braun + vitsœ:
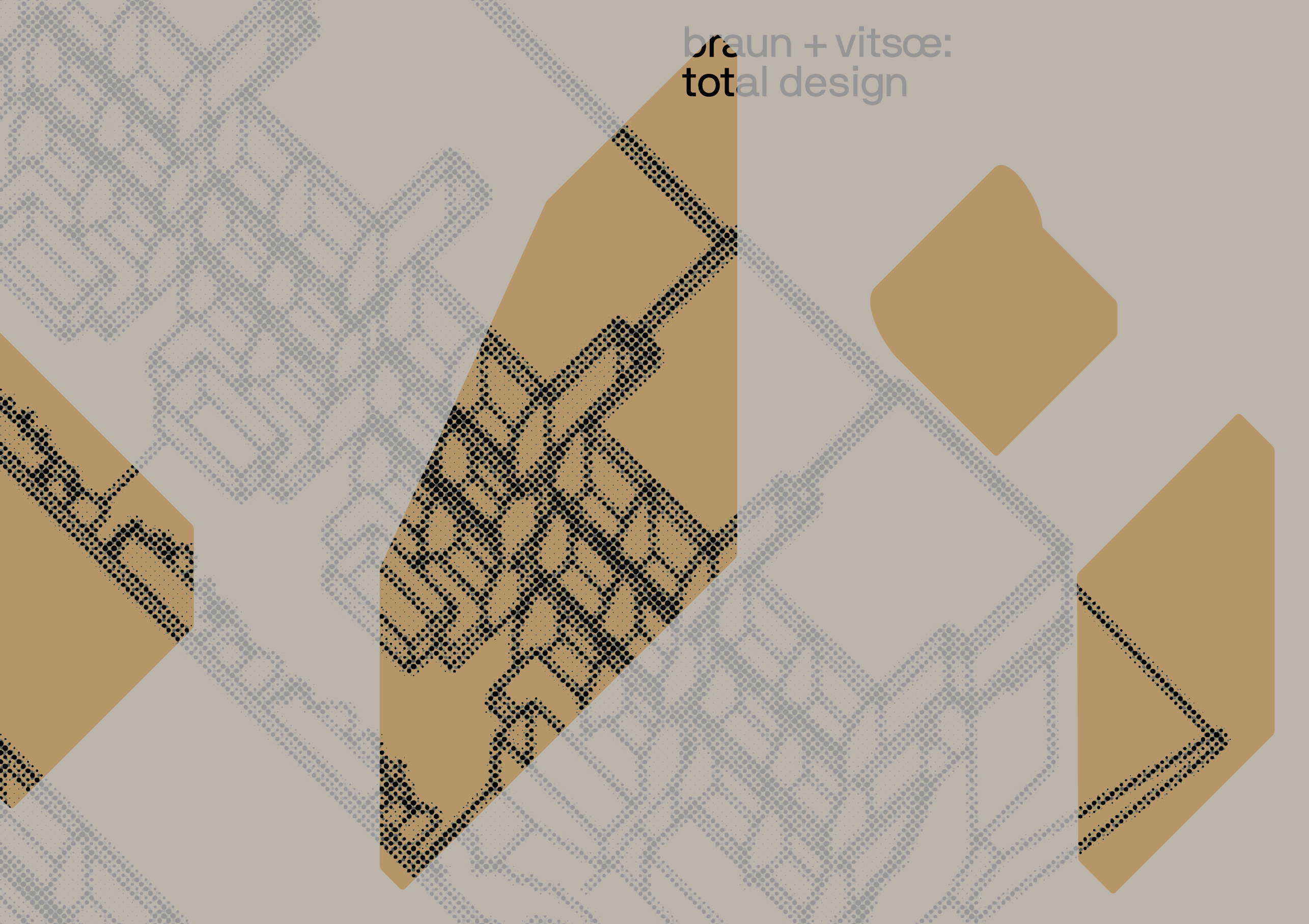# total design

braun + vitsœ:
total design

01   Sammler Börse flyer

Günther Staeffler, 1991 A culture of Braun Design appreciation has existed in Germany in organised form since the early 1980s. The first Braun Sammler Börse, or Braun collectors' fair, was held in Hannover in 1982 with the purpose of facilitating exchanges of information and objects between otherwise isolated collectors. Some forty-six such meetings have since been held. This flyer for the '91 fair circulated as an insert within the collectors' magazine Braun+Design.

