

Contemporary
DESIGN
ICONS

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selected by **James Dyson**

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“ For me, design is about how something works, not how it looks. It’s what’s inside that counts. ”

James Dyson

James Dyson

Born in 1947, Dyson attended Gresham's School in his home city of Norfolk, followed by the Byam Shaw School of Drawing and Painting and then the Royal College of Art, which are both in London. While training as a product designer at the RCA, he gained several commissions and his work won a number of awards.

From 1970, he spent four years managing the marine division of Bath-based engineering company Rotork, before starting his own company. The revolutionary Ballbarrow was his major invention of this period, winning a Building Design Innovation award.

James Dyson sold his shares in Ballbarrow in 1978 to fund the development of the dual cyclone vacuum cleaner. Over the next five years, he built more than 5,000 prototypes, before he succeeded with G-Force in 1983. The DCO1 was launched in 1993 and quickly became the best-selling vacuum cleaner in the UK. Dyson products are now exported around the world and the company won a Queen's Award for Innovation in 2003.

Awarded the CBE in 1998, James Dyson became the first engineer to give the prestigious Dimbleby Lecture for the BBC in 2004. James Dyson was Chairman of the Design Museum for 5 years, has won numerous awards including Designer of the Decade, Entrepreneur of the year, and the European Design Prize. James sits on a number of design boards, including council member of the Royal College of Art, director of Imperial College, London, Museum fur Angewandte Kunst (MAK) Vienna, and Member of Industrial Design Society of America.

Foreword

“ I have not failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work. ”

Thomas A. Edison

Some years ago, through pure frustration, I resolved to make a better wheelbarrow. And then a better vacuum cleaner. And then a better washing machine. My intention was to create products that served their purpose better than anything else available.

In that respect, I wanted to follow the path of my hero, Isambard Kingdom Brunel. In 2004, BBC viewers voted Brunel the greatest Briton ever after Churchill, so I am not alone. Yet his profession – engineering - is not particularly highly regarded. Design used to mean bridges, railways, purpose. Personally, I don't see the difference between designers and engineers. They are one.

Most people only consider how something was designed if it doesn't work. Real design works. The best products evolve as part of a design process, in which the technology on the inside informs the way that they look on the outside. The success of companies such as JCB and Rolls-Royce Aerospace illustrates the importance of keeping technology and innovation at the heart of design. For the same reason, the Citroen DS, with its many technological patents,

innovative suspension system and inimitable shape is inspired design and can stand shoulder to shoulder, or bumper to bumper, alongside cars designed today.

For me, design is about how something works, not how it looks. It's what's inside that counts. The best designs come from someone questioning everything. Designers, engineers look at the same things as everyone else. But they see something different. And they think what could be – and make it happen.....even if it takes 5,127 prototypes to succeed.

James Dyson

Dyson RDD centre

1998 Chris Wilkinson Architects

Up above, windows in a wavy roof allow light to penetrate deeply. More functional than a flat roof, it disperses rain-water through small pipes, which literally suck the water away. It can also be easily disassembled allowing new buildings to be bolted on.

Too many working environments, whether they are offices or factories, are dull, uninspiring or downright ugly. They may be designed to be functional, but many fail even in that respect. Little wonder so many people hate work.

James Dyson was determined to be different. Chris Wilkinson's design for the Dyson Research, Design and Development Centre in Malmesbury, Wiltshire is intended to make the working

environment inspiring. The building yells innovation and excitement. It says "great place to work". Indeed, it is designed to attract high-calibre people, the best in their fields, and make them want to stay. A building can do as much towards creating a happy environment as the people it contains.

Chris Wilkinson was asked to create a space that would reflect both Dyson's creativity and the surrounding landscape. So dividers do not separate workspaces, keeping the interior flexible and, wherever possible, open plan. As in any competitive business, there are secure areas, but they are not oppressive. The building reflects Dyson's philosophy of cleanliness, freshness and efficiency delivered through robust systems



Concorde

1969 BAC/Sud

The Soviet answer to the Concorde – the ill-fated Tupolev Tu 144 – was dubbed “Concordski” by the ever imaginative British press.

Fuel is pumped from one part of Concorde to another, maintaining the aircraft’s flight balance as the tanks empty.

British prestige suffered plenty of blows during the early 1960s. Among them was the abrupt cancelling of the entire programme for developing supersonic combat aircraft. One allied project did go ahead, however – and was to inject a big dose of pride into the national psyche.

The BAC/Sud Concorde was revolutionary in many ways. It carried commercial passengers at speeds much faster than sound (up to Mach 2, in fact). It boasted a stunningly beautiful double-delta wing formation with no need for a tail. And – perhaps most amazing of all – it was developed simultaneously in two sites, Toulouse in France and Filton in the UK.

Both prototypes embarked upon their maiden flights on the same day in 1969, provoking much public euphoria. Concorde’s commercial success was to be limited by high running costs, but its slender, elegant shape (accompanied by the harsh roar of its afterburners) soon became a familiar and enchanting sight in British skies.



Hovercraft

1959 Christopher Cockerell

In Canada, specially adapted hovercraft are used to break ice on waterways. The main obstacle to speedy travel – on water or land – is drag. One neat answer to this problem of friction, first researched in the 1870s, was to float the vessel concerned on a cushion of compressed air. Thus, it does not touch the water, but hovers above it.

A hovercraft can be steered by rudders, propellers or small doors in the skirt called “puff ports”. No practical breakthrough came, however, until the 1950s, when the British scientist Christopher Cockerell devised the first successful Air Cushion Vehicle or “hovercraft”. His SRN-1 created a sensation when it was launched in 1959. Gas turbine engines powered the lift fans, which sucked in air and forced it down into a space beneath the vessel. This air cushion was contained within a flexible rubberised skirt.

Driven forward by aircraft propellers, the hovercraft was highly manoeuvrable and could reach speeds of over 100 km/h (62 mph). A larger model, capable of carrying over 400 passengers and 60 vehicles, soon established itself as an alternative (and less nauseating) ferry across the English Channel.



Citroën DS

1955 Citroën

The Citroën DS needed no conventional jack when a wheel had to be changed. The pneumatic suspension did the job.

