

BRAUN

Hallo Simplicity.

Sixty years ago Braun unleashed a revolution. For the first time, electrical appliances were freed of embellishment and given a simple, functional design. The concept of simpler but better arguably originated in the Bauhaus school, but never before had it been applied to electrical appliances. The humanistic motivation behind Braun's bold step is still relevant today: the easier and more comprehensible an appliance is to use, the better the user's experience and results will be.

Over the last six decades, design has become a core pillar of the brand. The values of quality, functionality, clarity, longevity and timelessness have been integrated into an enduring design philosophy. Braun users identify with these values; for them, Braun products are long-term companions. In an age of prosperity and saturation, sustainability has become more important and the benefit of fewer, better products self-evident.

We believe it makes so much sense to continue living this philosophy today and advancing it into the future. In the twenty-first century, Braun is a megabrand spanning diverse categories and business partners. As we set out to create desirable, innovative products, our gaze looks forward into the future, but the design principles we use to achieve consistency, simplicity and clarity across segments is rooted in our unique design legacy. This is how we work and this is what this book is about: creating engaging simplicity – less, that becomes so much more

Prof. Oliver Grabes

Design Director Braun

The visionary.

Erwin Braun



In 1945, in the chaos that enveloped Germany at the end of the Second World War, a twenty-four-year-old former lieutenant made his way home on a bicycle, together with his newly wedded bride. The way home from Weimar to Frankfurt was 370 kilometers – Erwin Braun arrived safely with his wife Erika, and they moved into his parents' home, which had survived the 1944 bombing attacks on Frankfurt. As expected of a dutiful son, Erwin shelved his inner desire to study medicine and studied business administration instead, as preparation to take over his father's electrical company.

The takeover was quicker than expected, since Max Braun died unexpectedly only six years later. Erwin's younger brother Artur, a trained engineer like their father, took on responsibility for technical management at the age of just twenty-six. Max Braun's sales director continued to run the daily business, and the challenge for Erwin was deciding what the company's future strategies would be.

Both Erwin and Artur had experienced the oppression of the Nazi dictatorship and the horrors of war. Erwin in particular felt strongly that the company should break through into a new era that addressed a more modern lifestyle and showed greater humanity. Within three years he had the company logo redesigned, contacted the Ulm School of Design to redesign the existing line of radios and phonographs, affectionately referred to as "gold crates," and thus pioneered the birth of modern industrial design for electrical appliances. He also

established, thanks to the cafeteria with healthy food and the employee health center, a socially-oriented, humanistic leadership style.

Erwin Braun viewed the products he and his company created as precise, functional electrical assistants for the household, as discreet and as little disruptive as a butler. Because human beings are so diverse, the best way for a product to gain wide appeal is to be as neutral as possible – the same way paintings are best shown to advantage on a white wall. This vision of simplicity and neutral appearance has made the most sophisticated technology easily accessible for consumers – and is still a guiding principle for Braun Design today.

Erwin Braun could not realize his vision alone – he was successful in winning many talented people for the Braun cause, be it his friend Fritz Eichler, the designers Hans Gugelot and Otl Aicher from the Ulm School of Design, the new young leader of Braun's own design department, Dieter Rams, as well as a broad spectrum of technical and sales teams. This spirit of cooperation and reciprocal respect for other human beings continues to be an important underlying foundation for the Braun brand.

The strategist.

Dr. Fritz Eichler



The 1930's were a difficult if not dangerous time for artists and creative personalities in Germany. Art that did not fit the Nazi regime's criteria as appropriate for the fatherland was banned as degenerate. The young Fritz Eichler, born 1911 in Luxembourg, studied art history and theater in Berlin and Munich from 1931 to 1935. His doctoral dissertation was titled "Theater with Puppets and Marionettes." When the war broke out, he was drafted and assigned to be a radio operator. In his knapsack he boldly carried a catalog from the MoMA in New York and impressed his younger army colleague Erwin Braun with detailed reports about design trends from the recently banned Bauhaus school.

Some fourteen years later, when Erwin Braun was thrust into the role of company leader after his father's sudden death, he contacted his avant-garde colleague and friend. Two worlds collided: an art historian joined a medium-sized electrical company. Eichler's task: to transform the bombastic, antiquated products the Braun brothers had inherited into a modern, contemporary offering, not only in appearance but also in communication. He took on the challenge with the same boldness and honesty he had shown during the war years.

Fritz Eichler was the ideal mental sparring partner for Erwin Braun. They spent countless hours together, went for walks in the nearby Taunus hills and discussed their search for a common company image at every possible moment. When Erwin first contacted the Ulm School of Design, Fritz's judgment

and aesthetic opinion were an invaluable support. After the first successful venture in 1955 with Hans Gugelot and Otl Aicher, Eichler established Braun's own department of design, encompassing both industrial design, led by Dieter Rams, and graphic design and communication, managed by Wolfgang Schmittel.

Fritz Eichler was not only a major strategist, but also a key communicator who represented Braun in public, especially after the Braun brothers sold their company to Gillette in 1967. He gave countless speeches and statements at award ceremonies and museum exhibitions.

He was the keynote speaker at the first Braun Prize event in 1968 and led the Braun Prize Jury until 1989. Eichler joined the Braun advisory board in 1973, where he supported Senior Management with his expert opinion and forthright point of view until his death in 1991.