02   Rundfunkmuseum der Stadt Fürth poster

Jo Klatt, 1992 Poster for the Radio Museum in Stadt Fürth

03   Vitsœ 570

The kitchen units are constructed from an adapted Vitsoe 570 shelving system. The system was designed by twenty-five-year-old Dieter Rams in 1957, two years after his recruitment to the Braun Company, and issued by Vitsœ (then Vitsœ+Zapf) in 1959 as the company's first product. The design's visual simplicity belies its construction. Spanning elements are bolted into perforated steel bars, in turn clad with vertical wooden panels and braced by screw-fixed backboards. Whilst the system is highly flexible in the range of its possible configurations, assembly is fiddly; once configured, the user is not inclined to disturb it. The system's original dimensions (d 440mm | w 570mm) are preserved in the cabinets hung above the worktop. On the return wall, the system has been reduced to d 310mm. Worktop and edging are new additions. The anodised aluminium E profile extrusion used within the 570 system for sliding door runners will be familiar to users of the 606 system. The same extrusion, rotated and turned through 90 degrees, was used by Rams as E-track for the 606 shelving system. It says something for the

consistency of Vitsœ production that, sixty years on, we were able to assemble an ad hoc 570 cabinet with sliding doors by chopping down current production 606 E-track. The work of modifying and fitting the 570 was undertaken with fastidious care by Selce Studio.

04   Vitsœ 606 drainer

With some drilling and powder coating, two current production Vitsœ 606 shelves have been adapted to serve as dish drainers.

05   Vitsœ 610

Two panels of the 610 Hallstand Programm, a system of perforated folded steel panels, usually furnished with a range of anodised aluminium hooks and shelves, are used on the rear wall of the kitchen as 'peg board' storage for pans and a lamp (with assistance from Michael Marriott's Ernö hook).

06   M 1/11 Multiquirl | M 12 Multiquirl

Gerd Alfred Müller, 1960 | Gerd Alfred Müller + Reinhold Weiss, 1963 Müller's M 1/11 established a new typology, the handheld blender. The increased power of Weiss' M 12 revision is expressed in its denser form. The transition from body to handle anticipates his later MS 140 (see 09).

07   MPZ 1

Reinhold Weiss + Robert Oberheim, 1964. Compact juicer - a development by Oberheim of a concept proposed by Weiss in the same year.

08   M 140 / MS 140 Multiquirl | KM 2 multiwerk

Reinhold Weiss, 1966 | Dieter Rams + Richard Fischer, 1965. Two examples of the development of the handheld blender into a system. Weiss and Fischer received their training in industrial design at the HfG Ulm. Both designers, as a result, tended to think of devices in terms of systems – at the level of mechanical relations and as modular units.

09   Braun Kochbuch

Publisher Walter Hädecke, printed in German 1965; 2nd edition 1966. This recipe book is organised around the food-processing capacities of Braun kitchen equipment. Whereas five years earlier emphasis was placed firmly on nutrition from a medical perspective, here it is linked to the promise of convenience within the context of an elaborate domestic culinary performance, now taken as a marker of social distinction. A parallel shift from the medical to social can be traced at the level of product form within the shaver division (see exhibit 29 in the next room).

10   KM 32

Gerd Alfred Müller + Robert Oberheim, 1964. Müller's KM 3 design of 1957 (minor revisions in this later example by Oberheim), with its fluid profile and unitary form, was the first appearance of an important organic strand within Braun functionalism of the 1960s. The elements of its mechanical system are expressed through regular horizontal cuts, dividing the body into functional strata: motor block / gearing / tool.

11   ABR 21

Dieter Rams + Dietrich Lubs, 1978. As postmodern as Braun Design got – a radio alarm clock that in the arrangement of its controls makes historical reference to the SK 1 tischsuper, one of handful of foundational Braun Designs shown at the 1955 Düsseldorf Radio Fair.

12   Clock

Rupert Norfolk, 2013. A wall sculpture by artist Rupert Norfolk following Dietrich Lubs' Braun ABW 30 clock. The original clock is highly rational – the face is integrated within the stepped body such that the hands move on separate planes. Norfolk has deformed the clock by compressing the body; the face now reads as an ellipsis.

13   UKW 1 (w / I like Braun badges)

Hartwig Kahlecke, 1984

14   **Ingeborg Kracht-Rams photograph**
Original print, stamped 1965 showing the Vitsœ 601 seating system. The picture was made for Vitsœ by Ingeborg Kracht-Rams, Dieter Ram's wife, who worked as a photographer producing publicity imagery for the company throughout the '60s and '70s.

Living Room

15   **Braun PCS 45 | CSV 10 | L 250**
Dieter Rams, 1962 | 1967. A small audio system that mediated between the small lightweight portable devices (see exhibit 45) and substantial high fidelity fixed position systems (see exhibit 30). The PCS 45 was the last in a series of portable record players, the first, the PC 3, having been used as a module within the SK 4. The PCS 45 module was also used in the Audio 1, a combined system issued in the same year (see exhibit 32).

16   **Vitsœ 570 Desk**
Dieter Rams, ca 1965. The 570 system encompassed a number of furniture typologies, including shelving and wardrobe storage, side and coffee tables, desks, daybeds and beds. It was a Rams' first attempt at producing a universal system in which standard typological conventions of from were overwritten by universal principles of self-evidence and constructional disclosure.