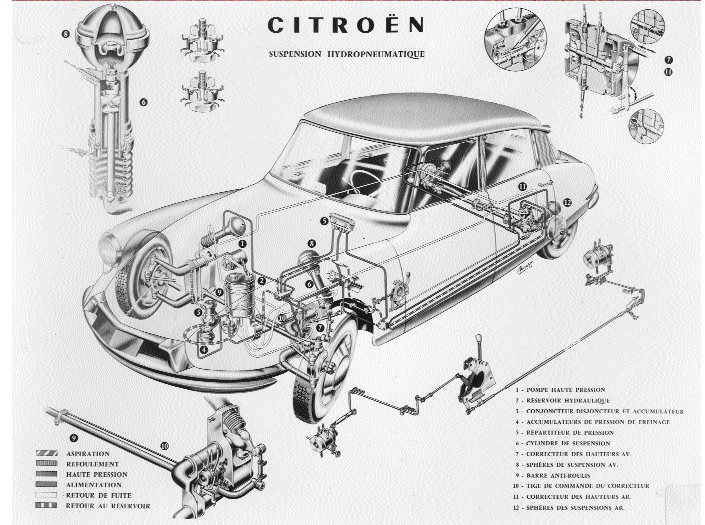
One unfortunate side-effect of the DS's rolling suspension for many passengers was a kind of sea-sickness.

The launch of the Citroën DS19 staggered the motoring world in 1955. It was, simply, the most technically advanced saloon car ever seen. To enhance the effect, Citroën christened it the "Goddess" or "Déesse" – hence DS.

For a start, the DS looked extraordinary. At the front, the nose sloped to a point. Where was the air intake? At the back, the bodywork curved down to the bumpers and enclosed the rear wheels. The steering wheel had a single spoke.

Then there was the suspension, each wheel being supported independently. The system was self-levelling, with pneumatic struts riding in oil, fed from a central reservoir. When the engine was started, the suspension would gently pump itself up to the correct height, no matter what weight was being carried.

Other marvels included power-assisted steering, power brakes operated by a tiny button on the floor, and an automatic pneumatic clutch. It was a futuristic car, which demanded futuristic drivers, and proved quite a handful for lesser mortals.



DCO2 Clear

1997, James Dyson

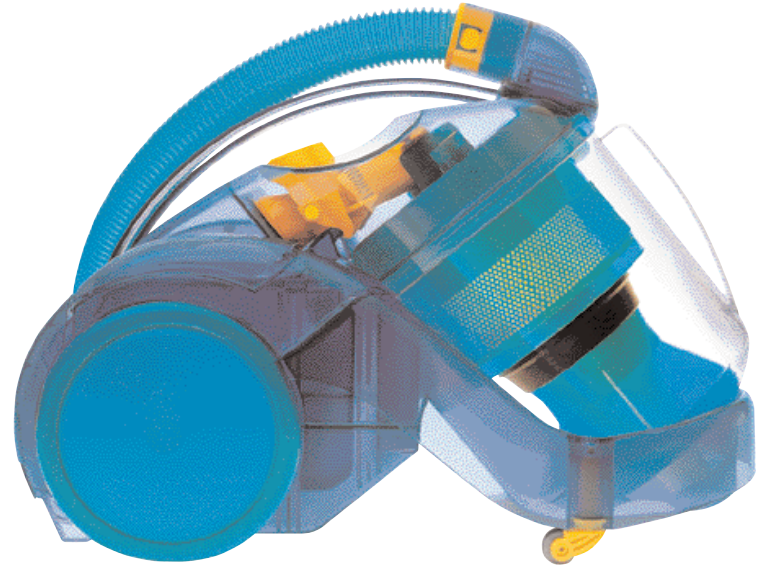
Within 18 months of launching Dyson was the best selling vacuum cleaner in the UK.

In 1998 Tony Blair announced that the DCO2 cleaner had been chosen as one of the UK's first "Millennium" products

Dyson's pioneering bagless vacuum cleaner, the DCO1, changed the face of the market on its launch in 1993. After more than 5,000 prototypes and fourteen years of development, the Dual Cyclone – or DC – was the first vacuum not to lose suction. With no paper bag to clog and restrict airflow, it worked properly !

For the first time, customers could see how the vacuum cleaning process actually worked. With its patented clear bin™ the DCO1 captured the public's imagination.

Dyson's DCO2 Clear went further. Launched in 1997, it pioneered the use of translucent plastic in a household product - even before the Apple iMac. Everyone could see, learn and enjoy the engineering behind the cleaning. Tinted green and blue, the yellow inner components allow the eye to follow the complete airflow process as two cyclones separate air and dirt by centrifugal force.



