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Rethinking the future: the importance of responsible innovation

Northumbria University's Salon initiative was just one of the innovative projects discussed at a recent panel debate exploring the future of design.

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‘Designing the Future’ is a unique series of events exploring different perspectives on the way design influences our daily lives and how it will impact our future ways of living. The second event in the series recently took place at the Discovery Museum and was led by Northumbria’s Director of Innovation Design Mark Bailey. Joined by a high-profile speaker Unilever’s Paul Howells, Mark debated the question, ‘What on earth is responsible innovation anyway?’. The debate explored the challenges that organisations face with continued pressures to innovate, concerns about peak oil, population growth, energy costs and water shortages needing to be balanced against consumer demand. One of the projects at the heart of the debate was Northumbria School of Design’s, Royal Academy of Engineering funded, Salon initiative which explores how designers can tackle the issues of expanding populations and diminishing resources.

Mark said: “It was great to have an opportunity to discuss ideas around responsibility in innovation in a public forum. It’s so important for academics to test their theoretical knowledge in practical situations.

“This is why our partnerships with organisations such as Unilever are so important and it was particularly valuable to be able to put some of our thinking into a global context by having Paul Howells with us for the event. Our research into design-led responsible innovation continues with, working with our partners through Innovate, with our Salon initiative and through the Ellen MacArthur Foundations Disruptive Innovation festival. We’re exploring the role that Designers, Innovators, Businesses, Policy-makers and Consumers play in crafting a sustainable future.

“These events with TWAM are offering us a special opportunity to explore what we can of the future through learning from the past and present; I’m looking forward to the following two events in the series, both of which will put design research and practice into a socially responsible innovation context.”

To view a short film about the Salon initiative, featuring Northumbria’s RAE Visiting Professor Adrian Stokes, academics and students as well as experts Mark Adams of Vitsoe, Sevrà Davies of RSA and Nick Oakley from Intel, click [here](#).

Mark’s event was followed by a third debate in the ‘Designing the Future’ series led by Professor Bob Young on the theme of ‘How can museums and galleries respond to the 21st Century?’.

Northumbria University’s Associate Dean (Business and Engagement) for Arts, Design and Social Sciences, Dr Heather Robson, said: “Delivered in collaboration with Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums, one of our key strategic partners in the North East, this series of events is tackling the big questions facing the design industry today.

“Led by experts from Northumbria’s world-class School of Design and featuring panels made up of high-profile industry names, these special talks are looking back at the past, using objects and artefacts from Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums, to better imagine the possible future of this exciting field.

“I’m very much looking forward to the remaining event in this series as we build towards celebrating 40 years of Design for Industry at Northumbria next year.”

The final event in the series will be led by Dr Stuart English and will take place at Discovery Museum on 1 December. To book tickets, please click [here](#). Tickets are free but booking is essential. Art and Design at Northumbria was recently ranked in the UK Top 20 for research power. For more information about studying Design at Northumbria University sign up for one of our Open Days at: www.northumbria.ac.uk/openday

Northumbria is a research-rich, business-focused, professional university with a global reputation for academic excellence. To find out more about our courses go to www.northumbria.ac.uk

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