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## Northumbria talent shines in design for disaster competition

Northumbria University students have dominated the final shortlist of a national design competition with their solutions for disaster relief.

Design students Michael Heppenstall, James Scott, and Josh Allsopp stood out amongst 82 entrants from across the UK, reaching the final five of the 2013 Design Innovation Plastics Award.

The competition brief challenged undergraduate and postgraduate design students from universities across the UK and Ireland to design a product that

would help to alleviate the suffering of disaster victims. The competition judges felt that the designs of the five finalists fully addressed the brief.

James Scott was shortlisted for his Rain Pod, a tent constructed to provide shelter and harvest clean drinking water for displaced people living in areas prone to monsoon weather. The Rain Pod collects and filters fresh rain water as well as providing secure shelter.

Describing his design, he said: “Monsoons affect vast areas throughout Asia every year. The greatest risk for flood victims is water contamination. In chaotic relief camps, Cholera and Rotavirus can become deadly. Rainwater is a suitable source of clean drinking water if it can be harvested before contamination.

“The Rain Pod contains all that is needed to survive the disaster, including extra food and medicine.”

Fellow finalist Josh Allsopp’s Disaster Casket is a biodegradable casket that can act as a stretcher, storage container, morgue table and biodegradable coffin.

“How corpses are dealt with has a long lasting traumatic effect on disaster victims,” Josh said. “My product aims to ease the trauma created by a natural disaster by dealing with the dead in a dignified way.”

Michael Heppenstall impressed with his Safeplace design – a waterproof container that protects digital and physical documents and important information from damage in flood situations. The plastic device is designed for people living in flood risk areas in first world countries and is able to hold A4 documents and a USB stick securely.

He said: “I am looking forward to being able to present my work to a group of individuals who have a real background and knowledge of the industry in which I one day hope to be a part of.”

Senior Lecturer in Design for Industry, Simon Scott-Harden, said: “Josh, James and Michael have all shown great awareness of what is needed in times of disaster. Through in-depth research into the problem they were able to

identify some interesting design opportunities to produce solutions that really help to alleviate suffering.

“I would like to congratulate all students on the Design for Industry course who entered the competition for their hard work. We wish the three finalists all the success in the final in July.”

The three Northumbria students, along with the two other finalists from Loughborough University and the Royal College of Art, will receive feedback from the competition judges to help them refine their designs for the second judging session, which takes place at the British Plastics Federation on 24 May.

The final winner will be named at an awards ceremony on July 5. All five of the finalists will be awarded a work placement with industry sponsors of the competition.

Design Innovation in Plastics is Europe’s longest running student plastics award, established to encourage innovative product design in plastics. The annual competition is open to all undergraduate and postgraduate students across the UK.

Martin Sixsmith, chairman of Design Innovation in Plastics, said: “We need to be innovative and look at new ways to tackle any disaster, and this competition has been the perfect platform for design students across the UK and Ireland to be creative and design a product that could help make a big difference.”

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