Challenge of Materials Bridge

1995 Chris Wilkinson Architects

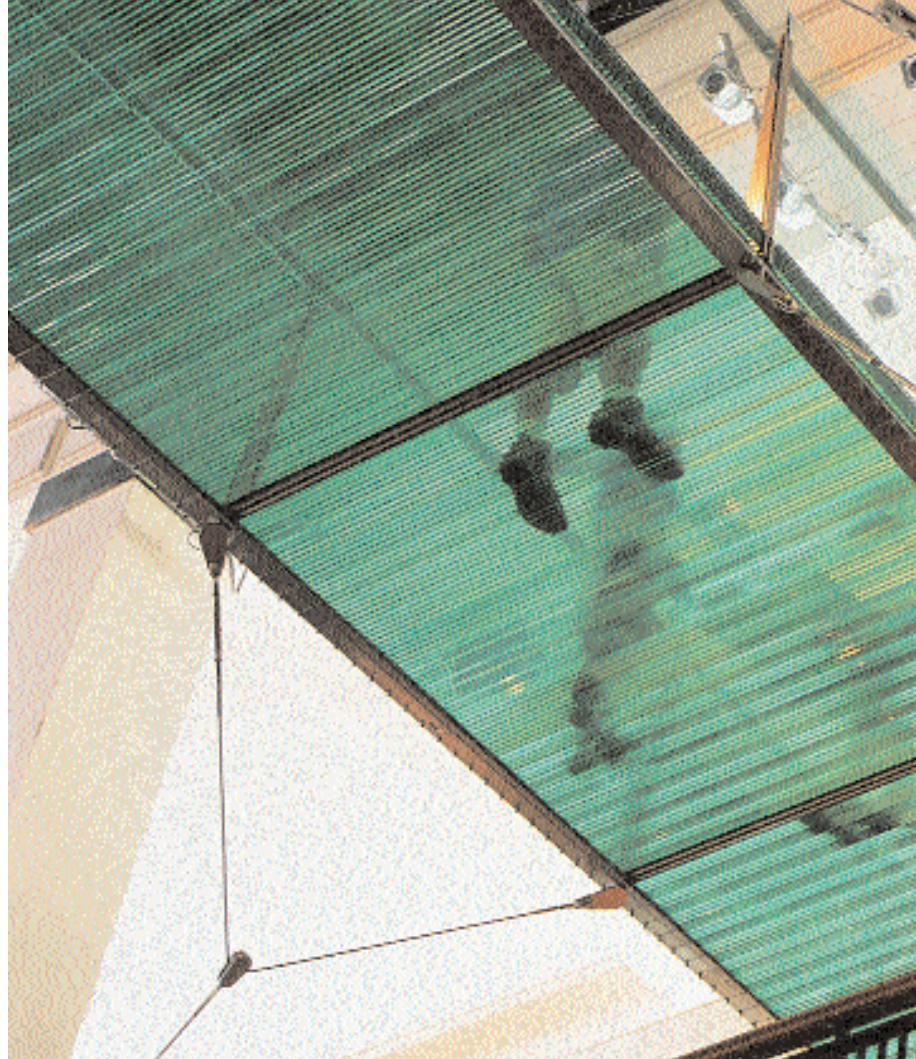
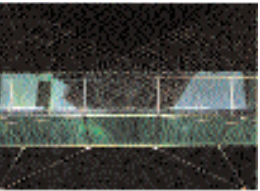
Among other Wilkinson-designed bridges are the Hulme Arch in Manchester, The Butterfly Bridge in Bedford and the South Quay Footbridge at Canary Wharf, London.

The most extraordinary addition to London's Science Museum in the 1990s has been the Challenge of Materials Gallery.

A series of stunning architectural conceits creates a framework which allows the visitor to explore the infinite possibilities of material science.

At the heart of the gallery is Chris Wilkinson's magical and intriguing bridge. It spans the atrium, floating at mezzanine level across the internal space and providing a visual focus for the other exhibits. It also demonstrates how materials can be pushed to surprising limits.

The design of the bridge is simple in the extreme. The deck is formed by over 800 glass planks, suspended from a network of ultra-thin stainless steel wires. Channelled through stress gauges, these wires activate acoustic and lighting systems devised by eccentric sound artist Ron Geesin.



Sony Walkman

1979 Sony Corporation

Sony had to impose the worldwide name "Walkman" after its American business insisted that the word wasn't proper English and called their version the Soundabout. In Australia, it was known as the Freestyle.

The name "Sony" is derived from the Latin sonus meaning sound. Originally, this Japanese corporation had the much more cumbersome title of the Tokyo Tsushin Kogyo Company.

Like Sellotape, Post-IT and JCB, Walkman has achieved generic term status. Whatever the manufacturer of one's small, portable stereo cassette player, you will know it as a Walkman, pure and simple. The CD version, the Discman, didn't manage the generic accolade, where consumers stick doggedly to the more common term, CD Walkman. That in itself reinforces the Walkman's iconic nature.

It wasn't long after the 1979 launch that the basic Walkman began to appear in a variety of tailored guises, not least for swimmers. Going underwater? No need to leave your music behind when you can bathe with a water-resistant Walkman.

The casing is designed for active outdoor use, with waterproof seals that help keep water out. Thought has been given on how to keep the device securely strapped to the body during vigorous activity. In addition to technical genius, Sony is a marketing colossus: spotting specific market segments and crafting products that appeal.



Moulton Bicycle

1958 Alex Moulton

At 51 mph, the Moulton holds the world bicycle speed record in a conventional riding position.

Moulton offers a single frame size that fits all riders with no annoying top crossbar.

Anyone who has ridden a bike for more than a couple of hours will understand the meaning of the phrase “saddle-sore”. Horse not needed.

Alex Moulton has spent almost 50 years continuously developing the perfect, hand-built bike. Having built suspension systems for cars (including the revolutionary Mini), Alex created a small-wheeled bike that was faster, more compact and hugely more comfortable than its conventional cousins.

Small wheels define Moulton bikes. With only half the rotating mass of standard wheels and high-pressure tyres, aerodynamic drag is lower, riders can pedal faster with less effort, and the whole bike is sturdier.

Moulton’s folding bike is a dream, and not just because it is compact and portable. The structure of the frame – a lattice of small diameter tubes – is far stiffer than a conventional diamond frame. It’s made from the same type of stainless steel tubing found on jet fighters for transmission of hydraulic fluids.



MacLaren buggy

1965 Owen MacLaren

MacLaren's first buggy weighed less than three kilograms. Modern MacLarens fold in five seconds, so parents can tuck a child under one arm and still fold away the buggy

It's rocket science! If you think baby deserves best, buy a buggy designed by a Spitfire pilot and aeronautical engineer.

Owen MacLaren helped design the Spitfire's undercarriage, so he knew a thing or two about lightweight, rigid, load-bearing structures. In 1965, not very impressed with existing products, he applied his knowledge to the important personal challenge of conveying his grandchild around. Until then, parents were stuck with perambulators – prams – unwieldy carriages of unattractive proportions with huge hoods that hid the child from the outside world.

The MacLaren Baby Buggy was far more practical for both transporting the infant and for storage. Employing lightweight materials such as tubular aluminium, MacLaren's structure could carry a sizable toddler and still fold away into a space not much bigger than that of a rolled umbrella. Its three-dimensional folding mechanism was umbrella-like too. In fact, it is sometimes referred to as the "umbrella stroller".



