

Inspired by: Jan Zander Design Studio

BY BARRY GABAY

Jan Zander studies the world around him and transforms it into writing instruments of unsurpassed beauty and quality.



Left and above—renowned pen designer Jan Zander; his Inspired by: Hector Guimard Version II limited edition fountain pen features a sterling silver overlay with a floral motif on a resin-bodied fountain pen inspired by the French Art Nouveau artist.

The poet William Carlos Williams stated that there are “[n]o ideas but in things.” He was describing sensations based on the everyday, concrete world. This is what we all experience when we hold a writing instrument, wear a piece of jewelry, or open a book. For Jan Zander, the concrete world not only infuses his profession and products, it serves as his inspiration. From Metro entrances to race cars, the tactile world fascinates and inspires this contemporary designer-artist-craftsman.

For over two decades, Zander was instrumental in designing Montblanc’s writing instruments. In fact, he was Montblanc’s first in-house designer. He still does third-party designs, such as a recent project with LAMY. In 2018, he founded Jan Zander Design Studio, where he creates his own exquisite writing instruments.

Zander describes his process as “driving a creative idea to perfection” while maintaining an understanding of “material and components to be formed into an exquisite fountain or ballpoint pen.” He moves from sketches to computer to workshop; with each step his or his client’s concept reaches closer and closer to realization.

By studying Zander’s vision for his current creations, we gain insight not just into this designer’s working methods but into an aesthetic understanding that reflects something about ourselves, about how we all see the world around us. But before delving into Zander’s newest creations, we must first visit his earlier models.

Inspired By: Hector Guimard

There are two versions of the limited edition Hector Guimard Collection, inspired by and named for the French architect who designed, among other commissions, the entrances to several Paris Metro stations. A proponent of the Art Nouveau movement, Guimard looked to organic shapes in nature and translated them into metal and masonry.



Above—Inspired By: Hector Guimard Version I limited edition fountain pen has a sterling silver floral filigree overlay.

Right column—Alter Ego, shown in ebonite with chrome-plated appointments and in grenadine with gold-plated appointments, is Zander's inaugural fountain pen and features a slightly curvier body profile.



Zander's Inspired By: Hector Guimard Version I has a rich resin barrel encased in a delicate, weaving floral design of sterling silver. The graceful silver overlay accentuates a glossy barrel while revealing the natural contours of Zander's sterling silver craftsmanship. Version II wears a more complete sterling overlay with cutouts and bas relief flower stems and blossoms. There is more silver present relative to the barrel, and it serves as a palette to reveal Zander's skill as a trained goldsmith working with sterling silver in these pieces. Curved white lines in the cap and barrel resin weave like vines searching for a home. Each version comes with a 14 karat gold nib and is limited to 25 pieces. (All Jan Zander fountain pens are cartridge/converter-fillers.)



Alter Ego

Zander's inaugural pen, Alter Ego, has lines that are smooth, clean, and straight yet subtly rounded at the edges. This full-size line of writers (fountain, ballpoint, rollerball) has a straight barrel and a slightly curved cap profile. In fact, one of the inspirations for this series of writing instruments was the classic Porsche 911, a sports car that embodies power and beauty.

The Jan Zander Alter Ego Collection reflects this combination of disparate elements: straight/curved, strong/beautiful, and aesthetic/precision engineered. It is available in three materials. Ebonite, a hard rubber compound, has historically been a prized pen material. It is warm and smooth in the hand, and for a century and a half, pens made of ebonite have been prized by writers and collectors. The Grenadilla version, a type of ironwood, allows Zander to apply goldsmithing and lathe techniques to a natural material. The result delights the eye and the hand. Finally, the newest Alter Ego glows in ivory resin, a stunning cream-white material, glossy and durable, comfortable and beautiful. Visit janzanderdesign.com to see this newest version.

Imagine

The Imagine Collection is characterized by clean, minimalist lines and distinct proportions of cap, barrel, section, clip, and nib. Clearly geometric in its precision, the distinctive lines and angles of Imagine form a simple yet compelling design. Made of very durable ground CFK carbon, it is characterized by "a silky-matte shimmer," according to Zander. The design features several innovations. It has a magnetic cap closure which ensures leak-proof safety when carried or stored. The writer also has the choice of several interchangeable clips, thus allowing for an altered appearance depending upon situation or mood. Two clips and three finishes are available. This timeless yet contemporary fountain pen is understated, bold, pleasing to the eye, and responsive in the hand.



Above—regular edition Imagine fountain pens have interchangeable clips, a magnetic closure, and are made of CFK carbon (black shown) with silky matte finishes. From top right—Imagine: The Power of Blue is inspired by the work of artist Yves Klein (right); Zander mimicked Klein's painting technique on the fountain pen's metal body. Bottom—Icon of Racing is an Alter Ego body with an aluminum finish and details inspired by the Mercedes-Benz W125 racing car.



The newest iteration of Imagine is “The Power of Blue.” Zander was inspired by the timeless, universally-appealing paintings of Yves Klein. These iconic ultramarine blue paintings attempt to convey the infinite with monochrome: a single color can convey the universe, just as a single thought or emotion can typify the extent of love, compassion, or empathy.

The new version of Imagine remains loyal to the engineering and mechanical features of the original. Its size, proportions, and hardware are identical to the first Imagine. In these new Imagine pens, Zander demonstrates his talents as a painter, using the same techniques that Klein used for his bright canvases: “I did exactly that with a very small sponge and coated the metal tubes with blue pigments and a very hard binder in a very elaborate process. This hand-applied technique creates a texture that is unique to each piece.”