17   **Vitsœ 622 chair**
Dieter Rams, 1962. A stacking chair designed to be suitable for a number of uses. Also issued unupholstered.

18   **Braun KF 20 filter coffee**
Florian Seiffert, 1972. In the stacking of its elements, the KF 20 has the appearance of a water tower. The distinctive vertical separation of reservoir and hotplate was made possible by an economically extravagant duplication of heating elements. Production costs of the 1984 KF 40 were required to be 60% that of the KF 20, a saving achieved in part by the substitution of polycarbonate for polypropylene and the unification of heating elements.

19   **Design+Design**
Jo Klatt + Gunther Staeffler (eds), Frankfurt 1986 – 2011. A specialist journal for Braun collectors, Design+Design (initially Braun+Design) was founded in 1984 by its editor Klaus Rudolph, a role assumed by Jo Klatt in 1986. Originally photocopied and staple bound in an edition of only 500, the magazine remained in print for 96 issues until 2011, with circulation finally swelling to 3,000.

20   **Braun D 6 slide viewer / projector**
Dieter Rams, 1962. A combined slide viewer and projector. The slides show views of a double-sided poster of the core Braun Program in that year.

21   **Braun domoset + Neubau 121 poster**
Dietrich Lubs, 1980. One of Neubau Berlin's Braun 121 poster series, consisting of drawings of Braun products in their actual size printed at DINA0. Neubau's poster design was produced for the Systems exhibition, curated by Das Programm and produced by Systems Studio, held in London 2013. The text you are reading is set in Neubau's International Pro Regular.

22   **KSM 1 Aromatic**
Reinhold Weiss, 1963. The devices on these shelves were designed in the early '60s for Braun by Reinhold Weiss. Weiss received his training in industrial design at the HfG Ulm 1955 – 1959. He joined the Braun Company immediately following his graduation, and he worked as the firm's first formally trained industrial designer and Deputy Head of the Design Department until his resignation in 1967.

23   **KMM 1 Aromatic**
Reinhold Weiss, 1963. Weiss' typically sculptural combination of cylindrical and cubic volumes articulates the functional elements of the grinding process as discrete units – jar | motor block | caddy – the transition between them also referring to the transformation of beans to grounds.

24 HL 1 multiwind

Reinhold Weiss, 1959. Designed in 1959 and introduced to the market in 1961, functional elements are cleanly divided and articulated as a play of textures, masses and volumes.

25 HT 1

Reinhold Weiss, 1961. Weiss frequently expressed a device's constituent elements as discrete units. In some cases, this was done by varying the visual weight of the parts. In others, the relation is more disjunctive, as in the HT 2 toaster where the thermostat and control are separated from the heating elements by a pronounced gap. The result is a nesting of parts.

26 HMT 1

Reinhold Weiss + Dietrich Lubs, 1963. A more pronounced nesting of elements between right angled feet / handle and heated tray, which appears to be gingerly handled on fingertips.

27 HE 1

Reinhold Weiss, 1961. For user confidence and safety, a more emphatic connection was needed between the handle and jug of the HE 1 kettle, which presents a more unitary and compact form.

28 Vitsœ 606

Dieter Rams, 1960. The system has been in continuous production since its launch onto the market in 1960. Whilst the system must have seemed austere and technical in the extreme when first issued, it has since proved remarkably resilient against fashion. In its original form – seen on this wall – the system was rigorously modular, shelving and cabinetry being variations of the same element. However, as can also be seen, the original wood block shelves were prone to deflection. For practical reasons, they were substituted for pressed steel, an element initially introduced as a special part for particularly heavy loads. Other elements shown here withdrawn from production: cabinets with sliding doors, yellow painted steel shelves (also issued in sage green and brown); on the wall opposite: cabinet with sliding glass doors, record holder.

29 Braun Shavers 1955 - 1976

This group provides an overview of the development of Braun shaver design. A key moment is the transition from a material language of medicine and personal hygiene to one more connected to the performance of masculinity, Hans Gugelot's 1962 SM 31 providing the crucial hinge.

30 Braun PCS 5-52 E (SME tonearm) | CSV 60 | CET 15

Dieter Rams 1965 | 1962 | 1961. This system sat at the top of the mid-'60s Braun audio program. The PCS 52 E consisted of a PCS 5 plinth and chassis mounted by an English made SME 3009 series II tone arm. Unlike the Audio 1, the CSV 60 amplifier and CET 15 tuner do not integrate into the 606 system. However, the two systems are linked by a common technical aesthetic, evident in the use of anodised aluminium sheet material, sharp corners and expressed screw fixings.

31 Braun T 2 Lighter, domino set, AB 24 clock, ET 22 calculator

Dieter Rams 1968 | 1976 | 1981 | 1976. Matt black casings entered the visual language of the Braun program in the late '60s. It's use spread, becoming a sombre standard within the categories of clocks and calculators throughout the '80s.