Gaggia Espresso Machine

1938 Achille Gaggia

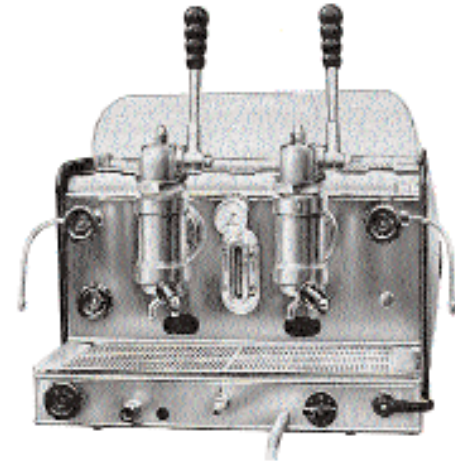
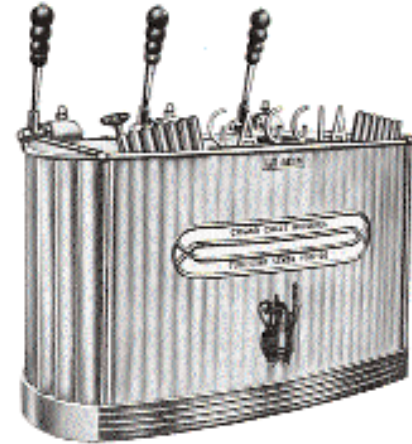
Cliff Richard's early film *Expresso Bongo* (1960) was one of many at the time centred on coffee bar culture – in this case, London's Soho.

The first Gaggia machines were imported into the UK by an emigrant Italian dental mechanic who was appalled at the quality of English coffee.

Few inventions have spawned an entire subculture. One such rarity is the espresso coffee machine developed by an indefatigable Italian engineer, Achille Gaggia, in the 1930s. In the post-war years, these gloriously dramatic chrome and gold constructions sold throughout Europe as fast as the Milan factory could make them.

The secret of Gaggia's success lay in the sprung piston system, by which hot water was forced at high pressure through finely ground coffee beans held in a filter. This did away with the traditional need for steam, which produced a much inferior brew.

Modern coffee bars sprang up at railway stations and on street corners, catering for the new custom of taking a nip of concentrated black coffee at regular intervals throughout the day. These bars became social centres, especially for the young. Dozens of variations were dreamed up – “cappuccino”, “ristretto” (extra strong) and “corretto” (with a shot of grappa).



B306 Chaise Longue

1928-29 Le Corbusier/Pierre Jeanneret/Charlotte Perriand

Le Corbusier is regarded primarily as an architect, yet his furniture design partnership with Charlotte Perriand was long-lived and highly influential.

The upholstered parts of the chaise are available in hairy skin, leather or canvas.

Charles Edouard Jeanneret, otherwise Le Corbusier, famously stated that a house was a machine for living in. He extended this to cover the furniture inside as well, and was later to describe his celebrated chaise longue as “a real machine for rest”.

History has proved him right, both technically and artistically. The B306 is still recommended by orthopedists today as ideal for back sufferers. It does not try to imitate the shape of the body, yet supports the entire back while placing the legs at the correct angle to relieve stress.

The chaise longue is just as pleasing aesthetically. It sits inside another metal frame, which enables it to slide in an arc and thus move the sitter in one smooth continuum from upright to supine. The simple, fluid outlines testify to Le Corbusier’s determination to link artistic theory with practice.



Rotring Engineering Pencil

1977 Rotring Group

The invention of the Rotring engineering pencil posed a serious threat to the pencil-sharpening business.

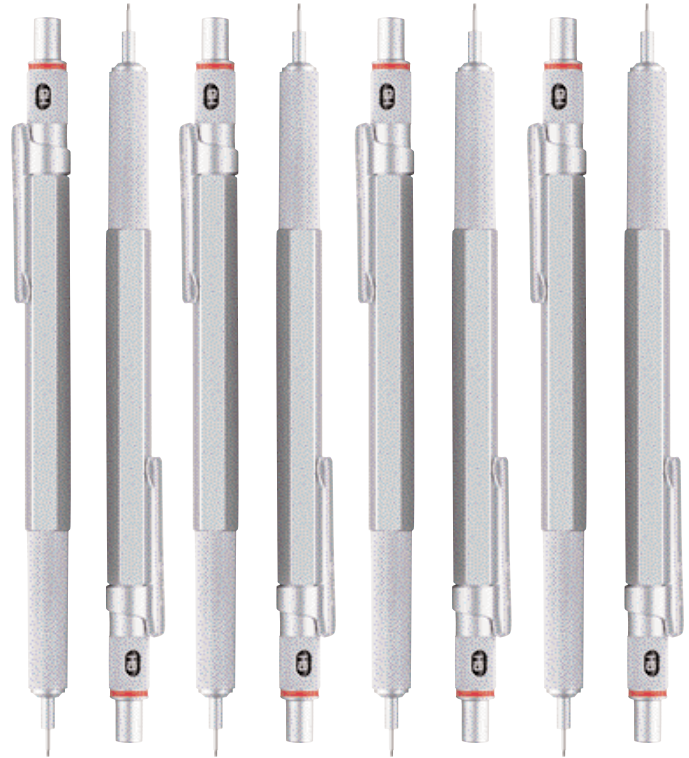


Rotring's ditty (above) advertising the four-colour ballpoint translates as "Saucy chicks, – bright tips".

Chunky, unpretentious and utterly dependable, Rotring engineering pencils and pens have no serious rival. The simplicity of the pencil's design – plain aluminium, hexagonal in section – somehow exudes quiet authority. And at its top, the thin red ring (in German, "rotor ring") subtly proclaims its maker.

It was in 1928 that Wilhelm Riepe developed the world's first nibless fountain pen. The innovation was taken a step further by Wilhelm's son, who launched the radiograph – the original technical pen – in 1953.

The firm became Rotring a decade later and has since grown into a massive worldwide group of companies. Its products now include everything, from capillary ink cartridges and computer-controlled lettering machines to artists' oils and colour cosmetics. But, to a host of planners, designers, inventors and dreamers, the engineering pencil remains its finest contribution to the twentieth century.



Design Museum London

1987-89 Conran/Roche

The museum also houses a resource centre, to service the design industry, as well as Conran's celebrated Blueprint Café.

Terence Conran and Stephen Bayley established the Design Museum to explain, improve and raise awareness of design standards in the UK. They believed that consumer goods deserved a focal point, where their function, appearance and marketing could be examined and explained.

