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BRITISH

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HOME FOR CHRISTMAS

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DESIGN EYE

BARBARA CHANDLER



Homes & Gardens' *design correspondent debates the importance of function over form in product design*

Beauty is in the eye of the beholder, but when it comes to design, it seems there is a bit more to it than that. An intriguing survey has shown that the more beautiful we consider an object, the more we anticipate that it will function well. Conversely, if a product's function proves unsatisfactory, we then see it as less beautiful.

These findings are from research commissioned by bathroom brand Ideal Standard, which describes it as "a neuro-scientific study into how the brain perceives and interprets beauty." A combination of EEG scans and online responses found there was a conflict (measured by electrical activity) when the brain had to reconcile a product it found aesthetically pleasing with the fact that it performed poorly.

Researchers from Mindlab, a leading agency in Brighton, have termed this clash of feelings as "aesthetic dissonance" and their findings have been analysed by neuroscientist Dr Jack Lewis. "In simple terms, if a beautiful object lets us down, we may not consider it beautiful anymore," he explains.

Dick Powell, from one of Britain's best-known design consultancies, Seymourpowell, goes on to say, "Designers have always intuitively understood this principle, but now it's been established scientifically. This knowledge should drive the design industry forward to create products that work just as beautifully as they look." Indeed, function must follow form.

So where does that leave the triffid-like Juicy Salif lemon squeezer designed by Philippe Starck? Notoriously, it does not squeeze lemons very well, yet it has captured the imagination of a generation of design buffs and is now happily celebrating its 25th anniversary. A limited edition of 299 in bronze at £850 each sold out, while squeezers in white and the original stainless steel cost just £49. Ironically, its manufacturer Alessi has just published a 25th anniversary catalogue titled *25 years without squeezing a lemon*.

Juicy Salif citrus squeezer in White, £49. Alessi, 020 7518 9091, alessi.com.



STANDING THE TEST OF TIME

Fans of the bold British style epitomised by iconic designer David Hicks will love the Benson sofa (above), created in the Seventies for Parker & Farr and now reissued to mark the brand's 65th birthday. It measures H74xW213xD84cm and costs £4,068. Contact Parker & Farr, 020 7736 1310, parkerandfarr.co.uk.

This festive season, take a trip back to a time when train travel was rather more glamorous. **Board the historic steam-hauled Belmond British Pullman train** at London Victoria, sip

Champagne in its vintage carriages, then settle in for a leisurely five-course lunch while taking in views of the wintry countryside.

From £415 per person. Contact 0845 077 2222, belmond.com.

HOT STUFF Whether your home is period or contemporary, the new collection of fire surrounds by Eric Cohler for Chesney's, 020 7627 1410, chesneys.co.uk, will have something to suit your style. The Griffin (shown here), 112x147cm, £5,940, is made in petite granite with strong fossil markings and a polished-steel finish.



TREASURE HUNTING The global, artisanal homewares collections from online store Nkuku are now available in the brand's first lifestyle shop and cafe, housed in restored historic barns near Totnes in Devon. As well as its own ranges, the store will be a showcase for antique, one-off and unusual pieces from around the world. Contact 01803 866847, nkuku.com.