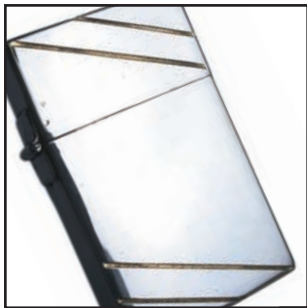


design classic ...

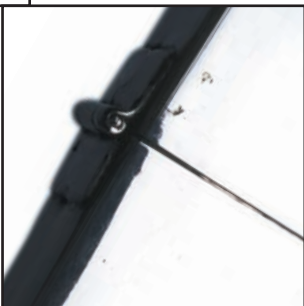


✉ A NOSTALGIC HOMAGE TO A PIECE OF DESIGN THAT STILL SPARKS IDEAS FOR CONTEMPORARY CREATIVES

What's your design classic? Is it something you'd like to share with the rest of us? It could be a contraption from the 19th Century, a childhood toy, or a piece of futuristic Web creativity you found last week. Whatever it is, send your idea to Graeme Aymer (graeme.aymer@futurenet.co.uk) and you too could have a whole page of *Cre@teOnline* dedicated to your favourite design from the past...



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❶ The original 1930s Zippo enjoyed decorative grooves and a more angular finish

❷ The lid's hinge was originally external – now it's tucked neatly inside

❸ Respect is due to George G Blaisdell – a man of stature, but dwarfed by his big idea



➤ Zippo lighter

A CLASSIC HANDHELD DEVICE THAT LOOKS, SOUNDS AND FEELS GREAT TO MARK JOHNSON, CREATIVE DIRECTOR AT CLEAR*

If there was a Top Trumps game for lighters, the Zippo card would beat anything that Bic or Clipper could muster, hands down. Zippos are compact, they feel great and they have a distinctive 'clink' when you flip them open. They even come with a lifetime guarantee, so if yours breaks, Zippo will fix it free of charge. How's that for added value?

The lighter was born in 1932 in Bradford, Pennsylvania. Legend has it that local entrepreneur George G Blaisdell was attending a formal dance and stepped outside to have a cigarette. A well turned out guest was struggling with an Austrian lighter that Blaisdell thought looked out of place considering the gentleman's elegant attire. Blaisdell realised that if he could design a reliable lighter that suited such a user, he was on to a winner.

So Blaisdell bought the American rights to the Austrian lighter and set out to improve the design. He and his three-strong team designed the lighter to

fit comfortably in the hand, and for ease of use, he had the lid hinged to the rest of the body. The team also designed a cowl around the wick to ensure the lighter's reliability.

Not far away, another company had just invented the zipper, and supposedly George loved the word so much that he christened his new product 'Zippo'. Apart from the slightly rounded tops, and the lid hinge now being situated on the inside of the lighter, today's Zippos still follow Blaisdell's 70-year-old design.

That's why Mark Johnson, Creative Director at Aylesbury's clear* believes the Zippo to be a design classic. "Basically, I like the look and the feel of the Zippo, but after owning a few I just really admire the whole design and how it combines innovation with beauty and functionality," he confides.

"I love the flip lid and the compact body. I guess that's its differentiator from other lighters, added to which the lid completes the 'obelisk' effect. I also like to hear the

Name: Mark Johnson
Position: Creative Director
Company: clear* (www.clear.uk.net)
Object: Zippo lighter
Type: Product
Design by: George G. Blaisdell
URL: www.zippo.com

'clink' when you flip the lid open."

And while old George G Blaisdell might not have ever conceived of such a thing as the World Wide Web, in Mark's opinion, he's left the new media industry a lesson in how to design a classic.

"From a designer viewpoint, the Zippo shows us that simplicity of approach in both design and aesthetic often brings about the most elegant and usable result," he says. We couldn't agree more. ■