The pair found a disused warehouse overlooking the River Thames near Butler's Wharf. It was too costly to renovate completely, so they decided to demolish and rebuild a major portion. The result was a 'new' 1930s building, an assemblage of rectangles with a subtly layered frontage.

The coolness of the exterior (the original brick having been covered in white stucco) was echoed inside. The galleries on the top two floors are flooded with natural light, bringing to life the neutral tones of oak and marble floors and white walls. The sight of the Thames running smoothly below adds to the general calmness. No wonder one critic praised the Museum's 'atmosphere of quiet decorum'.



Geodesic Dome

1954 R. Buckminster Fuller

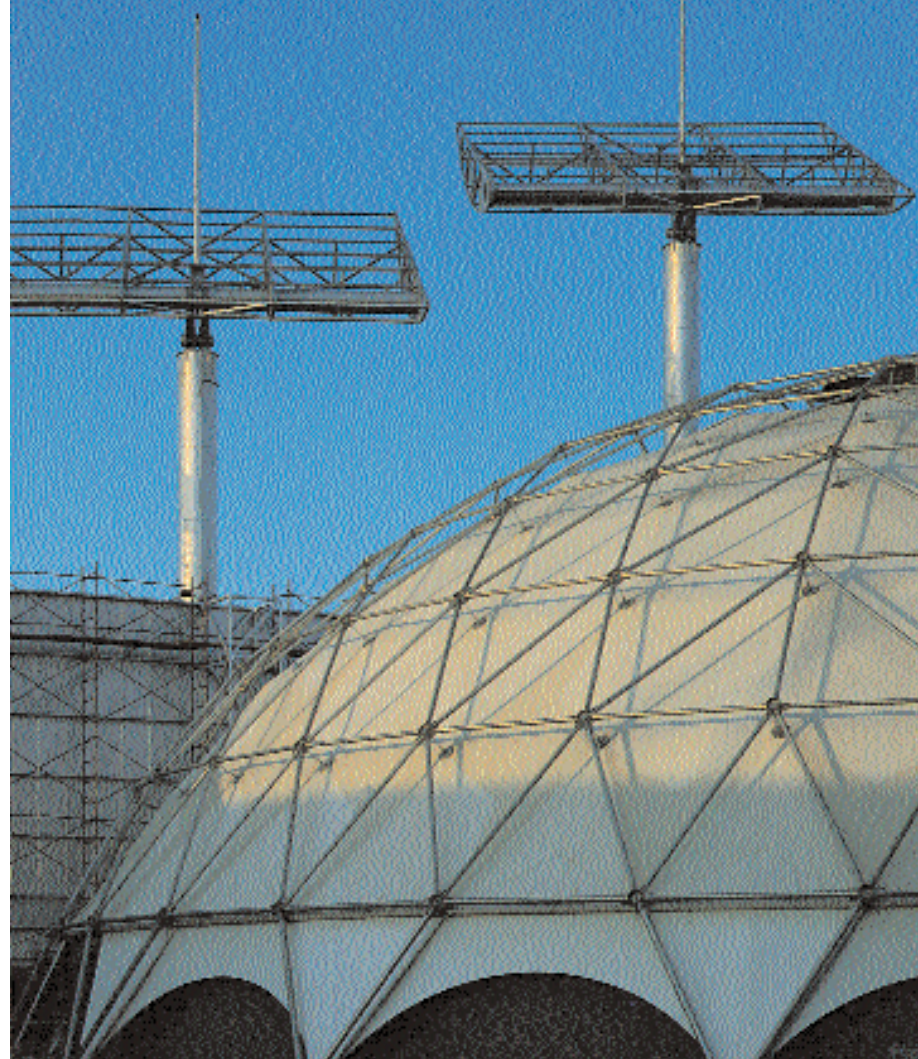
Within 30 years of Fuller' patenting his geodesic dome, more than 50,000 structures had been built.

The most well known dome is Disney's Epcot Centre in Florida, often mistaken for a giant golf ball!

Richard Buckminster Fuller was a brilliant and prophetic engineer, who aimed his many inventions unequivocally at the betterment of humanity. Among these were a rechargeable electric car, a vehicle which could move in any direction and an all-metal house in kit form.

Fuller was intense in his belief that people could control large parts of their environment without being divorced from nature. To that end he developed what he called the 'geodesic' dome. This was a large, lightweight enclosure which combined great strength with a minimal structure.

The surface of the dome is honeycombed into triangular pieces by a latticework of rods. This highly efficient framework can easily support a weather-proof covering. Alternatively, the dome can be formed of solid panels. The geometry of the structure makes it perfectly rigid even when built of a weak material such as cardboard.



RB211 Engine

1968 Rolls-Royce

After the 1971 bankruptcy, Rolls-Royce was re-formed as two separate companies – one to build jet engines, the other to produce automobile and diesel engines.

