



**TECHNOLOGY Design**

# Perfect form

**IN THE NOT-SO-DISTANT PAST**, when it came to gadgets, people expected – demanded – complexity. VCRs were so difficult to program it became a cliché that nobody knew how to work them. People wanted their gadgetry to come loaded with as many functions as possible. We even had alarm clocks that made cups of tea.

Then Apple happened – or, more accurately, Jonathan (Jony) Ive, under the auspices of Steve Jobs, happened. Cutting-edge gadget design was no longer about dazzling with complexity, but about beauty through simplicity. Why have separate buttons for play, pause, skip and rewind when one sliding wheel will suffice?

The same applies to software. When I was growing up, to load a program on a PC you had to input lines of code; now we work with user-friendly tiles designed to do all the work for us. Operating systems are designed to be clear from the first time you use them, with no need to sift through endless instruction manuals (or the instructions that explained how to read the instruction manual).

**Everything is designed, but not everything is designed well. Steve Dinneen brings you tech with both style and substance**

Thankfully, the past decade has seen this attitude become the norm. We now expect electronics to be simple and attractive. Children are so used to growing up with touchscreen interfaces that parents often see them poking in frustration at the television set, wondering why it won't respond. As a rule of thumb, if your grandma or six-year-old nephew can't work something, it's probably too complicated.

Design hasn't just improved gadgets – it has improved lives. Apple didn't really do anything groundbreaking – it simply applied the same principals the great designers of the 20th century had already mastered in other fields. The iPad is to personal computing, for example, what Philippe Starck's *Juicy Salif* (pictured right; £49 from [alessi.com](http://alessi.com)) was to lemon juicers: taking something practical – even mundane – and reimagining it as something beautiful and desirable.

Starck is famed for his elegant, minimalist creations, from moulded plastic chairs to wind turbines – items that look entirely at home next to the modern crop of consumer electronics. Likewise, British-Iraqi designer Zaha Hadid has applied these principles to everything from architecture (think of her London Aquatics Centre for the 2012 London Olympics) to furniture, trainers and super-yachts – anything that can be simplified, improved and made more beautiful.

We are living through a gadget renaissance, when items of incredible craftsmanship are being made available to the everyday consumer. In fact, many of these items (such as smartphones) are so mass-produced that they have become ubiquitous. Here are ten gadgets that use these principles to improve different areas of our lives, or which push the boundaries of design from both an aesthetic and utilitarian perspective.

THINKSTOCK

76 JUNE 2014

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# Business Traveller (UK)



Mots : 1902







## TECHNOLOGY Design

### BANG AND OLUFSEN H6 HEADPHONES

£329; [beoplay.com](http://beoplay.com)

Denmark's Bang and Olufsen has garnered a reputation not only for incredible audio quality but cutting-edge design. Inspired by mid-20th century minimalistic Scandinavian manufacturing, its sound systems aren't just a way of playing your music – they are pieces of sculpture for your living room. That doesn't do you much good when you're sitting on a plane – which is where the leather-trimmed H6 headphones come in. They maintain the clean lines and earthy colours (beige or charcoal) of the home-stereo range and combine them with innovative design flourishes, such as the ability to connect two pairs to share your audio from a single source.



### PININFARINA CAMBIANO EVERLASTING WRITING INSTRUMENT

Release date and price TBC; [pininfarina.com](http://pininfarina.com)

This unusual writing implement has a trick up its sleeve – it will never run out, wear down or need refilling. From Italian design firm Pininfarina, which has designed vehicles for Fiat and Ferrari, it uses a process of oxidation to create an alloy called "ethergraf" that makes marks on paper, without the tip ever reducing in size. It looks stunning, with a hand-crafted aluminium shaft inlaid with wood. *Business Traveller* understands it will retail at around the US\$120 mark, so it shouldn't be outrageously expensive, either.



### LEICA A LA CARTE

From £3,595; [leica-a-la-carte.com](http://leica-a-la-carte.com)

If you couldn't afford to spend US\$1.8 million on the one-off Leica Red – a collaboration between the German optics company, Apple designer-in-chief Jony Ive and industrial designer Marc Newson for a charity auction – then Leica A La Carte could help to satisfy your desire for a gorgeous piece of bespoke engineering. Whereas the Leica Red took 55 engineers three months to get right, going through 550 iterations before it was perfected, with this online service you can customise either a Leica MP or M7 compact system camera yourself (hopefully in a fraction of the time). You can choose the body finish, leather trim, viewfinder specifications and even include a personal engraving of your signature.