32 Braun Audio 1 | Braun L 46

Dieter Rams, 1962 | 1963 . The Audio 1 combines the TC 40 control unit, similar to that used in the wall-mountable TS 45, with the PCS 45 phono module. The system was the first fully transistorised combined system. Both it and the L 46 flat speaker were proportioned such that they integrate directly into a 67cm bay of the 606 Universal Shelving System.

33 Vitsœ 601 seating systemDieter Rams, 1960

An early modular seating system with a technical appearance, consisting of seating and side tables. Seating was produced in high and low back versions, upholstered in leather or hopsack, with footstool and side table. A connecting foot could be used to form banks of seats. In form and height, the seating reaches out to the 'kangaroo' audio system stand, whilst the textured polystyrol top of the side table corresponded with the faces of early 606 systems draw units.

34   Technolumen RHa 1 work light
Dieter Rams + Andreas Hackbarth, 1981.

35   Braun kangaroo record compartment
Dieter Rams, 1967. Record compartment module of the Braun 'kangaroo' system stand. Although it was introduced to the market in 1967, the 'kangaroo' system stand was designed by Rams 1960. The leg elements share the same profile and paint finish as those of the Vitsœ 601 seating system. Together the two designs offer a visual running together of audio and furniture systems; a more directly physical union is achieved in the integration of the audio 1 and 606 shelving system.

36   Vitsœ 620 seating system armchair w/ coffee table
Modular seating system design providing for seating ranging from individual armchair to sofas of, in principle, infinite length. The distinctive pig-nose fixings used to connect fibreglass shells to the base unit match those fastening seating pads to the shells of 601 seating issued the previous year.

37   FSB door handle
Dieter Rams, 1986. Part of the extensive Griffprogramm of door and window furniture for the German hardware manufacturer, FSB. No longer in production.

38   Vitsœ 621 side tables
Dieter Rams, 1962.

39   Braun L0 1 speaker w/ stand
Dieter Rams, 1958. Additional stand mounted speaker for use with light audio devices. Mounting designed by Dieter Rams and produced by Braun. Stand produced by the German lighting manufacturer Staf.

A real unity can be achieved only by coherent restatement of the formal theme by repetition of its integral properties in all parts of the whole.

Walter Gropius, Weimar 1923

Eighth law [of construction]: In every constructive unification the idea of the collectivism of mankind is inherent. In the close cohesion of the elements the concord of all man's best aspirations is reflected.

Yarkov Chernikhov, Leningrad 1931

The late 19th and early 20th Centuries saw an outbreak of attempts to form cohesive environments from items of everyday use. Wagner, who is credited as the first to self-consciously promote a synthetic approach within the arts, devised the term Gesammtkunstwerk, rendered in English as 'total, or universal, work of art'. The impulse found extended expression in the Art Nouveau, Vienna Seccession and Arts and Crafts movements, wherein every facet, from salt cellar to chimney pot, was subordinate to the law of a unified aesthetic regime. Often this practice held an ambiguous significance. The seemingly magical level of completeness presented by these buildings and their interiors offered a nostalgic and private retreat from an industrialising social world that tended, in sharp contrast, towards fragmentation, atomisation and conflict. Yet, there were many others, the Constructivists in Russia and certain members of the Bauhaus in Europe, for whom the shattering of tradition held the promise of a world technologically re-made on human principles. The whole formed as a rational coordination of industrially produced parts, for those designers, not only promised economic efficiency and egalitarian distribution, it took on a speculative aspect as the proposal for an ideal form of social life. In Germany immediately after the Second World War, those ideas were further developed at the HfG Ulm, the post-war successor to the Bauhaus. Indeed, it was one of the school's early clients, the Braun Company, through which the idea of 'Gesammtkunstwerk', was for the first

time actualised at an industrial scale under the heading 'systems design'.

Braun Design, in it heroic form, emerged only slowly from this encounter. Its initial phase, 1955 – 1960, was chaotic. The HfG Ulm had provided a coherent visual identity for the company but this was unevenly reflected at the level of its products. At the time, design work was largely undertaken by freelancers. Working closely with the company but independently of one another, they produced in loose sympathy according to their own concerns. Dissatisfied with the chaotic result, the Braun Company commissioned an Ulm research unit headed by Hans Gugelot, Development Group II, to produce a comprehensive product analysis, one that would provide the conceptual blueprint for a fully unified program. In 1959 the working group submitted its findings to the client in the form of a plan. The following year, the Braun Company established an internal design department with the purpose of implementing it; thereafter, substantial ties with the HfG were cut and the services of freelancers dispensed with. The HfG had developed the conceptual preconditions for the expansive Braun program of the 1960s, but the foundation of the Design Department, and with it the possibility of terminating the ad hoc personal product lines, presented the necessary (but still insufficient) conditions for the production of the Braun program as a coherent unity.

