

IN ASSOCIATION WITH BARCLAYS

The Daily Telegraph

Things that make the world work

In any good design, function is as important as form. Ergonomics – how everyday products, an object, typography or even an app make life easier for us – are a crucial consideration. When something works well, it is beautiful – especially in technology and digital media, where well thought-out design can save stress and time, freeing people to do the things they care about.

That is borne out by Telegraph research carried out for Barclays. Of those surveyed, 89 per cent thought technology had made their lives easier and 84 per cent felt it had saved them time. In a series of

interviews presented by Barclays, The Telegraph's Dominic Lutyens speaks to influential design thinkers about the things that work and make our lives that little bit better.

Industrial designer and architect Ron Arad is best known for his Rover reclaimed car seat and the bendy Bookworm shelf. Here, he talks about the products that work for him and how ergonomics influence his designs. And at the foot of the page, The Telegraph's Mike Pattenden tries out the Barclays Pingit app, an easy way to send money securely and quickly to friends, family and businesses.

DESIGN HERO Ron Arad

London-based, Israeli-born Ron Arad is an industrial designer, architect and artist whose work cross-references these disciplines. He was educated at the Jerusalem Academy of Art and the Architectural Association in London. In 1981, with Caroline Thorman, he co-founded the design studio One Off, famous for its Rover chair that combines two ready-made elements: a reclaimed car seat and a piece of scaffolding. The company evolved into Ron Arad Associates and Ron Arad Architects. Arad also designed his best-selling serpentine, plastic Bookworm bookshelf in 1991. He has had solo exhibitions at New York's Museum of Modern Art and Paris's Centre Pompidou.

What are your views on ergonomics?
They're important, but they're not rocket science. Chairs should be comfortable, but when you're creating one from scratch, you're designing for an invisible person who could be fat or thin, and you need to take this into account. My Gomli chair has a cavity that's like an imprint of one of Antony Gormley's sculptures made from a cast of himself. This accommodates any human shape – from a Twiggy to a Favarotti. And my ultra-flexible A-frame spectacles for eyewear brand PQ have titanium and cellulose acetate frames that adjust to fit different face shapes. But the ways we use our bodies sometimes changes and ergonomics adapt accordingly. For example, I call my young people the "thumb generation" as they use their thumbs when playing with games consoles, using mobiles and even ringing doorbells. A perfume bottle I've designed for Kenzo, which you use your thumb to squirt the scent with, reflects this.

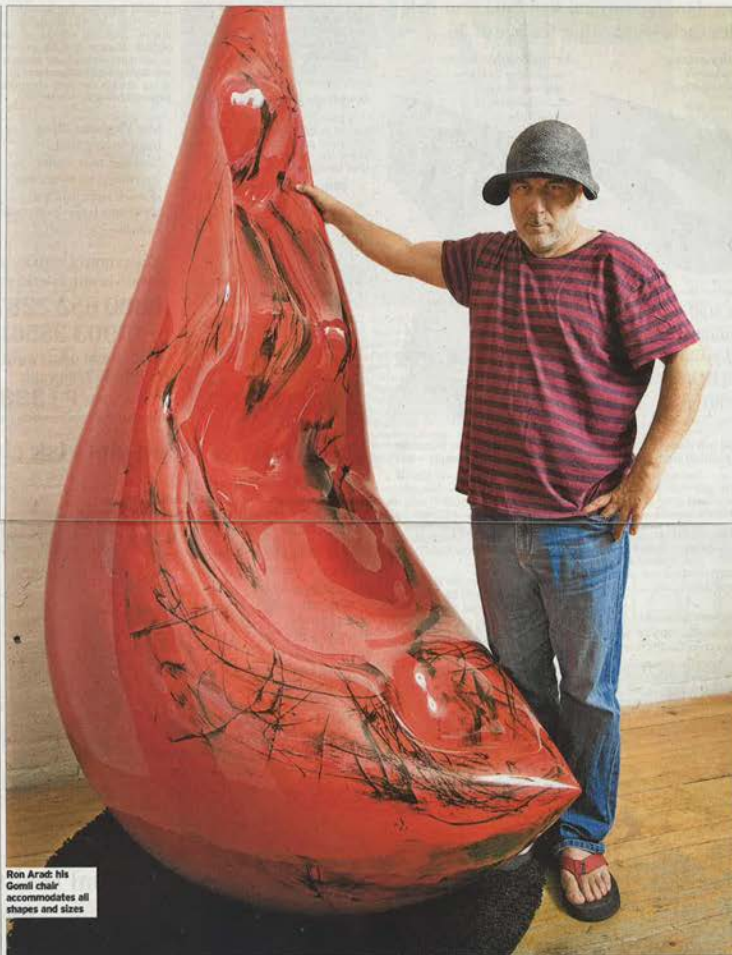
“Young people use their thumbs for everything. I've designed a bottle in which you use your thumb to squirt the scent”