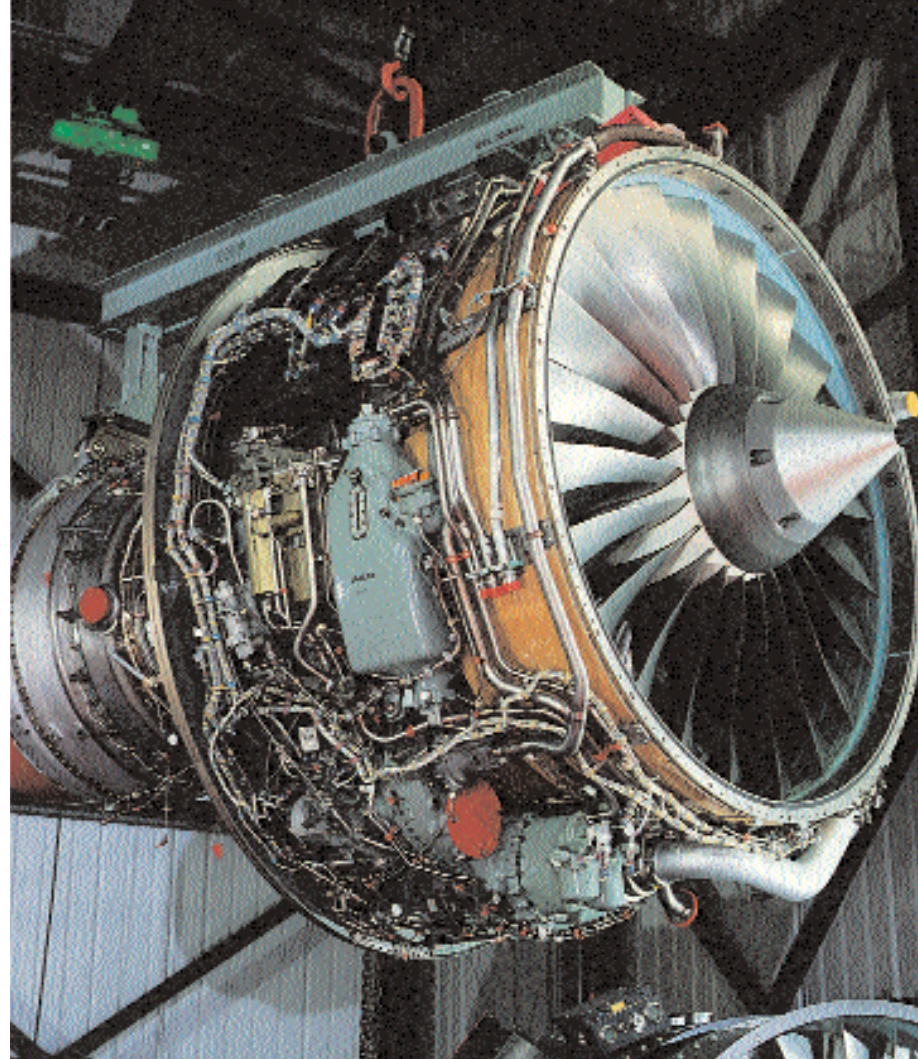
RB stands for Rolls-Royce Barnoldswick.

This division of the legendary company was opened in an old tank engine factory in Nottinghamshire in 1943, and it was here that engineers created many of the most powerful aero engines in the world.

Among these was the RB211, introduced with a flourish in 1968. This pioneering engine, with 40,600lb of thrust, was ordered by Lockheed to power its brand new Tristar airbus. The most astonishing quality of the RB211 was its light weight, thanks to fan blades made of carbon fibre.

The triumph, alas, soon turned to disaster.

The revolutionary new carbon material proved too weak for the stresses of wear, and had to be replaced with heavier titanium. Rolls-Royce itself went bankrupt in 1971. But the RB211 was saved. Completely redesigned, it did indeed launch the popular Tristar. And in 1981 Boeing selected an improved model to power the outstandingly efficient 757 airliner – the first time Boeing had ever introduced an aircraft with a non-US power plant.



John Hancock Center Chicago

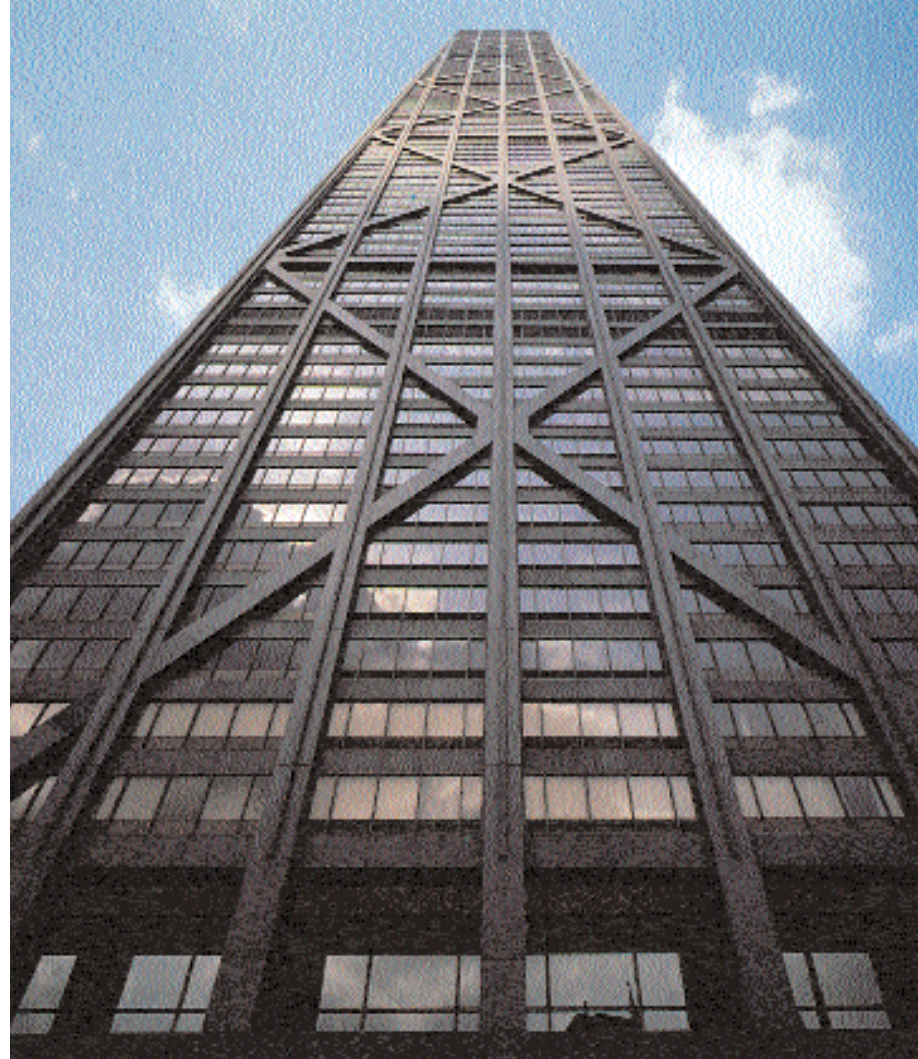
1968-70 Bruce Graham

The sky lobby – between floors 44-45 – is where everyone changes elevators. You can stop here to eat, shop or even take a dip in the swimming pool.

As American skyscrapers grew taller in the post-war era, materials and design solutions were stretched to the limit. Existing structural systems had to be revised. Added strength and resilience had to be found from somewhere.

The John Hancock Center in Chicago presented a clear answer to the problem. The building's designer Bruce Graham described it succinctly as 'a diagonally braced tube'. The X-shaped bracing on the exterior was a visible expression of its structural efficiency, with the walls bearing most of the vertical load, and also coping with the lateral forces of wind. A secondary system of floors and window panels added sturdiness internally.

