



Symposium to explore design's links with science

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By Angus Montgomery

The links between design and science have been highlighted recently by the Design Council's formal tie-up with the Technology Strategy Board and Royal College of Art rector Professor Sir Christopher Frayling's campaign to have design education recategorised in funding terms to bring it closer to science subjects.

These links are being further emphasised by an international symposium organised by Kingston University's Design Research Centre, Design Plus at Kingston University (which promotes collaboration between businesses and universities), and the Colour Group Great Britain.

The event, titled Integration of Design and Science: Light, Materials, Colour and Environment, is being held at the Royal Institute of British Architects in London on 24 June. It will, according to the organisers, look at 'issues of inclusive and sensory design within the built environment, social responsibility of design and the role of beauty, comfort and confidence in serving and engaging users of environment'.

It is the second in the series of Integration of Design and Science events; the first, held in June 2007, looked at environments and wellbeing, focusing particularly on healthcare interiors.

This year's symposium is split into two areas: light and material, and colour and material. Among those discussing light and material will be Rachel Wingfield, founder of consultancy Loop.ph and research fellow at Central St Martins College of Art and Design in London. Wingfield, whose work fuses state-of-the-art lighting with domestic design, says her talk will focus on environmentally responsive textiles which use materials to harness light.

Loop.ph, she says, has been working with Risø DTU, the national laboratory for sustainable energy in Denmark. Based on the work of Dr Frederik Krebs and Torben Damgaard Nielsen, the consultancy has been developing printed organic solar panels. Wingfield says Loop.ph wants to integrate these panels into its pavilions and even use them to create a modular lamp for the World Bank's Lighting Africa project. This project is at the prototyping stage, and Wingfield says she is hoping to have it ready by December.

Also looking at the subject of lighting and materials will be Hungarian architect Áron Losonczi, who will be discussing his invention Litracon, a combination of optical fibres and fine concrete which acts as a light-transmitting concrete that can be used as a building material. And as part of his talk, titled Light as Material, Jack Mama, creative director of the Probes programme at Philips Design, will show concepts from Philips' work to explore new forms for LED bulbs, and 'emotional sensing garments', which, he says, can use pattern and colour change to interact with the wearer's emotional state.

Among those examining colour and material will be artist Martin Richman, who was recently appointed alongside Jason Bruges Studio to work on the bridges and underpasses in the London 2012 Olympic Park in east London, and Jakki Dehn, a reader in product and furniture design at Kingston University, who will be looking at the creative potential of materials made from waste.

Designer Amanda Russell, of Soulfood Studio, is giving a talk titled Do Children Learn Better if Their Classroom is Yellow?, which will look at how 'senses and environments can have a direct effect on the people who use them'.

Using Soulfood's projects at Latchmere Junior School in Kingston and Kingston Hospital as exemplars, Russell says she will be looking at principles which build on US architect and behavioural scientist Roger Ulrich's research on the effects of healthcare environments on healing rates, and also applying these principles to education.

Soulfood designed a blue relaxation room and a yellow creative room for Latchmere School. 'The more natural blue colours calm occupants, while the creative room is much busier, and has quite a lot of texture,' says Russell.

She adds that while research on the use of colour in interior design has been around for a while, it is beginning to be formalised and recognised, as demonstrated by the Latchmere work being awarded a Government-sponsored CARA

(Creativity Action Research Award).

Some other issues being addressed

- Vibeke Riisberg, associate professor at the department of textiles at Kolding School of Design in Denmark, will look at how decorative textiles can adjust daylight and solar heat in offices
- Anke Jacob, post-doctoral research fellow at Kingston University, will look at lights, surfaces and illusions
- Hilary Dalke, professor of design for environments and director of the Design Research Centre, Kingston University, will study colour contrast and visual impairment

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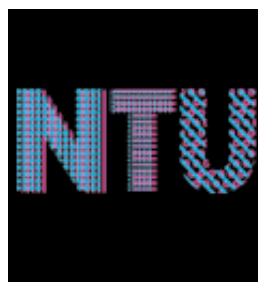
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