A review of the Braun program's conditions should reflect the following: the existence of viable plan together with the corporate resolve to implement it; the commitment to maintain such a program, entailing the subsidy of weaker lines by stronger; robust consumer demand coupled with the exclusion of marketing consultants from the design process; a team of extraordinarily skilled industrial designers working from common principles under a charismatic director, Dieter Rams, who also sat with the board of directors. The rigour and coherence of Braun Design depended on these factors, and would prove untenable in their subsequent absence. But in considering the program

in its full extent, it is also necessary to take into account Ram's work for Vitsœ. And so, we should add to the conditions listed above: the tolerance of an employer (Braun) of their employee's distraction by work for another (Vitsœ).

The company, then Vitsœ+Zapf, had been established in 1959 by Niels Vitsœ and Otto Zapf to produce Rams' furniture designs. It would be more accurate, however, to say that the company allowed Rams to extend his approach to furniture, since his work for the two companies comprised adjacent aspects of a continuous project. Over the decade, Rams produced an array of furniture designs encompassing storage, tables, beds and seating, thereby opening the possibility of a domestic interior entirely fitted with items conceived and produced according to common criteria. At first, this might appear a merely commercial strategy for covering of all the bases. In fact, the program that resulted was so unlike anything that had come before that it succeeded in alienating the greater part of the market.

The Braun/Vitsœ program had a distinctive relation to typology. At the level of function, it maintained a clear categorical structure. But Rams' truly radical approach sought to dissolve all distinctions between object sets based on arbitrary morphological conventions, unifying them under a single aesthetic regime. Thus, photographic, audio equipment, storage and seating were conceived on the universal criteria of rationality, self-clarity and order, not on received ideas of what certain objects should look like, nor upon conventionally established indications of an object's prestigious status. This approach was shared by other designers, such as Reinhold Weiss, Robert Oberheim and Richard Fischer, working within the extensive categories of household appliances and personal grooming. Such that, at its height in '68, the universe of Braun and Vitsœ design comprised a unitary and outreaching system of systems, one that in taking up within itself every aspect of the Braun and

Vitsœ ranges also implied its extension to encompass the design of buildings, districts and cities.

Of course, the conditions that made possible the 1960s Braun/Vitsœ project no longer hold, and haven't done for some time. Perhaps that distance renews for us the strangeness of the program's first appearance. Indeed, in our collective forgetting of its underlying ideas, such a program may seem even stranger today than before. The kneejerk response to its totalising drive is often to question the designer's motive. There's a suspicion of megalomania. Traces of violence are detected in the plan that seeks to impose an individual's idea upon users, as if they did not have equally individual wishes and needs of their own. Total design, all utopianism, in fact, is said to slide inevitably into totalitarianism. Such criticism says more about our present than it counts against the design, however. There are no grounds to assume the project had anything to do with the singular ideas of individual designers, let alone their personal genius or 'vision'. In both its origin and aim, we might think of it instead as a moment within the unfolding of a collective project, even as belonging to a tradition of sorts.

On the side of the user, if the program is thought to limit choice and so curtail freedom, why assume that freedom can be enacted on an individual basis, as opposed to being something social and, as such, connected to what we collectively do, rather than what we individually consume? The tradition of total design, at least that strand of its to which the objects of Braun and Vitsœ belong, in their coherence, their joining and combining, their aesthetic fusion and dissolution of traditional boundaries, were intended as an alternative model of freedom. For they suggest how a part might be such only through its relation to the whole, and how norms, which purport to describe how things are and must continue to be, might be revised or abolished entirely. From the standpoint of production total design is no longer feasible, yet given our current situation, its lesson might still be useful.

Peter Kapos, 2018

40 Braun L 450 | TS 45 | PCS 5 | Vitsœ 606
Dieter Rams 1962 | 1960. A reduced version of the more heroic wall-mounted system usually including the TG 60 reel-to-reel. As with the Audio 1, the plinth height of the PC 5 record player corresponds to that of Vitsœ 606 endplates providing visually continuous integration within the system. Here Vitsœ 606 system E-track is also used to support non-standard shelves.

41 Braun LE 1 electrostatic speakers
Dieter Rams, 1959. Rams drew up the housing solution for innards (ESL-57) licensed from the UK firm Acoustical Manufacturing Co. Ltd. (latterly Quad). The speakers were the first electrostatic speaker available on the German hi-fi market. Only 500 pairs were issued, production ceasing in 1963.

42 Braun T 1000 | PV 1000 direction finding antenna
Dieter Rams, 1964 1964. The World Receiver's calm enclosure belies its complex range of functions. Behind the front panel, controls are set out according to a highly rational operational hierarchy. This example is shown with direction-finding accessories, a navigational aid for boats.

