

Dieter Rams

Design Hero

“ Question everything generally thought to be obvious,
Less, is better, Good design is as little de
sign as possible, **Good design is
honest,** Good design is aesthetic design, Good
design should be innovative, Good design
is consistent in every detail, **Good
design is long lived,** Good design
will make a product understand able, Good
design should make a product useful, Good
design should be envi ronmentally
friendly, ” Good design is unobtrusive

Harry Ketley



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Fig 1: Dieter Rams, 2012

“As a matter of fact, whoever looked into our world from the outside and sees what we have done to it must be puzzled of the humankind and the environment it has created.”

Dieter Rams

[Less, But Better, V&A, 20/2/2009]

Introduction

“Less is, better”



Dieter Rams in [Fig 2, 2012] became one of the most influential Industrial designers of the 20th century ranging from Interior Design and architecture to product design. [Ambrose, Harris, 2011] He did this by using elegance and simplicity in his designs mixed with dissatisfaction for the world and what he called “chaos in existing architecture and products in the market. The experimental and different use of materials he used made him well known as an innovative designer who went against styles of post WWII design movements. His ethos was functionality and longevity in products, which he believes is part of good design. Rarely did he talk about the beauty and aesthetics which is ironic because so many of his products became an iconic image of design. [Design Museum, 2007]

Fig 2: Dieter Rams

Biography

Dieter Rams was Born May 20th 1932 in Wiesbaden, Gemany. He grew up influenced by his grandfather a carpenter who made forms and shapes pleasing to the eye. [Design Museum, 22 June 2007] This was Dieter Rams earliest memory of inspiration and his passion for design.

Before his career in 1947 he studied architecture and interior Design at School of Arts in Wiesbaden. Whilst at university he won a trade competition winning a journeyman's certificate, which is a tradesman's certificate, which usually means you have to complete an apprenticeship for. He carried on to graduated with a distinction.



Fig 3: young Dieter Rams

After university he started at Braun as an Architect and Interior Designer. He had his first task the next year and the following year he created a first design of a chair for Otta Zapf, which can look like an early version of 606 Universal shelving units [which can be seen in a writers notebook at Vitsoe.com]. He quickly became noticed and subsequently became Head of Production Design and continued to climb the business in 1968 getting appointed Director of Production Design. During his time at Braun he became well known for hid innovative designs and different use of material. His products have a simplistic user-friendly feel and a modern look people where instantly drawn to. He ended his career in 1995 after 40 years of successful design. [Design Boom, 2010] Dieter Rams still believes from his years of experience that the best design comes from good partnerships within a company.

Although he had a successful time at Braun, in 1959 Dieter asked Erwin Braun for permission to design furniture for a company called Vitsoe for Niels Vitsoe and Otto Zapf. This was instantly approved because Erwin thought it would benefit the market for radios. A year later Dieter designed the wall mounted 606 Universal Shelving systems. Throughout his career he continued to raise awareness to the limited natural resources we have on our planet. Vitsoe continues to make furniture and Dieter Rams still works for them to this day.

