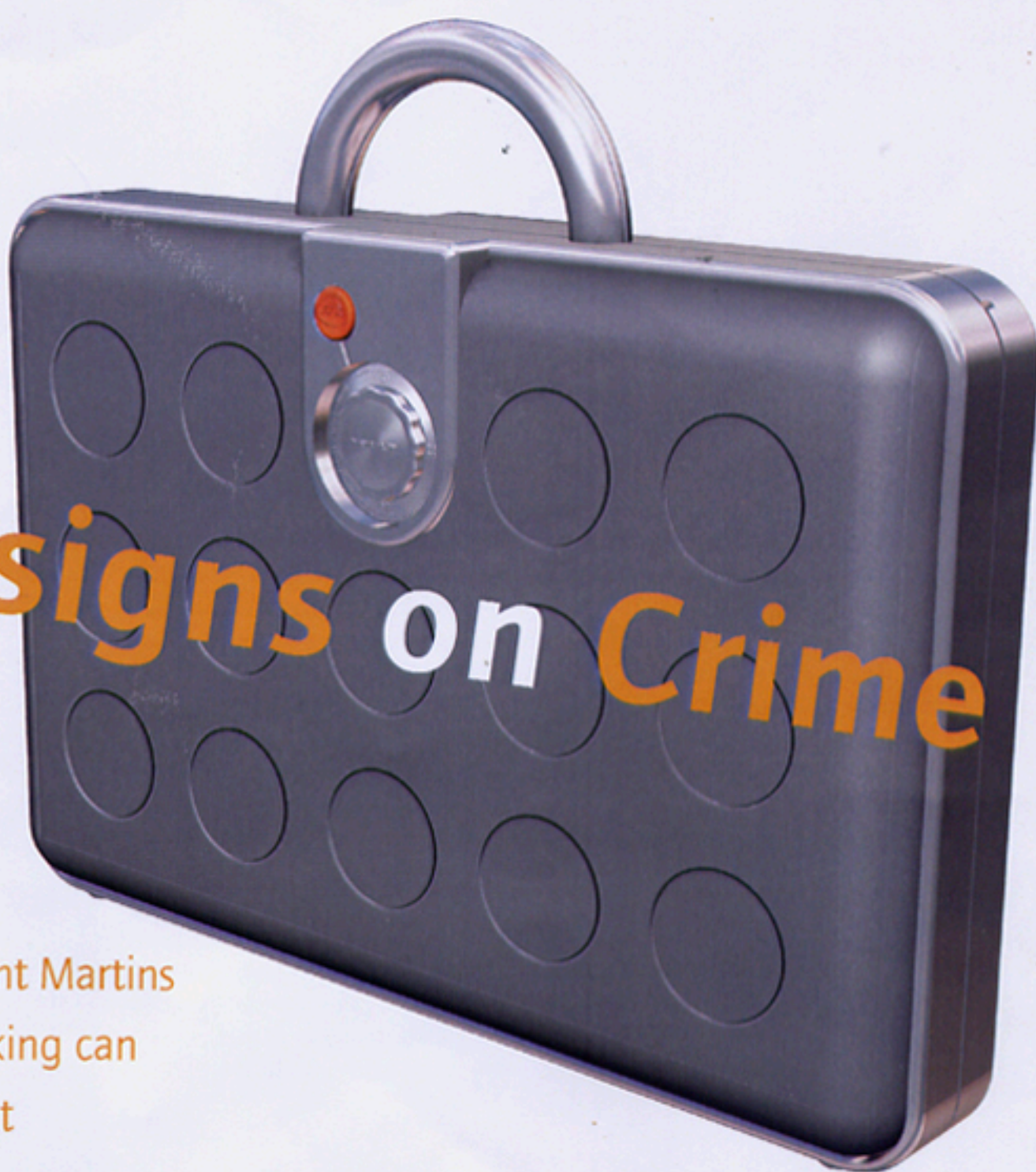


review

Designs on Crime

A multifaceted anti-crime research initiative at Central Saint Martins demonstrates that creative thinking can outsmart criminals. By Fay Sweet



Top Right
Volt Case, anti-theft briefcase
by Andrew Fowkes, Senior Tutor,
BA (Hons) Product Design

Above
M-bracelet, anti-theft
handbag by Jonna Naumanen,
MA Industrial Design

It is a design dilemma; how do you make things attractive and appealing to the consumer and, at the same time, undesirable to the thief. The conundrum has long fascinated Dr Lorraine Gamman, senior research fellow in the Department of Graphics and Industrial Design at Central Saint Martins, and it has now inspired a vast series of anti-crime design projects, exhibitions and pieces of research.