43 Braun Atelier 3 | L 20
Dieter Rams, 1962. The Atelier 3 is the last of Rams' early Atelier series. Whereas Ateliers 1 and 2 presented relatively crude variations on Gugelot's SK 4 design, the 3rd iteration broke with it decisively. 'Natural' wood finishes were swapped for emphatically industrial anodised aluminium and paint. As such, the housing of the Atelier 3 also follows the same constructive principle and materials as Rams had used two years previously in his 606 Universal Shelving System, whose cabinetry the Atelier 3 closely resembles. This convergence of audio and storage design through common material and constructive principles finally resolved the problematic tension between audio and furniture characteristic of the first phase of Braun audio program.
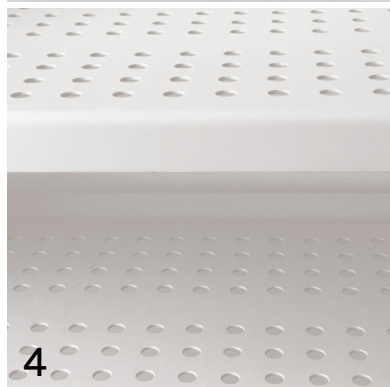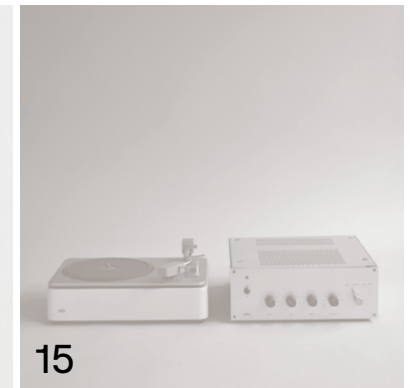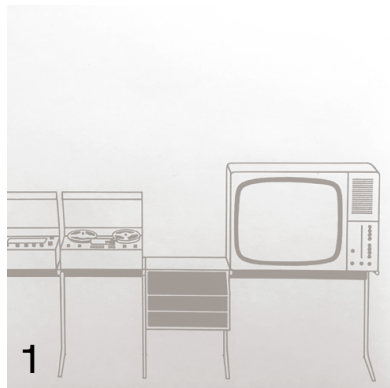
44   **Braun L 46**

Dieter Rams, 1963. In addition to integrating within the 606 system, the L 46 speaker was designed to be wall-mountable in two orientations.

45   **Braun TP 1, T 530, T 4, transistor K**

Dieter Rams 1959, 1962. Between 1958 and 1963, the Braun audio program was divided between light weight portable and semi-portable devices, fixed position combined systems fitted with crystal pickups and fixed position high fidelity systems with magnetic pickups. The portable devices used a distinctive vocabulary of light grey plastic casings with leather straps, handles and slip cases (a combination being rediscovered today by a number of wireless speaker manufacturers). As the '60s progressed, emphasis shifted increasingly towards the production of high fidelity equipment. The early light weight systems were a more promiscuous grouping: additional speakers could attach to radios, which could serve as amplifiers for small mains powered record players, or even smaller battery-operated ones; radios could be fitted into cars in special cradles. The emphasis in this segment was on freedom of movement and flexibility, arguably less 'bourgeois' than the living-room bound hi-fi systems. On the flipside, the price of freedom was paid in sound quality.
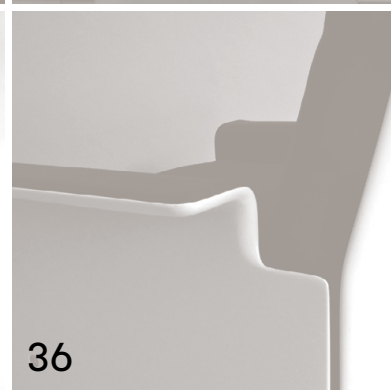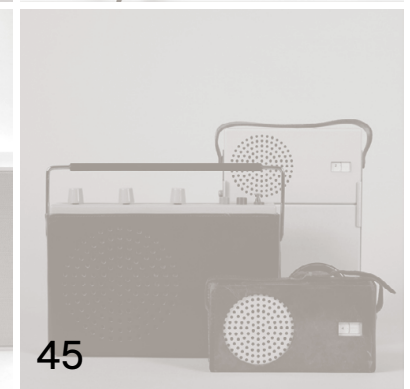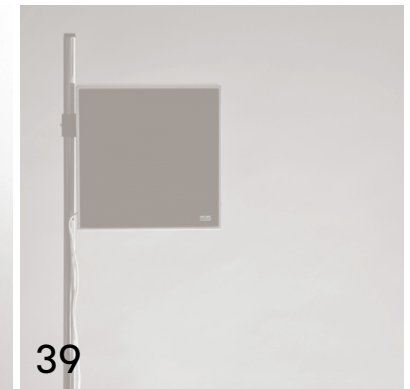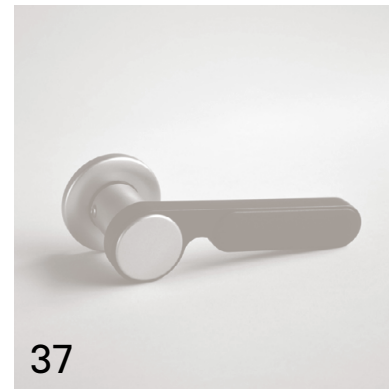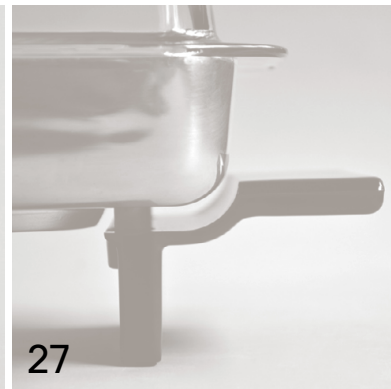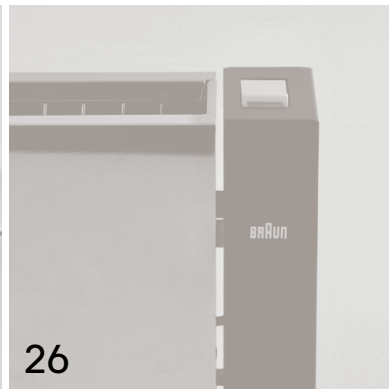
46   **Vitsœ 606 programme catalogue**