Philosophy

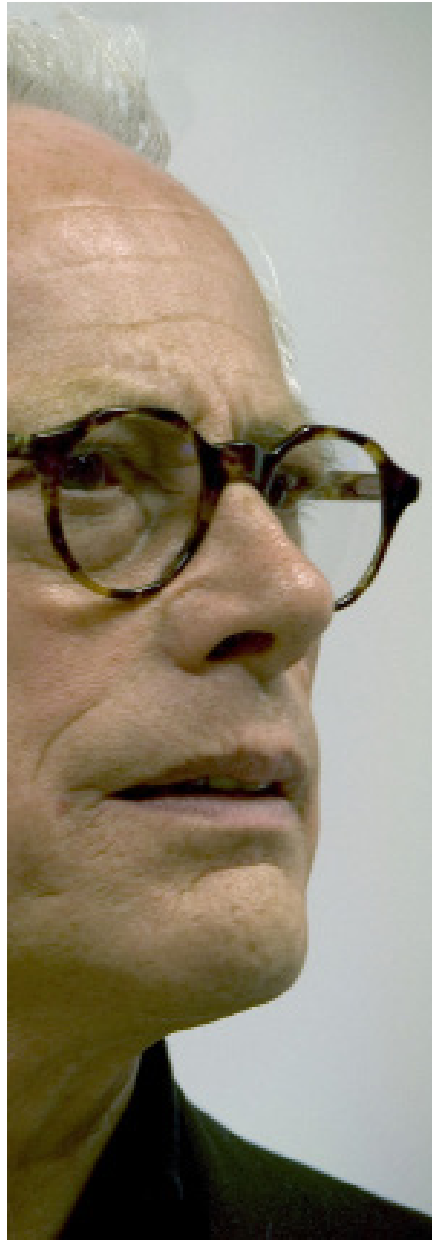


Fig 8: Dieter Rams

Aims and beliefs are very important to a Designer because it creates an image and sculpts their motives. Dieter Rams had very strong beliefs of what was wrong with the world. He seemed to be very dissatisfied by what was around him calling it “an impenetrable confusion of forms, colours and noise”. [Brimstone and Treacle.com, 2012] When it came to design he also knew what he wanted, how it should function, its look and feel aesthetically. His strong beliefs and unique way of thinking have made him who he is. Designers today have similar concepts and views and have more in common than a lot of designers back then. People are much more conscious about the environment and the effects products are having today, Dieter Rams quotes this continuously since almost 60 years ago. It is fascinating how many of his opinions would fit in with modern environmentally conscious designers today still feeling like “modern” views. [A writers Notebook, Vitsoe.com]

When people talk about his ethos they often use words and phrases like sustainable, longevity, functionality, question everything, less is better, too much rubbish along with many other famous quotes he has talked about. People warm to this because although he can be seen as negative all his aspirations are positive but he sees chaos. Dieter Rams developed a series of principles of good design and wanted to bring a new world of modern design to post 2nd World War Germany.

10 Principles of Good Design

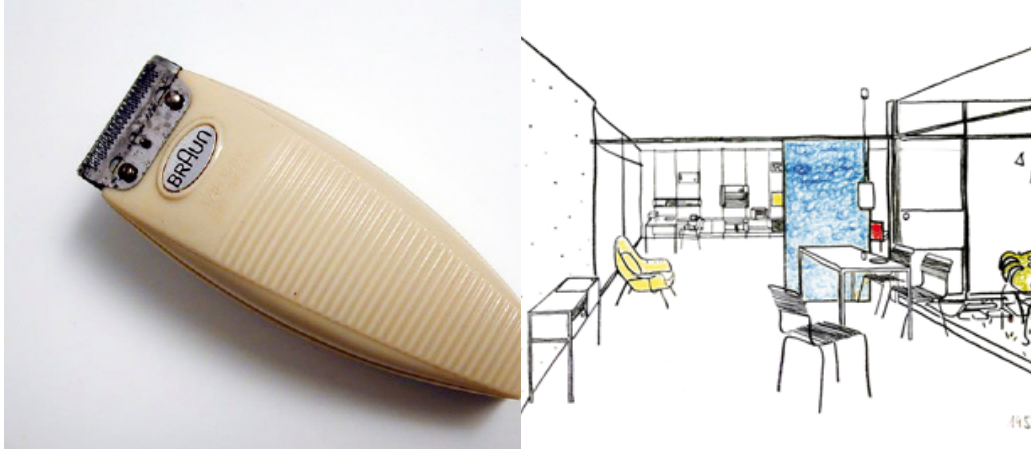
1. Good design is Innovative
2. Good design makes a product useful
3. Good design is aesthetic
4. Good design makes a product understandable
5. Good design is unobtrusive
6. Good design is honest
7. Good design is long lasting
8. Good design is thorough down to the last detail
9. Good design is environmentally friendly
10. Good design is little design as possible

by Dieter Rams



Fig 4: TP 1 Radio/Phonon 1959, Fig 5: T3 Braun pocket radio 1958 Fig 6: SK 4 Record Player 1956, Fig 7: Sixtant SM2 shaver for Braun 1962

BRAUN



Braun is a German electric company known for longevity, reliability and sustainability and is seen as a pioneer for the Industrial Design. Dieter Rams is a big part of Braun's great reputation due to his designs and principles associated with design. Braun started by an engineer called Max Braun who established the company in Frankfurt am Main. The company was started by Max Braun fixing radio parts in 1921, later in 1934 the logo with the distinct rounded A was established. The company thrived on making shavers, radio player, electrics and was quickly expanding. [Design Museum, 22nd June 2007]

The Second World War affected Braun badly as they had to stop making products for the civilian sector. In 1944 a lot of factories were bombed and destroyed leaving only 150 employees. After being disheartened but not completely destroyed the company was in the process of being rebuilt in 1945 and in 1950 they launched their first electric shaver called "S 50" (figure 8). [Braun.com]

Dieter Rams joined Braun in 1955 aged 23 along with 15 other designers. In his first year of Braun Dieter started off as an Interior Designer and [in source-] is his first sketch as his task was to modernize the interior. What is interesting about this sketch is that it shows the earliest signs of his product made for Vitsoe in the background called "606 Universal Shelving unit". [Vitsoe, 1955]

Dieter Rams brought a lot to the company bringing innovative revolutionary ideas and introducing new materials such as the SK-4 Radiogram where a transparent plastic lid was used. [Kemp, 2011] This was thought as being ugly in post world war II as people were not used to see the inside components. Dieter quickly gained respect in the company making a name for him. He became head of Braun in 1961 till 1995 where Peter Schneider succeeded. [Springer DE, 2009]