Icon of Racing

This exceptionally sleek and dynamic pen evolved from the Alter Ego series, when Zander decided he wanted a metal version. In his workshop, Zander hand turned a solid aluminum blank into the familiar, tubular shape of a fountain pen. After polishing it to a gleaming surface, he realized he had created something quite different from the original Alter Ego.

Zander explains, “The silver reflection of the aluminum and the modernity of the shape immediately reminded me of the power and speed of the legendary Silver Arrows from Mercedes-Benz. The W125 then served as a model for me. That high performance race car was the beginning of the success story for Mercedes-Benz’s racing team and became a racing icon.”

In the same way a driver holds the steering wheel and controls the car’s movements, the writer grips the pen and directs their thoughts to completion. Icon of Racing features several characteristic elements of the W125: shining aluminum, overlapping strips of lamellar ventilation, and a red starting number. This model is limited to 50 pieces, each numbered. Series numbers can be chosen by the customer.

For the box packaging, an auto mechanic’s screw driver is included. Zander continues, “You have to unscrew the aluminum cover (of the pen’s gift box) with a historic car mechanic’s screwdriver to get to the writing instrument.” The package also includes an antiquarian book on the history of the famed Mercedes-Benz Silver Arrows.





Inspired By: Quentin Tarantino

The new series of writing instruments in Zander's Inspired By collection have their origin in Zander's love of film. Just as a film can elicit deep emotions from the viewer, a very personal pen generates feelings in the writer. Regardless of their source or how our emotions surface, the feelings associated with the writing instrument are genuine, strong, and deeply felt. That is how Zander, and many of us, feel about our favorite films. Because movies are a personal passion for Zander, it seems only natural that his new collection is dedicated to and inspired by them.

Quentin Tarantino is one of Zander's favorite directors, and the first pen in the series arises from Zander's love of his movies, specifically the seminal two-part series *Kill Bill*.

"*Kill Bill* is a masterpiece for me," Zander says. "The film features some of Tarantino's most interesting characters, particularly the complex and strong protagonist, The Bride. *Kill Bill* embodies Tarantino's distinctive style with stylized violence, dialogue-heavy scenes, and homages to his cinematic influences."

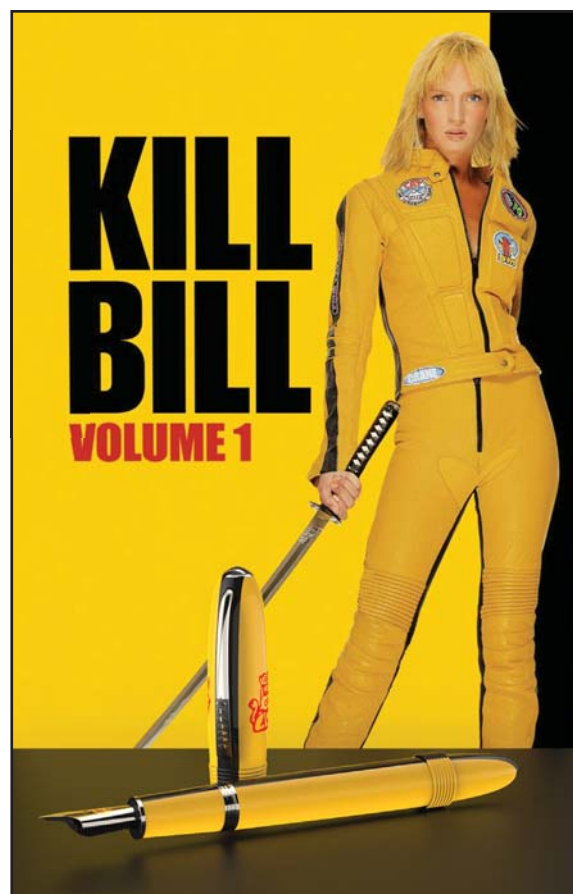
Because movies are a visual medium, Zander is especially precise and careful in his selection of imagery in the new homage edition. Color is a vital feature of movies, and the new pen features colors inspired by the two action movies. Zander describes his color choices: "The yellow and black suit worn by Uma Thurman, first as a motorcycle suit and later as a tracksuit, is a replica of the suit worn by Bruce Lee in *My Last Fight*, his last film."

This is a true film fan's recognition. Because of the martial arts orientation of both films and the color similarities, it seemed natural to Zander that yellow had to be his color choice. The Hanzo sword, which plays such a pivotal role in *Kill Bill*, is another aspect of the new pen. It has been reproduced as the cap clip. At the current stage of development, the pen will come in a bamboo gift box and will include a bottle of red ink, reminiscent of the almost comical amount of blood in scenes from *Kill Bill*.

Where will Jan Zander take us next? To late 19th century Paris, into the limitless blue sky, or onto a Hollywood sound stage? Wherever we travel with him, his marriage of the material world with the realm of aesthetics will surely be a delight—a beautiful and handheld, functional delight.

Visit janzanderdesign.com or scan the QR code at right.

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This page—Zander's newest Inspired By fountain pen takes elements of the iconic costume worn by Uma Thurman in Quentin Tarantino's *Kill Bill* movies, including the rich yellow color, along with the Hanzo sword that plays a pivotal role in the movies' action, and the red devil's head icon.

