

Bright Ideas from the RSA

Each year since 1924 the Royal Society of Arts has run its prestigious Student Design Award Competition. This invites students on HE or FE design courses to enter work in a variety of categories ranging from stamp design to engineering. The competition is an important annual event for participating colleges many of whose winners go on to make a significant impact in the commercial world. A recent example is Jonathan Ive, chief designer for Apple.

During a recent round of awards TEP collaborated with Siemens and Hewlett Packard to sponsor a new competition category: Bright Ideas. This invited design ideas for exploiting electroluminescent (EL) film a relatively new ultra-thin flexible light-emitting material. EL film is already used widely for backlighting in consumer products (e.g. mobile phones) and in advertising, but its unique properties suggest that there are many more applications. The competition entrants did not disappoint in this respect with over 40 different ideas reaching the judging stage. These included proposals for illuminated childrens books, an

emergency marker buoy, domestic lighting and an emergency shelter. Because of the high number and quality of entrants, this category produced two winners: an illuminated guitar finger board for musician training and a highly innovative lamp inspired by a double helix molecule.

A surprisingly large number of the entries were made using rapid prototyping techniques including the articulating elements of the beautifully constructed lamp. A sample materials kit on offer to entrants included some Polymorph. This was used by many for prototyping including those entering other competitions such as toothbrush design!

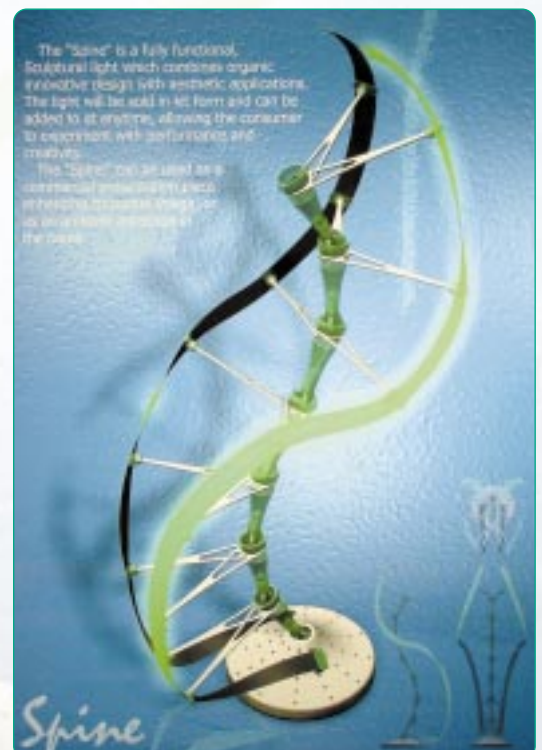
An important feature of TEP's involvement in this competition is to illustrate new opportunities for aspiring designers in schools. The resources which are provided for the competition are therefore made available to schools at a cost made possible by large scale purchasing for the competition. EL film and power supplies are now currently available. At the start of 2002 the resources for the

current RSA competition sponsored by TEP will become available to UK schools for the first time. This year's competition invites students to design a smart product. Students are supplied with a miniature self-contained control module that can be built into a product. Despite its hi-tech provenance, the system is incredibly easy to use and will be affordable. Further details of availability to schools in January 2002 will be posted on the TEP website and in the next issue of News and Views.

Further information on the RSA Student Design Awards competition can be obtained by accessing the RSA website at www.rsa.org.uk

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TEP will be offering a limited number of sets of RSA smart modules to schools free of charge in early 2002 - in return for information on potential applications. For further information see the *next issue* of News and Views.



The "Spine" is a fully functional, sculptural light which combines organic, innovative design with aesthetic applications. The light will be used in all forms and can be added to it anytime, allowing the consumer to experiment with configurations and materials. The "Spine" can be used as a commercial product, such as for interior lighting, or as a decorative element in the home.