Fig 9: Shaver "S 50" 1950, Fig 10: Dieter Rams sketch, 1955



SK-4 Record Player - 1956



TP1 Radio/Phono 1959



I 450 flat loudspeaker 1962-1964



MPZ 21 multipress citrus juicer - 1972

Time at Braun

1955

1995

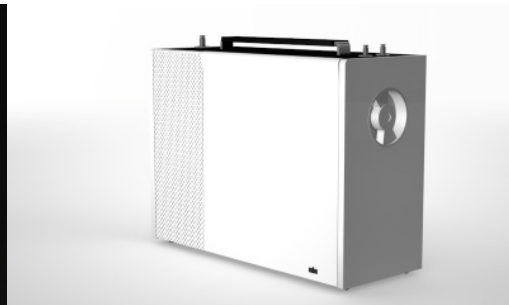
SK-5 Radiogram - 1956



Braun FS 80 - 1964



T-1000 World Receiver - 1963



KF 20 Aromater - 1972



“Living better, with less, that lasts longer”

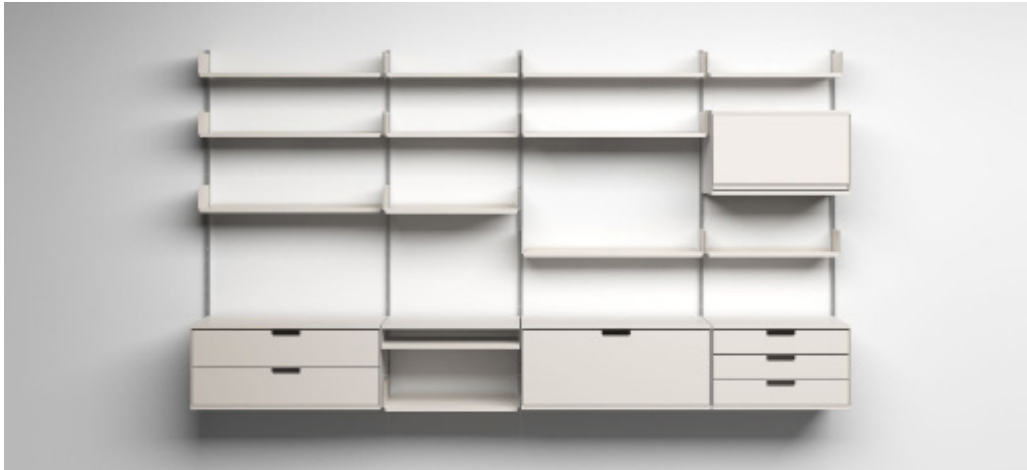


Fig 11: 606 Universal shelving System 1960 Fig 12: Niels Vitsoe

Vitsoe is a furniture design company which was started by Neil Vitsoe in 1959. The aim of Vitsoe is to have long lasting good quality furniture that can be used through several generations. They also use quotes that are on the website saying, “Living better, with less, that lasts longer.” [Ambrose, Harris, 2011] Dieter Rams first collaborated whilst working at Braun. Vitsoe has an ethos that people can only warm too. Vitsoe looked on how people can have less impact on the environment by less waste and the unnecessary need people have to continuously replace products that have a short life span. When talking about what their products should be, long lasting, easy to repair/replace parts, allow to evolve, construct and dismantle it gives a very honest almost family feel if you assume the furniture will last so long that it will be passed down generations. Vitsoe also had the belief that we need to reuse and not recycle. A lot of the aims and thought process behind this company seems very similar with Dieter Rams morals, which is why he flourished and did so well. [Ambrose, Harris, 2011] Dieter Rams continues to work for Vitsoe to this very day continuing his journey for a better future.



622 - 1960



606 - 1960



RZ 61 - 1961



710 Corpus - 1971

Time at Vitsoe

1959

2012 Continuing

601 - 1960



601 Easy Chair - 1960



620 - 1962



RHa Worklight - 1981



“I think that good designers must always be avant-gardists, always one step ahead of the times,” They should – and must – question everything generally thought to be obvious. They must have an intuition for people’s changing attitudes. For the reality in which they live, for their dreams, their desires, their worries, their needs, their living habits. They must also be able to assess realistically the opportunities and bounds of technology.”

Dieter Rams

[Vitsoe, 1980]



Fig 13: Braun T1000 Radio, 1963, Fig 14: 606 Universal Shelving Unit 1960, Fig 15: Dieter Rams

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- 3 Fig 3: Young Dieter Rams
http://www.designaddict.com/design_addict/blog/index.cfm/2011/6/21/Dieter-Rams-As-Little-Design-as-Possible
- 4 Fig 8: Dieter Rams
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- 5 Fig 4: Radio/Phonon 1959
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Fig 7: Sixtant SM2 for Braun 1962
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- 6 Fig 9: Shaver "S 50" 1950
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- 8 Fig 13: Braun Radio 1963
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Fig 14: 606 Universal Shelving Unit 1960
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