

Edited by Rachael Philipps

Sell Out

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DESIGN'S NEW GRAVY TRAIN

A design exhibition with a £16,000 difference.

There's one crucial element that seems to be missing from a lot of design exhibitions: a winner. A bit of competition (and a £16,000 top prize) can do huge amounts to up the ante and get exhibitors and visitors a lot more interested. This is just one aspect that sets the Oxo/Peugeot Design Awards Exhibition (now in its second year) apart from the umpteen furniture and design events taking place across London this summer.

Then there's the consumer-friendly approach to visitors which underscores the event. This is an interactive exhibition with everyday objects that visitors are invited to touch, explore and connect with. It signals a welcome shift from uptight, museum-style exhibitions with a strict look-but-don't-touch atmosphere.

The aim of the event is not only to laud great design but to make it accessible to a public who may not know their Pantone from their Paulin.

And even though the great and the good will have voted on the winner, the organisers are interested in hearing what we think. While the exhibition is running, visitors get to vote for their favourite design, with £1,000 going to the winner and £500 for the runner-up.

The judges whittled away at over 300 entries this year, ranging from furniture and lighting to ceramics and textiles, with fledgling designers and established names vying for a spot in the exhibition's shortlist of 11 products.

This year's finalists include familiar names like Michael Sodeau (whose work has already been stocked at design emporia like SCP) and El Ultimo Grito (well known for its 'Mind the Gap' coffee table which was a category finalist at last year's exhibition).

Vying with established designers are the young guns. One of the brightest new designers to be

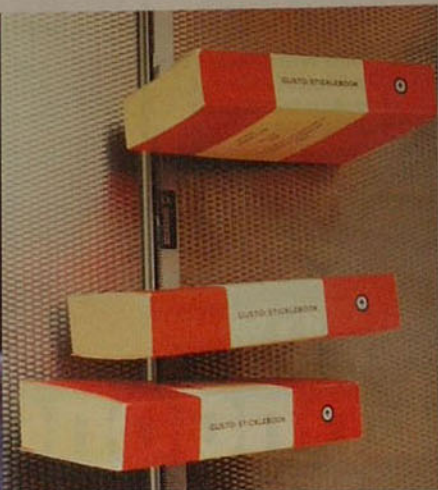
shortlisted is a recent graduate from the Royal College of Art, Hector Serrano. The Spanish designer has created the Super Patata, an incredibly tactile light made from a Latex balloon, salt and a lamp. This simple combination is highly alluring – the salt settles in the balloon and the

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lamp gives off an intriguingly warm glow. Another contender that caught our eye for top prize is the Sticklebook Bookshelf, by duo Gusto Design (London-based designers Neil Barron and Rys Newman). Combining original design with practicality (smart storage is always a plus), the wall-mounted rail has tiny teeth that grip on to the pages of paperbacks,

suspending them adjacent to the wall.

Andrew Purves (proprietor of design shop Purves & Purves), was on the panel of eight judges who shortlisted the entries and selected the winner. 'I was looking at the overall design', he explains, 'from aesthetic to the intellectual aspects.' Of course, being one of London's premier stockists of designer interiors gear, Purves was also looking at the saleability of the products. 'I asked myself: Can it be used? Can it be made? Will it sell?' With several of the shortlisted products getting a big 'Yes' to each of these questions, don't be surprised to see some of these designs in shops next year. *David Nicholls*
Oxo/Peugeot Design Awards Exhibition, Oxo Tower Wharf, Bargehouse St, South Bank, SE1 (020 7401 2255) Blackfriars or Waterloo tube/BR. Open daily 11am-6pm. Exhibition runs until July 30. Adm free.



CRAFTY CLASSICS 'Super Patata' (left) by Hector Serrano (pictured above left), and 'Sticklebook' bookshelves (top) designed by Gusto Design (pictured above right).

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