumbria.ac.uk](http://www.northumbria.ac.uk)

--- Please contact [media.communications@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:andrea.slowey@northumbria.ac.uk)

07708 509436



**Rachael Barwick**

Press Contact

PR and Media Manager

[rachael.barwick@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:rachael.barwick@northumbria.ac.uk)

07377422415



**James Fox**

Press Contact

Student Communications Manager

[james2.fox@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:james2.fox@northumbria.ac.uk)



**Kelly Elliott**

Press Contact

PR and Media Officer

[kelly2.elliott@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:kelly2.elliott@northumbria.ac.uk)



**Gemma Brown**

Press Contact

PR and Media Officer

[gemma6.brown@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:gemma6.brown@northumbria.ac.uk)