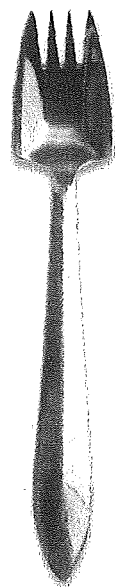


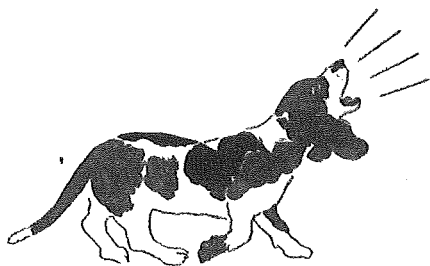
### THE WRITING ON THE WALL

In Japan, shops and restaurants often hang decorative curtains called noren over their doorways. They serve two purposes: 1) they keep the elements out, and 2) their cute illustrations tell people what kinds of products they can buy inside. The genuine articles are usually quite large, but Spanish store Fantastik has begun selling miniature versions you can hang on your wall. Looking for a colourful ode to the ice cream or Japanese beer? There's a noren for that. *fantastik.es CH*



### THE SPLAYD

It's a wonder that no one has ever bothered to build a hall of fame for Australian inventions. At the very front you could have the hits – the Hills Hoist, the bionic ear, the black box recorder. Further down you could put a few lesser-known things – maybe the plastic spectacle lens. And then if there's still space, perhaps in the back of the men's toilets, you could find a spot for the Splayd, Australia's "all-in-one food-to-mouth transport device". The thing was created in 1943 by Sydneysider William McArthur, when he noticed how difficult it was to juggle cutlery while eating food on your lap at a barbecue. He decided to create an object that put the power of a fork, spoon and blade into one hand. Demand for the product eventually dried up in the '90s. But, during its heyday, it was the ultimate in cutting-edge design, with around 5 million sets sold. *SY*



### THE ANIMAL TRANSLATOR

Derek Abbott is an electrical engineering professor in Adelaide with a peculiar interest: the way that animal noises are interpreted in different languages. A few years ago, he started compiling a big chart on the subject. It includes information such as how the bark of an English dog ("woof woof") differs from that of a French dog ("ouah ouah"). Most of his research happens during science conference tea breaks. He'll bowl up to a stranger from, say, Tokyo, and ask him about the noise a bee makes in Japanese (turns out it's "boon boon"). One of his favourite discoveries is the Hungarian word for a dove's call. "It's 'burukk' – quite beautiful, much better than our pedestrian 'coo.'" The most disappointing animal, overall, he reckons, is the cow: "They all make a mooing sound. I was hoping some crazy language would come up with something more exciting than that." *LK*

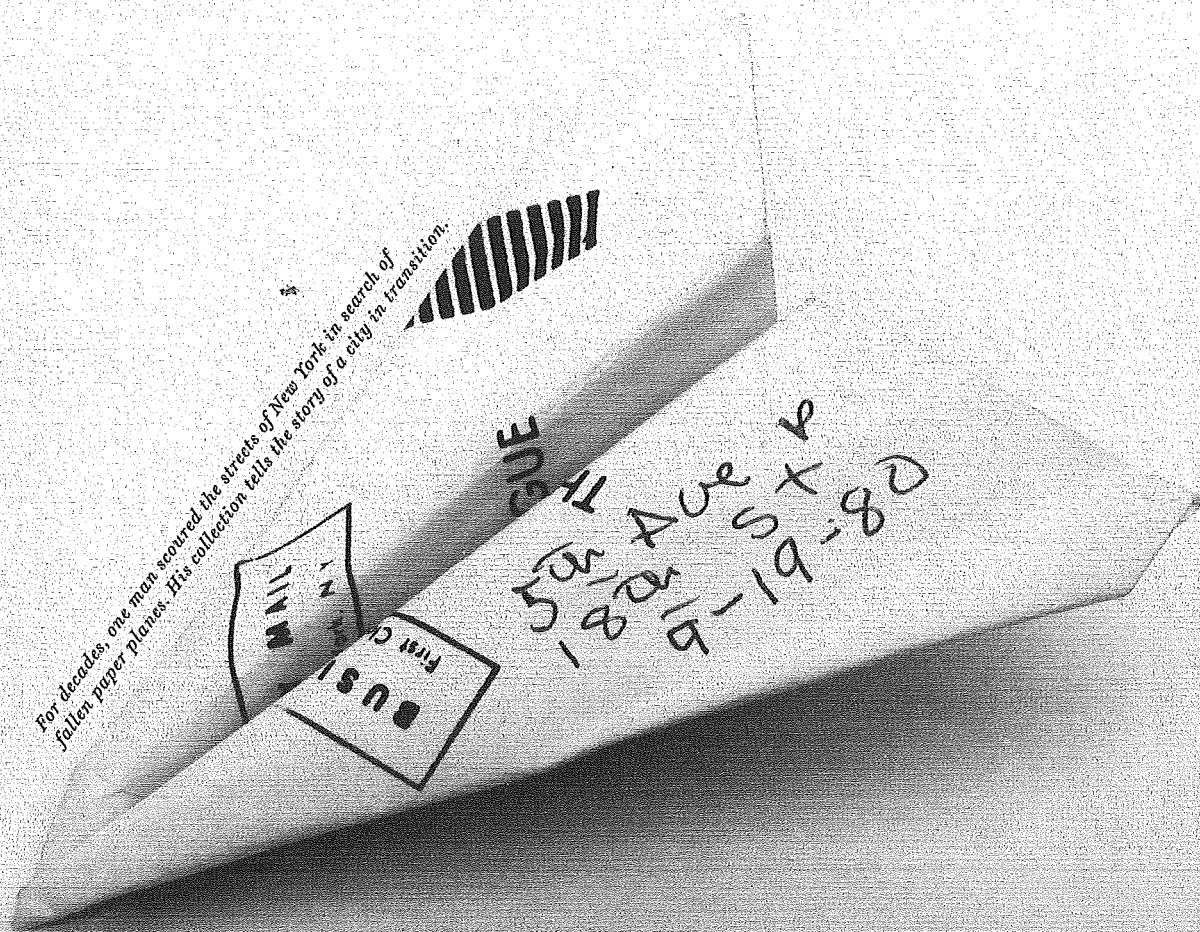


### ACROSS THE BOARD

Things change. Life is fluid. Material objects come and go. That's why this pegboard from Melbourne-based furniture makers Plyroom is so handy. It's made from renewably sourced birch plywood and can be rearranged to suit your shifting needs. It's the perfect size to keep above a desk, and the best bit is if you get into the habit of using it to store your keys, wallet and phone, you'll never leave the house in a scramble again. *plyroom.com.au SY*

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