### NIKON ACULON T51 BINOCULARS

£155; [europe-nikon.com](http://europe-nikon.com)

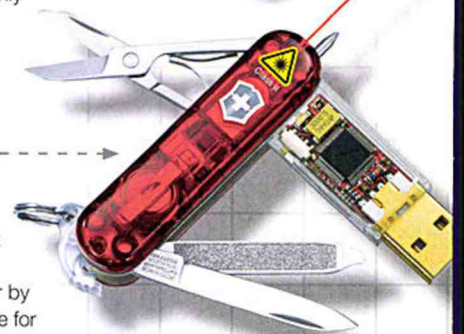
Whether you are an architect, bird-watcher or just a regular business traveller exploring between meetings, these stylish but powerful binoculars from the Japanese camera giant are a nifty piece of kit. Coming in red, pink and silver as well as black, the compact, lightweight metal chassis is beautifully crafted and the well-balanced ergonomics ensure they are comfortable enough to use for long periods; perfect for when you're on safari, at the opera or a major sporting event. At only 200g and 10.3cm in length, they'll also fit easily in your pocket.



### VICTORINOX PRESENTATION MASTER

£325; [victorinox.com](http://victorinox.com)

When it comes to world-beating design, the Swiss are worthy of a special mention. While watches may be their best-known industry, the Swiss Army Knife has become one of the world's most iconic products. The Presentation Master brings its classic red fold-out design into the 21st century, incorporating a 256-bit data encryption USB storage drive that can hold up to 32GB. The ingenious device allows you to access your data via a sensor for fingerprint-recognition, or by entering a password into your laptop. It also comes with a laser pointer and a Bluetooth remote for changing slides during a presentation. Just remember to pack it in your hold luggage.







## SKYRUNNER

£75,000; fly-skyrunner.com

Flying cars have been a mainstay of science fiction movies for as long as there have been science fiction movies. Now, thanks to the Skyrunner, fiction has become reality. Designed by Dorset-based Parajet International, this almost unbelievable machine looks like the Batmobile's younger, slimmer brother and is billed as "part all-terrain buggy, part light aircraft". On land it's a dune buggy with acceleration of 0-62mph in 4.3 seconds, with suspension tough enough to tackle bumpy terrain. Making use of a rotor blade at the rear and a paraglider wing, it can take off and climb to 15,000 feet, after which it can cruise for 200 miles before it's time to go back down to earth. At £75,000, it's about the same price as a BMW 7-Series.



## DYSON DC58 ANIMAL

£350; dyson.co.uk

Any company that can make hand-dryers seem sexy deserves some serious design props. Dyson – the British Apple – long ago learnt that form and function need to go hand in hand, and its appliances aren't just practical, they also look great. It helps that Dyson knows a thing or two about marketing; its vacuum cleaners feature "cyclone" technology, which makes sucking up crumbs from under the sofa sound like more fun than it actually is. The handheld DC58 (useful for cleaning your car) is one of the most impressive in its range, giving the suction of an upright model in a 20.8cm x 39.5cm x 14.4cm package.



## RAZER BLADE LAPTOP

£1,802; razerzone.com

When it comes to laptop design, it can be hard to see past Apple's glorious Pro and Air ranges. But it's not the only company that can craft deliciously stylish machines – and in terms of sheer horsepower, the Razer Blade leaves its Mac equivalents for dust. Built from matte black aluminium, with distinctive green-lit keys, the Blade claims to be the world's thinnest gaming laptop, at 0.7 inches, and weighs 4.5 pounds. It comes with a top-of-the-range Intel chipset and features a touchscreen for use with Windows 8. Every hipster worth his salt has a shiny silver Mac, but you'll be the envy of the departure lounge if you pull out one of these. And it's not just for gamers – if you work in design, or any industry where you need some real computing firepower, then this is the laptop for you.



## LYTRO ILLUM

US\$1,599; lytro.com

Great design isn't just about making something that looks pretty – it's about pushing the boundaries of what gadgets are capable of. The Lytro Illum, from US start-up Lytro, does just this. Far from an ordinary camera, it takes "living pictures" that you can refocus after you have taken a snap. The remarkable technology doesn't just capture the light in a scene, it also analyses which direction it's coming from, meaning it can detect different depths and allows you to "nudge" between them, sharpening your pictures. It comes with all the capabilities of other high-end cameras – wifi, GPS, touchscreen display – and it's a handsome beast, with a gigantic lens capable of 8x optical zoom.



## SAMSUNG GEAR 2 NEO

£190; samsung.com

The Samsung Gear may have had a muted response since its launch but in terms of heralding a shift in how we view wearable tech, it can be considered a design innovator. Like a smartphone, it has an ecosystem whereby developers can design apps independently of Samsung, meaning the software is constantly evolving. It already incorporates many of the functions of fitness trackers, using an in-built accelerometer and gyroscope to monitor your activity, and can beam music to your wireless headphones via Bluetooth. Heck, it can even tell the time. ■

