

NUS design students show their works, including kitchen tools for blind people



2 of 2 Invited guests looking at a showcase of design works by students from the National University of Singapore (NUS) School of Design and Environment, at a graduation show at the National Design Centre on June 2, 2017. ST PHOTO: KEVIN LIM

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Ng Wei Kai

SINGAPORE - Handling kitchen tools can be dangerous, and even experienced cooks often get cuts and burns.

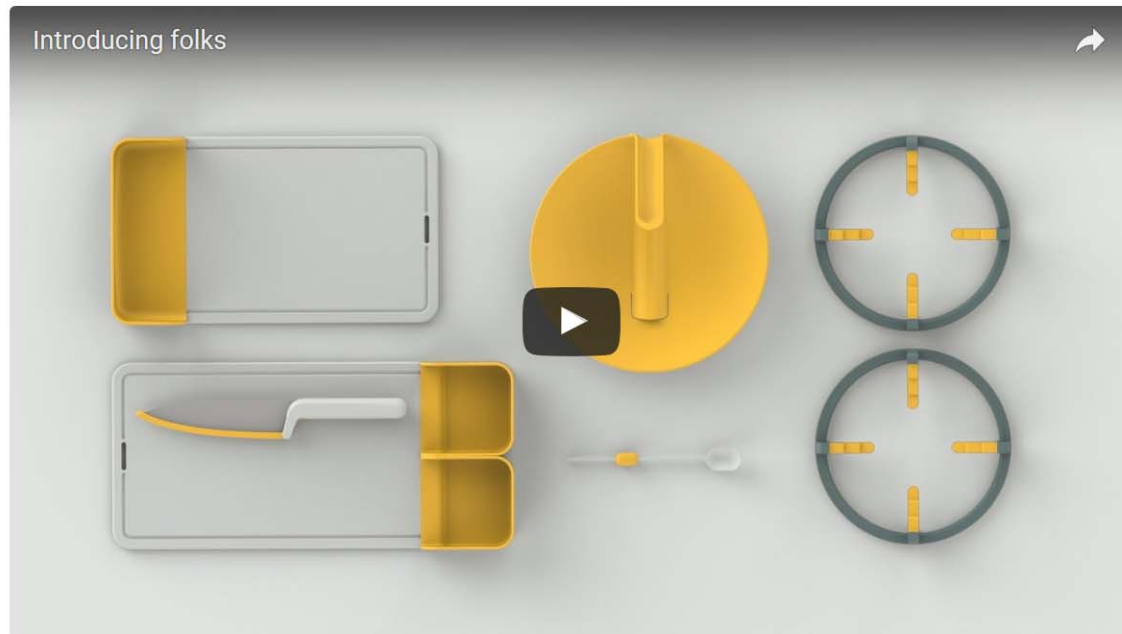
But if cooking is difficult for the able bodied, imagine what it would be like if you could not see the sharp knives and heavy pots every cook has to handle.

That's where Project Folks comes in. It is a National University of Singapore (NUS) design student's solution, which leverages on sensory feedback to allow people who are blind to prepare food safely and conveniently.

Project Folks consists of a set of five kitchen tools consisting of guards and add-ons to common kitchen implements such as knives and spoons, to make them easier to use by the visually impaired.

It was developed by Mr Kevin Chiam, 25, from the Division of Industrial Design (DID), which is part of NUS's School of Design and Environment.

Mr Chiam was one of 34 students from DID who are exhibiting their work at the 15th DID graduation show. It runs from Saturday (June 3) to Thursday (June 8) at the National Design Centre at Middle Road.



All the students will graduate in July with a Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Industrial Design.

The annual exhibition also features 24 projects from current undergrads from DID.

Mr Chiam's experiences with the Lions Befrienders volunteer programme motivated him to come up with Project Folks.

"I saw that many of them (the visually impaired) had cuts and bruises on their arms from trying to cook, which is a necessity especially if they live alone," he said.



Another graduating student, Ms Lim Xin Yuan, 25, thought big in finding a solution to making mobile devices easier for the older generation to use.

Project New Ways of Seeing Mobile User Interface for Baby Boomers, which she developed, consists of a set of innovative visual elements that seeks to integrate with existing smartphone user interfaces.

Adapting to problems such as small font size and difficulty of changing settings for seniors, the project minimises hassle and allows users to do things like magnify text by simply scrolling through messages.

"I live with a lot of people of that generation so the inspiration came to me when I saw them struggling and was trying to figure out how to help them use their smartphones," she said.

Although the user interface is not fully functional, both she and Mr Chiam hope to continue with these projects after graduation.

Mr Chiam is even in talks with Dignity Kitchen, a local hawker training school for the disabled, with the hopes of them picking up his project.

Associate Professor Christian Gilles Boucharenc, 52, head of DID, said: "I would like to congratulate the students for their passion and hard work, driving them to outstanding achievement."