In one of his many writings, Eichler summed up his and Erwin Braun's quest as follows: "Can a company have financial success creating products that exude more honesty and humanity? This truly weighty question could only be answered by going down that path". The Braun brothers took the decision to go down that path, and Fritz Eichler was the light that illuminated it.

The designer.

Prof. em. Dr. h. c. Dieter Rams



A young man graduated with honors from the Wiesbaden School of Arts and Crafts at the age of 21, having also completed an apprenticeship in carpentry. His first job was in the office of the Frankfurt architect Otto Apel. After two years, on a whim, he applied for a job as an architect and interior designer at the Frankfurt company Max Braun. All applicants had to submit a sketch for the interior design of an office. Fritz Eichler, whose office was the one being designed, recalled: "I could still draw the outline today. It was simply naked and plain. [...] Hans Gugelot, Erwin Braun and I met to discuss the submissions. Gugelot then said, that's the only one we can consider." The year was 1955, and the young man who got the job was Dieter Rams.

Things were moving fast at Braun. Under the leadership of Fritz Eichler, Braun began to establish its own design department. Rams' first assignment was to design a combined radio and phonograph unit; he created the foundational pure form, with slits for the speaker and ventilation, as well as geometrically shaped operating elements. Hans Gugelot from the Ulm Design School added the idea of using metal instead of wood for the housing. Later a plexiglas cover was added – the SK 4, also known as Snow White's coffin, was born.

Gerd A. Müller, whom Rams had met during his carpentry apprenticeship, was hired shortly thereafter and assigned to design small appliances, whereas Rams concentrated on radio and phonograph products. In 1959, a considerable part of the

Braun range – containing many iconic products designed by Rams – was accepted as part of the permanent collection at the MoMA in New York. Soon thereafter, Rams was made head of the Braun Design department, which expanded to include designers such as Reinhold Weiss, Robert Oberheim, Dietrich Lubs, and many more. Over the next thirty-five years, until Rams retired from Braun, his work and that of his team gained worldwide recognition and fame.

Dieter Rams has been called "The Designer's Designer," because so many designers today have been inspired by his work, his ten principles of good design, and his maxim "less but better." Naoto Fukusawa, Jasper Morrison, and of course Apple's Jonathan Ive have all expressed their admiration for Rams. Most importantly, his work remains a source of strength for Braun design today. Rams' own words about himself at the start of his career, "I wanted to clean up, to get rid of the chaos," already foresaw sustainable thinking long before the expression was coined, and remain a guiding principle for Braun design in the future.

The collector.

Horst Kaupp



He came to Braun in 1950 on loan, a sixteen-year-old young man from Frankfurt apprenticed to be a carpenter. His task: support the Frankfurt company Max Braun in constructing presentation stands for trade fairs and exhibitions. Sixty-five years later, he is still affiliated with Braun: he manages the Braun Archive at the unique Braun Collection of historical products and documents in Kronberg. His name: Horst Kaupp.

Braun products are known for their high quality, reliability and longevity. It is not unusual at Braun Customer Service to receive letters from satisfied consumers who have had their kitchen machines for 30 years or more, consumers who trust Braun and remain brand loyal. If these values of longevity and loyalty were to be personified, most Braun-insiders would point to Horst Kaupp.

Young Kaupp finished his apprenticeship in 1952 as the best carpenter in the guild and in the entire state of Hesse. He helped in the construction of the famous trade fair stand designed by Otl Aicher for the Düsseldorf radio exhibition in 1955. The radio and phonograph products presented there, revolutionary new designs by Hans Gugelot from the Ulm School of Design, marked the birth of modern Braun design.

For over fifty years, Horst Kaupp worked constructing trade fair stands for Braun, crossing paths with Max, Erwin, and Artur Braun, Dieter Rams, and many others. Kaupp was responsible not only for construction, but also for assembly, dismounting

and storage of the stands. Over time, at the request of Senior Management, Kaupp began to collect products, often samples left over from the exhibitions, and store them in the large trade fair warehouse. Managers came and went, but Horst Kaupp remained and the collection grew.

In 2004 Senior Management visited the trade fair warehouse and was astonished at the size of the product offering that Horst Kaupp had amassed over the past thirty-some years. This sparked the establishment of the Braun Collection in 2005, which is open to the public and today contains some 10.000 historical products (420 displayed permanently, 1200 in the walk-in archive), plus thousands of documents and images. The Braun Collection vividly presents the history and the aura of the Braun brand and its unique role in pioneering German design in the second half of the twentieth century.

Horst Kaupp continues to be active, arranging traveling exhibits and loans to prestigious institutions such as the MoMA in New York or the MAK in Frankfurt. He also gives interviews and tours for collectors and school classes. Visitors to the Braun Collection can meet Horst Kaupp personally and experience how he lives the values of longevity, loyalty and attention to detail – day in, day out, for the last sixty-five years. Braun is lucky to have him.

Past forward.

Braun's design DNA has strongly influenced the field of industrial design.

It not only created a mindset of order, clarity and simplicity that inspired designers and companies around the world, it also became visible and tangible in hundreds of products Braun introduced to the market. Iconic details like nub textures on shavers and circular or lozenge-shaped buttons with functionally-oriented colors are well known examples.

At the heart of Braun Design is the urge to make things useful, meaningful and beautiful with as little design as possible.

This has been and continues to be what we strive for - in the past and again today.