The Center is also visually breathtaking, its tapered steel form making a dramatic silhouette against the Chicago skyline. This elegance is heightened by the understated dark colouring of the exterior.



Wink Chair

1980 Toshiyuki Kita



What is an 'animated' chair? The idea of an assemblage of steel, dacron and foam plastic coming to life is perverse. And yet the Wink chair, with its Mickey-Mouse-ear armrests, its rounded contours and its jolly colours, has an animal-like charm quite unlike most other modern furniture. One critic likened it to a gigantic friendly insect.

The Wink moves, too. It can be flexed and bent to many different positions, from upright armchair to lounger. This neatly encapsulates the Japanese custom of sitting on the floor whilst offering the Western visitor the comfort of a traditional backed chair.

Indeed, the Wink is the embodiment of Toshiyuki's determination to assert his cultural identity. His work, which includes paper lampshades and lacquer tableware, has been instrumental in the recent revival of native Japanese arts. Yet his experiences of the West have led him, he writes, 'to design objects which take into account the values of both worlds'.



Heron Parigi Drawing Board

1964 Paolo Parigi

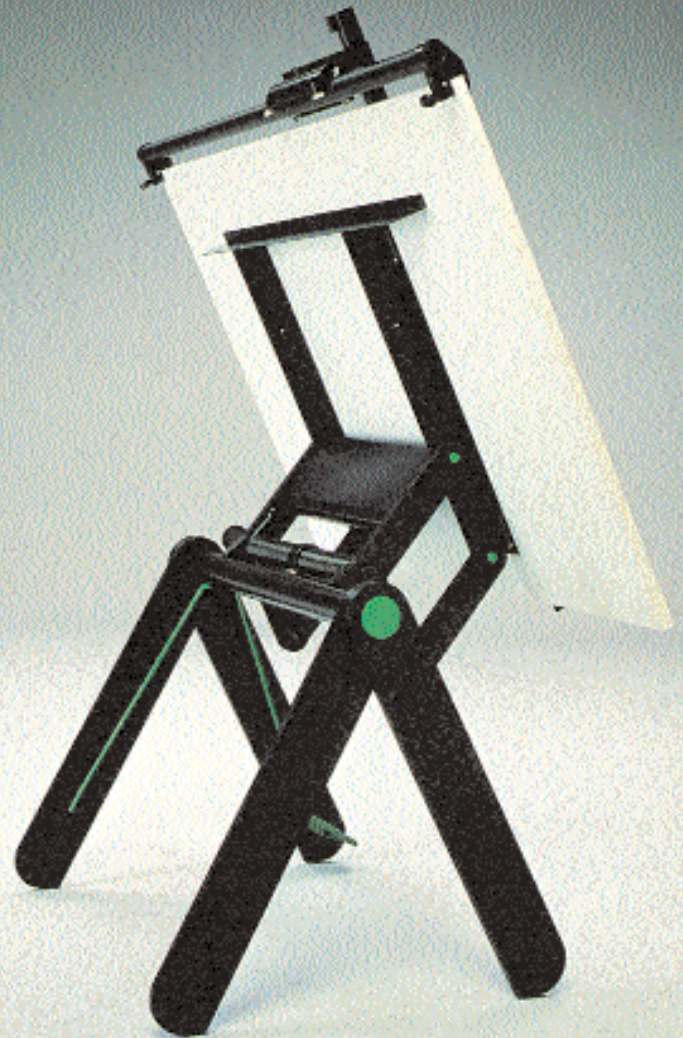
“Metal is not cold. Metal is beauty, severe and uncompromising. It seeks no accord from the world which surrounds it. It is sublime, of a harshness that needs no sculpting.”
Paolo Parigi



Born near Florence in Italy in 1936, Paolo Parigi found himself learning his trade at the epicentre of post-war innovation in industrial design. At twenty-eight, he unveiled his first mass-produced project, the ‘Heron’ drawing table, so-called because of its long legs and expectant attitude.

It was an immediate success, and inspired in turn the company name, Heron Parigi. As partner and design director, Parigi has pioneered many ground-breaking products including some astonishing perforated metal benches and office chairs.

The great virtues of his group’s designs lie in their apparent simplicity, their use of the minimum of parts and their pride in fine workmanship. These qualities can be seen to best effect in their vast range of drawing boards and tables, with their robust mechanisms and graceful efficiency.



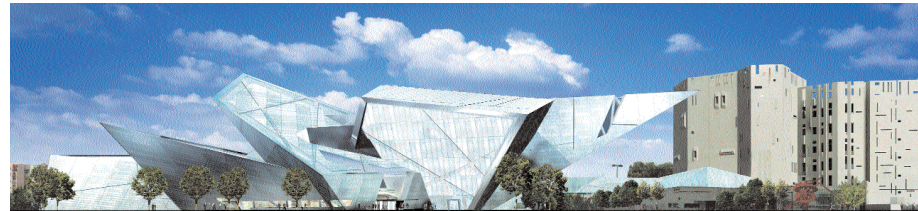
Art Museum Denver

2003 Daniel Libeskind

The building will form a “connected gateway” between downtown Denver and the burgeoning Golden Triangle area south of the museum. The new 146,000 square foot building will consist of geometric shards, flaring out like flower petals, built of glass, titanium and Colorado granite. A sharply angled cantilevered section will jut across the street toward the existing museum.

Founded in 1893, the Denver Art Museum has the largest and most comprehensive collection of world art between Kansas City and the West Coast. The present building is itself as much a work of art as the objects it contains. The 28-sided, two-towered building, designed by Italian Gio Ponti in collaboration with James Sudler Associates of Denver, has seven floors of gallery space, stacked vertically to enable visitors to reach desired exhibits quickly by elevator. The exterior is covered with more than one million faceted, shimmering grey tiles specially designed by Dow Corning.

In 2006, the Denver Art Museum will nearly double in size and boast one of the country’s most unique structures. Construction on an extraordinary new building designed by renowned architect Daniel Libeskind began in July 2003 and, when finished, will include permanent gallery space, special exhibition venues, a restaurant and a rooftop sculpture garden with spectacular mountain views.