1965 catalogue showing the integration of Braun audio parts within the 606 system.

47   **Highgate Newtown Stage 1**

The exhibition is situated within Highgate Newtown Stage 1, a modernist housing development skirting Highgate Cemetery designed by Peter Tábori for Camden Council and completed in 1978. The step sectioned building is formed as a series of balconied terraces divided by cast concrete fins. Living areas are open plan, partitioned with story-height sliding doors. Pedestrian walkways, raised above parking, follow a street plan, and, unusually now for London, are much enjoyed by children. Highgate Newtown Stage 1 belongs to a set of five important high density low-rise schemes built by Camden in the 1970s. These buildings are the subject of an excellent monograph by Mark Swenaton, Cook's Camden, published this year by Phaidon.
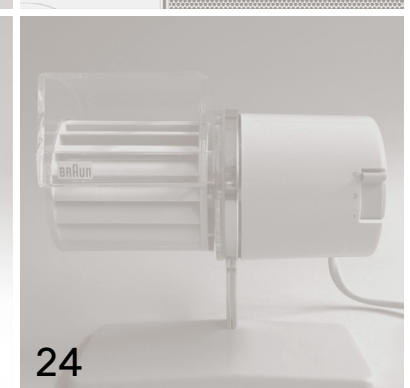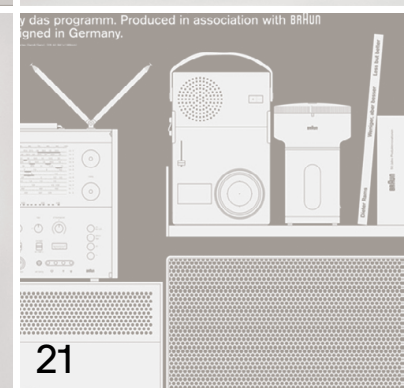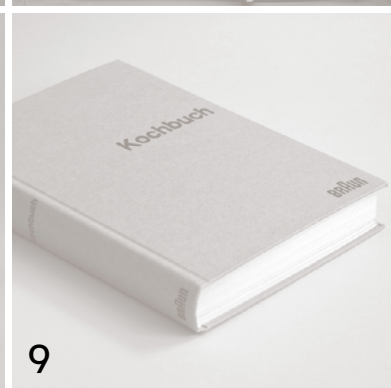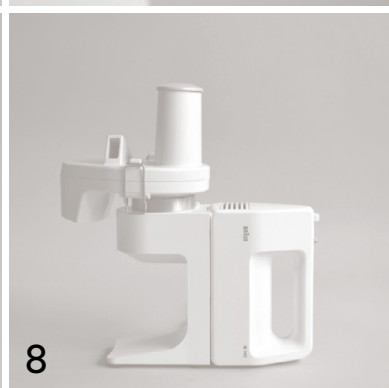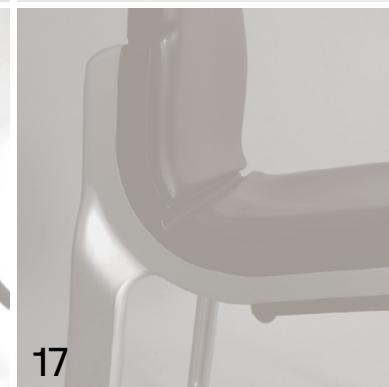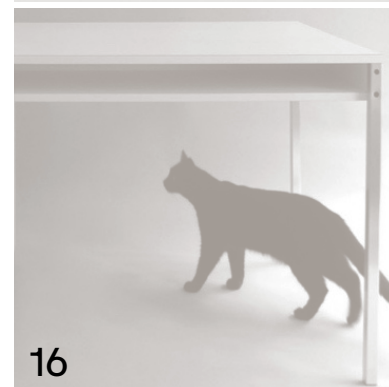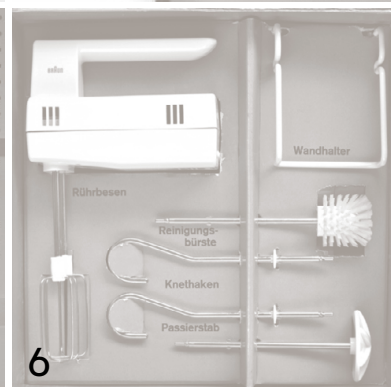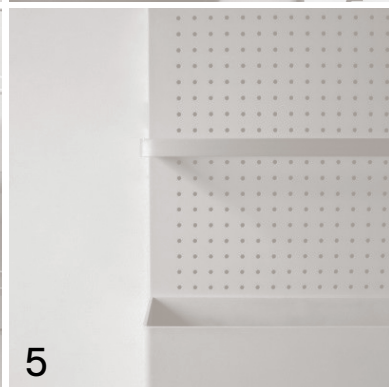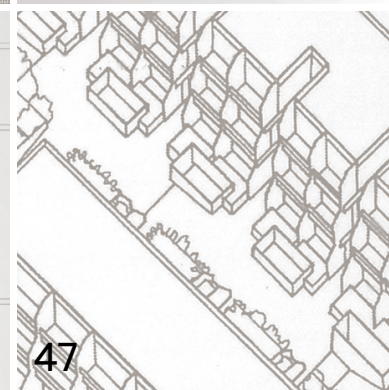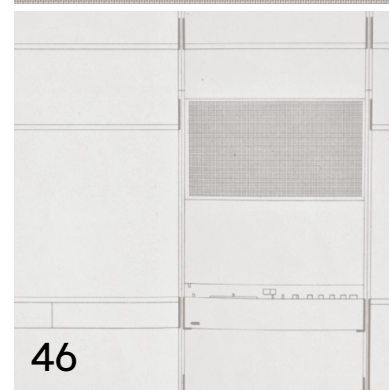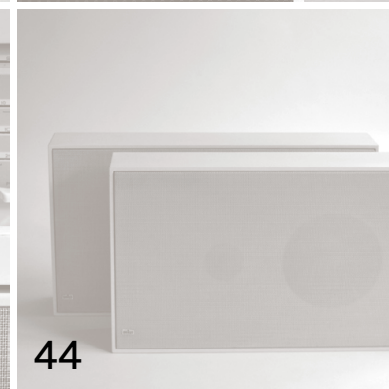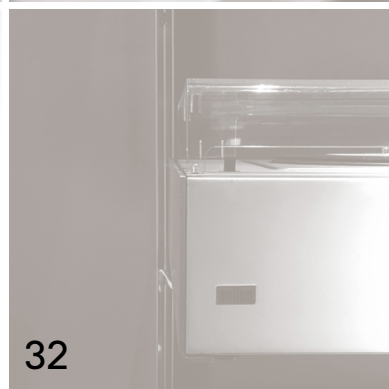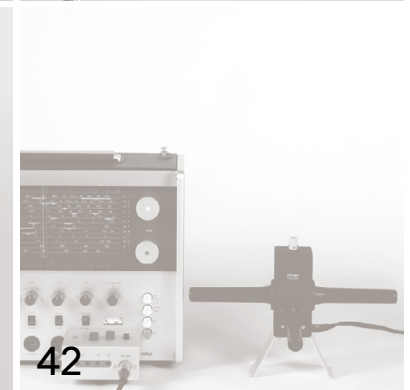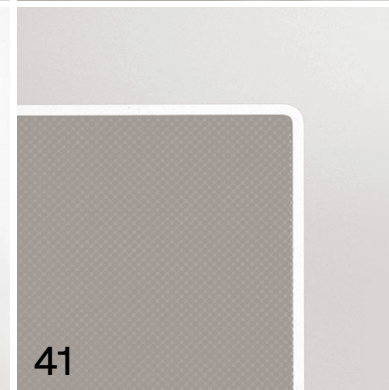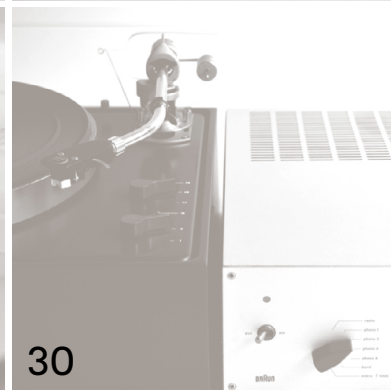
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