During 2005/2006 twenty one research networks were supported by the scheme, each exploring a different aspect of future design activity. Professor Tom Inns, Director of the Initiative, worked closely with the design community and the two research councils to establish the Phase 2 Research Project Call for the Initiative. Over 60 applications for Phase 2 projects were submitted in April 2006, 19 were selected for funding by an interdisciplinary commissioning panel in September 2006. The selected projects include investigations into the future of the UK design consultancy industry, research into fashion design, explorations of branded places, research into the design of services and into the design of the 21st Century office environment for elderly workers.

Over the next 2 years Professor Inns and Initiative Co-ordinator Vicky Hale will organise a series of workshops and conferences to support this research activity. The first of

THE AHRC AND EPSRC’s ‘Designing for the 21st Century’ research initiative is now entering its second phase of research activity. Vicky Hale brings us up to date on the 5 year initiative, which is being run from the University of Dundee, to support interdisciplinary design research in Universities across the UK.
By detecting the characteristics of movement it responds to the mood of those people around it. Snake Robot invites its audience to engage in spontaneous dance duets by encouraging them to express their feelings through movement.

A TWO-METRE HIGH robotic snake which uses sensors to react to people nearby is being developed by experts at Nottingham Trent University. ‘Snake Robot’, which is constructed from a series of vertebrae containing pneumatic muscles, detects the mood and movement of its viewer and reacts accordingly.

A diverse team of academics and technical staff is behind the interdisciplinary project, including control technologist Dr Philip Breedon, product designer Jamie Billing and choreographer Dr Sophia Lycouris. The trio are from the university’s School of Art and Design and School of Architecture, Design and the Built Environment.

Dr Breedon specialises in control technology in artistic projects and the use of pneumatics which respond through movement in interactive sculptures; Jamie Billing’s area of expertise is ‘critical’ design which exposes rather than conceals the product’s technology, and Dr Lycouris is interested in how dynamic changes in physical spaces affect the perception of that space.

Dr Lycouris said: ‘This is an elegant robotic structure with human presence and the ability to express its emotions through articulate combinations of snake-like movement.'