How can design make things work better and be more practical?
It can make things work better. But a design can be functional without being practical. One of my designs, the dual-purpose Rotator bath, rotates vertically to become a shower unit. In that sense, it functions well, and is space-saving, but it doesn't have a plug so the water has to be tipped out, which isn't so practical. There again, some chairs I supplied to the restaurant at London gallery The Wapping Project, which were mixed with others by Verne Pantun, worked very well. The owner once said to me: "I've got a bone to pick with you. At the end of the night, it's the people sitting on your chairs who are the last to pay their bill and leave."

What are the main inspirations in your work?
Everything I've seen until 4pm yesterday afternoon – in other words, anything. It could be something as ordinary as a traffic light changing colour.

What role does good design play in your life?
My old Fiat Cinquecento, designed by Dante Giacosa. It's comfortable, beautiful and proved more successful than the Fiat 600. It's a lesson in manufacturers wisely sticking to a car with great qualities. I've featured Fiat Cinquecentos in various forms in my show. In Reverse, including crushed ones flattened to resemble a cartoon representation of a car after an accident or a 2D child's drawing.

Whom do you respect as architects and designers?
Architects Frederick John Kiesler and Edwin Lutyens and Italian industrial designer Achille Castiglioni. Castiglioni used ready-made elements in his furniture years before this became common, for example with his Mezzadro stool of 1957, co-designed with his brother Pier Giacomo, which incorporates a tractor seat. I also like the work of design duo El Ultime Grillo and lighting designer Paul Cockedge, whom I taught when I was head of the design products



Ron Arad: his Gomli chair accommodates all shapes and sizes

department at the Royal College of Art. They've since really found their own identity as designers.

What pieces of yours are you most proud of?
My Bookworm bookshelf. It's a perfect example of an idea that would get the thumbs-down from a marketing board because the shelves aren't parallel, but it's proved a best-seller. Another favourite is my Rover chair. It's become an 80s icon and beloved of environmentalists because of its recycling element – though unwittingly as this was never my intention. I also

like my Tom Vac chair with a rippled plastic seat because thousands of fakes have been made. As a designer you know that if there aren't any fakes of a design you've failed.

Do any everyday problems require design solutions?
Speed bumps. What a stupid idea it is to punish us all because some people drive too fast, when others, like me, drive slowly and responsibly. I have one outside my home and you can hear the cars hitting the bumps. One alternative could be

a bump made out of a viscous material that rises if it senses a car going too fast. But I don't want to give away all my good ideas. Boris Johnson knows where to find me.

● Ron Arad's exhibition *In Reverse* celebrating his work in metal – his favourite material – runs until October 19 in the Design Museum, *Home in Israel*.
● Arad's film *Last Train* is at this year's Venice Biennale, held at the Palazzo Cavalli Franchetti, San Marco, until November 24.

Arad's favourite apps and objects

IPLAYER

I never have time to watch television at home, so this

is a godsend. In fact, it's made my television at home redundant.

BRUSHES

This allows you to create very colorful, albeit digital images. I recently spent some time in Venice with my

friend, the Spanish designer Javier Mariscal, who'd sit down and, in two minutes, create unbelievably fluent images of architecture and the canals.

LAST TRAIN APP

This iPad app accompanies the exhibition of my film *Last Train* at this year's Venice Biennale. *Last Train*, commissioned by Steinhilber Diamonds, shows glowing lines scratched on to glass with a diamond ring. I'm

wearing that pokes mysteriously through a black cloth. I wanted to watch other artists experimenting with this, so I've invited Al Weibel and Antony Gormley and others to simulate this scratching action on this app.



WORDFEUD

W⁴ I'm addicted to this. I play Scrabble on it with friends wherever they are in the world. You can take a

break from playing for a few hours, then pick it up where you left off. It keeps track of all your and your friends' moves.

S-CARGO CAR

My other car – the curvy Nissan S-Cargo, made from 1989 to 1991. I first saw it in Japan. It looks as if it was designed using only a ruler and compass and resembles a cartoon version of a Forties French baker's van. It even makes

traffic jams fun. Everyone rolls down their window and wants to know about it.



WACOM TABLET

I use my life to this graphics tablet, which comes with a digital pen. It's replaced my 28 pencils

and has allowed me to join the digital age while still being able to draw.



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