

More than being there: the Bachelor of Industrial Design at the University of New South Wales

Author:

Demirbilek, Oya; Tantaró, Nick

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IT’S MORE THAN BEING TNEREFFID

THE BACHELOR OF INDUSTRIAL DESIGN PROGRAM
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

When it comes to industrial design, there is definitely an attraction in being different, although the irony today is that “different” is often interpreted as “fashionable”. But is this enough?

In a world where industrial design is intrinsically linked to its potential to do well in the market place, the Bachelor of Industrial Design Program at the University of New South Wales (UNSW) takes on a human-centred and holistic approach to distilling the essence of successful product design which, importantly, includes the role of both the industrial designer and the end user.

Industrial design can demand an unflinching acceptance to find “true purpose” and uncover how the product and its design sit in the scheme of things. It can insist on a responsibility to the past, to the present and of course, to the future. At its heart, there is often a devotion to discipline that is far removed from mere flights of fancy. On the other hand, its spirit must be free to pluck ideas from the very ether around us, drawing inspiration from the well of imagination and embracing fun.

It almost sounds like the quest for the Holy Grail rather than a better toaster. Yet, doesn't industrial design by its very nature build a bridge connecting human beings to objects? (And doesn't good design make it easier for the marketers to instil personality in the product to allow us to bond more easily?)

Indeed, while form and functionality are essential ingredients in industrial design, the way “humanness” is integrated into the product has become a cornerstone in the challenge the industrial designer faces in creating a fresh approach. Taking into account that an important part of the success of a product design may be measured by the strength of its connection to the end user, the Industrial Design Program places a strong emphasis on developing product knowledge in relation to human needs together with a thorough understanding of the processes involved in research, development and evaluation.

In combination with this approach, UNSW Industrial Design Program Staff members take pride in providing a nurturing environment to bring out the unique talents in each student by encouraging originality and the ability to see things from outside the square.

In preparing students for rewarding careers, the Industrial Design Program utilises a number of resources to equip students with as complete a picture as possible together with real world applications in the field of industrial design.

For example, working in collaboration with the Faculties of Business and Engineering, the Industrial Design Program is able to successfully marry both technical and commercial considerations to the human elements in design for a range of consumer and capital products used in domestic, commercial and industrial environments.

To obtain that important global perspective and participation, a number of international design activities and collaborative projects are continually being forged with institutions in Europe, America and Japan. Recently, a team of our industrial design and interior architecture students were invited to the Milan Furniture Fair as part of the Dining Design exhibition of 10 restaurants of the future designed by students

from 10 selected international universities. Working with leading furniture company Molteni & C to build a section of a working restaurant called “Carnivora”, our students blitzed the show with their “furniture kitchen” concept in dining. These real life experiences not only hone design skills, they also provide students with an opportunity to learn a number of invaluable lessons such as the role of leadership and teamwork together with importance of planning and organisation in a real setting.

Many of our students continue their experience overseas. Dyson, Nokia, Motorola, Nakamichi and Lego are just some of the overseas companies that have employed our graduates.

Locally, you can find our graduates flexing their creativity in companies such as Blue Sky Design, Resmed, Box&Dice, Neoz Lighting, Street Furniture Australia, Mambo, Rode Microphones, and Design + Industry.

To encourage the highest levels of excellence, students are encouraged to create new or challenge existing processes and product designs by entering national and international design competitions and awards.

Many innovative student designs have garnered both local and international praise and recognition such as the Rockpool waterless dishwasher (design team: Ross Nichols, Doug Nash, Oysten Lie) that took first place honours in New York in 2004 as part of the International Electrolux Global Design Lab (among 10 selected design schools).

When it comes to significant recognition for student achievements, the Australian Design Award - Dyson Student Award stands as a beacon in the field of product design. Last year Industrial Design Program students were honoured by receiving two prizes in this prestigious Award. Despite even stiffer competition this year, UNSW industrial design graduates again impressed the judges who awarded a total of three prizes. These award-winning designs were a result of thorough research, problem solving, attention to detail and creative thinking - traits that help open doors into the competitive industrial design industry.

Naturally, the success of these projects was helped by the strong partnership that exists between students and the team of dedicated teaching staff in the Industrial Design Program. It has been said that “inspiration breeds inspiration” and this cannot be truer than in the field of industrial design. The Industrial Design Program is passion heavy with a pool of highly skilled lecturers such as Jonathan Talbot. Hailing from a successful industrial design background, Jonathan directs industrial design studio courses, teaches ergonomics and computer modelling while actively researching the application of “user-centred design” to enhance the usability outcomes of industrial design activity.

In fact, the Australian Design Award - Dyson Student Award has awarded the Industrial Design Program a trophy two years running (2006 and 2007) in recognition of the quality teaching that nurtured award winning students. Summing up, the UNSW Industrial Design Program is based on a multidisciplinary approach to user-centred design that encompasses real world applications, encouraging individual creative development with a deep understanding of such elements as form, function and commerciality for designing products that can claim to be more than just tnereffid.

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Pictured (L-R): Oya Demirbilek, Head, Industrial Design, Jonathan Talbot, Senior Lecturer, Mariano Ramirez, Lecturer, Steve Ward, Lecturer and Lance Green, Head of Postgraduate Studies, Industrial Design, Faculty of the Built Environment, University of New South Wales