'I saw my job as helping to persuade designers that crime issues were relevant to them and their work'

Having already developed an interest in design and crime with a PhD on shoplifting, Dr Gamman took up her current post in April 2000. 'In this new role, I saw my job as helping to persuade designers that crime issues were relevant to them and their work and that crime prevention could be an integral part of the design process,' she explains. 'No one wants to live in a fortress society, so

the message is that design provides a way of building in anti-theft features and reducing opportunities for criminals. The result has a double benefit, fewer people become criminalized and fewer people become victims.'

The impressive series of projects took as its starting point the *Design Against Crime* joint initiative of The Home Office and Design Council intended to tackle and reduce the annual £60bn cost of crime in

talks,' recalls Gamman. 'I invited in gurus from the Home Office, the Jill Dando Crime Science Research Centre at UCL, and scholars from LSE who have been working on situational crime prevention to speak to CSM designers and researchers and students.' At least two papers from this seminar series have led to student projects on anti burglary and anti stalking. This work was entered for the first Design Council Design Challenge competition.

Among the first series of results to emerge from Dr Gamman's ongoing research is the *In The Bag* – a multifaceted research and design project exploring solutions to bag theft, pickpocketing and street crime. Here CSM staff and students are working on a wide-ranging series of ideas including *Stop Thief* chair designs which would help prevent bag theft, how to make secure personal products such as mobile phones, bags which are designed to be difficult for thieves to open or slash and ideas for safer environments.

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A number of CSM departments including Product Design, Industrial Design and Textiles are collaborating in the *Design Against Crime* initiative. From Product Design, for example, senior designer Jackie Piper, is working on a project to customize and design furniture in ways to reduce bag theft. The first eye-catching results include incorporating a slot into chair seats so that a bag handle can be held securely in place. In fact a series of innovative chair adaptations have already been created and formed their own small travelling exhibition first shown at Designer's Block in September 2000 and at the end of the year at the Royal Institute of British Architects. From Textiles, staff including Carole Collet and Sharon Baurley became fascinated with the idea of anti-slash and

but has also received an enthusiastic response from the Police force which is using the material in some of its own seminars. 'It has been really heartening to see people's enthusiastic and inspired response to this challenge and all designers have put in a huge effort with excellent results,' says Gamman. 'Our aims now are to continue with a range of projects including new areas such as tackling stalking and house burglary.' As part of the latest work, links have been formalised between CSM and the Jill Dando Crime Science Centre. Says Gamman: 'having this forum for the exchange of information and ideas is absolutely invaluable for both of us, we have completely different approaches but it is precisely those differences which unite us and make us strong.'

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anti-slash materials and produced designs which were both beautiful and secure. The bag manufacturer H Fine & Co help make up exhibition prototypes.

By the end of 2000 the project had inspired enough material to form an exhibition and *In the Bag and Off the Wall* ran at the Design Museum in London during December 2000 and January 2001. The opening appeared in six TV programmes and coverage of the show was featured extensively in the national press. This event was swiftly followed by another related show – *Don't Tempt Me* – which took place at the Milan Furniture Fair in spring 2001 and then travelled to Barcelona. And to celebrate the results of the first year of this initiative a CD ROM design resource, funded by The Home Office, was produced called *In The Bag*. This was designed to appeal to and inspire designers,

The first *Design Against Crime* manufactured product is also within sight. Dr. Gamman and CSM designers are currently working with designer-manufacturer Vexed Generation, known for 'steath' fashion, to develop anti-theft bag/wearable concepts into products for sale in the marketplace. Says Gamman: 'We obtained research funding support from Design Council and the London Institute in January 2002 - to finalize concepts and retest the efficacy of the bags with the Metropolitan and British Transport Police and self defence advisors.'

The first six Vexed/CSM DAC products are due to be launched in May 2002 with a further six to follow in the autumn. Gamman concludes: 'We are confident that there is a market out there and the good news is that we are already seeing interest from the press and would-be users.'



Clockwise from top
Stop Thief chair designs by
Jackie Piper, Senior Designer,
BA (Hons) Product Design

One Way by Ralph Ball, Principal
Lecturer, MA Industrial Design

In the Bag and off the Wall
exhibition at the Design Museum

Don't Tempt Me exhibition in
Barcelona and Milan