Austin Morris Mini

1959 Alex Issigonis

The Mini achieved its apotheosis with starring roles in 60's heist movies, *The Italian Job* (1969) and *The Thomas Crown Affair* (1968). Lawrence, the unfortunate husband of Beverly, in *Abigail's Party* (1977), upgraded his Mini every year.

One major stimulus for the creation of the economical Mini was the Suez Crisis of 1956, which had led to petrol rationing.

It began life as the BMC 850 and became the Austin Seven – the fifth car to bear that proud name. But it achieved legendary, almost totemic, status as the Mini, the most successful small car ever made. Sir Alex Issigonis had already designed one classic 'compact', the Morris Minor, when he became BMC's chief engineer in 1951. Soon he landed an even more challenging brief: to create a car which was small, fuel efficient and revolutionary in shape.

The result was an astonishing landmark in automobile design, launched in 1959. With its engine set transversely and its gearbox nestling down in the sump, the new car was less than ten feet long. Yet it could easily carry four people and, thanks to small wheels and independent rubber suspension, it gave them a comfortable ride.

Above all, the Mini was perfectly suited to the spirit of the times. Cheeky, unconventional and nippy (with excellent road-holding qualities, thanks to front-wheel drive), it was embraced as a chic symbol of the Swinging Sixties. With over six million sold, it has never gone out of fashion.



JCB Digger

1953 Joseph Bamford

Bamford insisted that all his diggers were fitted with electric kettles. That way, the operator wouldn't have to leave the comfort of his cab for a tea break.

Before 1953 no-one had ever dug a ditch without a hand shovel. Then came Joe Bamford's Mark I Hydraulic Excavator. It fitted on a standard Fordson tractor, could swivel a full 180 degrees and dig up to 45 cubic yards per hour. Above all, it made use of the incredible force which could be generated by hydraulic power.

Over the next half century, JCBs played a major part in transforming the face of Britain – and the rest of the world. They sprouted bulldozer blades, backhoe buckets and crawler tracks. They became a permanent fixture on building and motorway sites, farms and quarries.

"JCB" even gained the rare distinction of becoming a generic word, a shorthand description for all excavators. Indeed, it now has its own proud entry in the Oxford English Dictionary.

Bamford's secret for success? 'I always count the number of parts: parts are money. Better to keep it simple.'



A vintage advertisement for the JCB Industrial Major Loader. The background is a bright yellow. At the top left, the 'JCB' logo is written in large, bold, red letters inside a white, rounded rectangular frame. To the right of this, the words 'INDUSTRIAL MAJOR LOADER' are printed in a large, bold, black, sans-serif font. Below this, the text 'Another JCB Product' is written in a smaller, black, sans-serif font, with 'JCB' in red and 'Product' in black. In the center, there is a black and white photograph of the loader, which is a tractor-mounted machine with a large front bucket and a rear-mounted digging arm. The loader is shown from a three-quarter front view. At the bottom of the advertisement, the name 'J.C. BAMFORD' is written in large, bold, red letters. Below this, the text 'LAKESIDE WORKS - ROCESTER - UTTOXETER - STAFFS - ENG' is written in a smaller, black, sans-serif font. At the very bottom, there are small, faint lines of text: 'Telephone: ROCESTER 2110' on the left and 'Telephone: LAKESIDE, ROCESTER' on the right.

Eames Lounge Chair

1956 Charles and Ray Eames

Charles and Ray Eames were also experimental filmmakers, and featured their chair in an animated short. The title, naturally, was *Eames Lounge Chair*.

One common misconception is that this was the chair designed for film director, Billy Wilder; that was the Eames chaise longue.

“The warm receptive look of a well-used first baseman’s mitt.” This was the homely aim of Charles and Ray Eames when they created their Lounge Chair – and a homely object it has become, reproduced in a thousand guises all over the world. Derided by some as too conventional, and even too ugly, it is still a bestseller.

In the 1950s, the Eames design partnership had accepted the challenge to design a modern American equivalent of the comfortable leather armchair beloved of English gentleman’s clubs. The result had to be culturally acceptable to a wide range of people.

The chair’s basic framework was of three pieces of plywood, moulded in no more than two planes. This was covered in rosewood veneer and button black leather upholstery, stuffed with down, feather and foam. The whole rotated on an ingenious ‘spider’ mechanism.



Toio Lamp

1962 Achille and Pier Giacomo Castiglioni

The floor lamps in Castiglioni's oeuvre are among the most beautiful and simple of his designs. His Toio lamp, and the Parentesi, a lamp suspended between floor and ceiling, are featured in the Museum of Modern Art's collection in New York.

With his brother Pier Giacomo, Achille Castiglioni emerged as a major driving force behind modern Italian design after the Second World War.

Together they re-thought form, function and manufacturing techniques, and produced work of apparently effortless grace and practicality.

For many of Castiglioni's most enduring designs, he made use of many 'off-the-shelf' items, employing ready-made technology in fresh and often surprising ways. A tractor seat was fixed on a steel support to create a chair. The business end of the Toio floor lamp was simply a car headlamp.

The headlamp, directed upwards, was mounted on an adjustable-height brass stem which was nickel-plated and polished. The chunky rectangular base was of enamelled steel. The novelty, as Castiglioni pointed out, lay not in the way the lamp looked but in the way it was put together.



A-POC – a piece of cloth

1989 Issey Miyake

Over-length sweaters, dresses off the roll - "A-POC" is based upon Issey Miyake's first design concept, a piece of cloth. It is a new and unique suggestion for everyday life, which goes far beyond the boundaries of fashion.

It is made using an industrial knitting or weaving machine programmed by a computer. This process creates continuous tubes of fabric within which lie both shape and pattern. The customer cuts sleeves and skirts exactly to the desired length. It is an idea that totally overthrows the existing standards for making clothes.

"A-POC" is made in a sequence in which thread literally goes into a machine and re-emerges as a piece of clothing, an accessory, or even a chair. This interactive new method not only reduces left-over fabric but also permits the wearers to participate in the final step of the design of their clothing: they determine the final shape of the product. Mass production and custom-made clothing, seemingly opposing ideas, become compatible through the wizardry of technology and the fire of imagination.



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