

Press Release

systems at Walter Knoll – an exhibition.

An international group of 34 graphic designers respond to the systematicity of Braun Design.

Walter Knoll is proud to host **systems**. It was felt important, at this moment in time, to take another look at mid-century German Functionalism, a set of ideas about industrial design developed at the School of Ulm and taken up by the Braun Company. Arguably, that approach to design is as relevant now as it ever was. Walter Knoll is pleased to support an exhibition that acknowledges the importance of this period, and tracks its influence on designers today.

Curated by das programm, **systems** at Walter Knoll is an exhibition of commissioned poster designs, and examples '60s Braun Design printed materials and products.

Thirty-four leading graphic designers and studios were invited to produce a poster design on the theme of Braun systems design. From repetition and development to nostalgia and critique, the diversity of response to the **systems** brief offers a snapshot of the international graphic design scene at a fascinating juncture, one in which the legacy of modernist graphic design appears with renewed but uncertain relevance. At the same time, **systems** sample some of the best and most challenging work currently being produced, including a contribution from Braun Design.

The designs are shown in a single grid of A1 prints at the Walter Knoll London showroom. Alongside these contemporary works is presented an extensive collection of Braun graphic design from the 1960s. The consistency, rigour and beauty of Braun graphic standards was essential to overall coherence of the '60s Braun programm - its systematic character.

The display also includes examples of '60s Braun products based on modular systems, including the Lectron system, flash light system and a top of the range audio system shown for the first time in the UK.

systems is curated by das programm and produced in association with Braun, exhibition design and graphics – window vinyl, wall text, labelling, printed guide and catalogue (forthcoming) – undertaken by Giorgio Del Buono and Michal Polak.

We would greatly appreciate a courtesy copy.

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Concept

systems' relatively loose brief was designed to gather a variety of response to Braun Design. Because of the latter's strong character, there is a degree of consistency between works. But each design also offers a singular perspective, some pointedly so. In this way, taken as a whole, the works test the mid-century modernist ideal of universal rational form under the present conditions of a disjunctive global culture. The relation that the new designs, as a grouping, enter into with the various historical Braun Design materials also on display implicitly poses the question of the form that modernist design must take in the present, if the project of the last century is to be extended.

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Graphic designers contributing to systems

almost Modern Rotterdam

André Hernâni Meca Lisbon

Antonio Carusone New York

ArtivaDesign Genoa

Bernd Grether London

Bibliothèque London

Braun Design Kronberg

Cartlidge Levene London

Derek Kim San Francisco

Design Project Leeds

Dominic Dyson typeandline London

Henry Coleman London

Ibán Ramón + Dídac Ballester, Valencia

Experimental Jetset Amsterdam

Felix Pfäffli Luzern

Hey Barcelona

L2 M3 Stuttgart

Lundgren+Lindqvist Gothenburg

Mark Gowing Design Newtown NSW

MuirMcNeil Design Systems London

Neubau Berlin

Playgroup London

Remake Brooklyn NY

Ross Gunter London

Spin London

studio fnt Seoul

studio job Nynke Tynagel + Job Smeets Antwerp

Studio Sport Ronnie Fueglistner + Martin Stoecklin Basel + Zürich

TM David Mamie + Nicola Todeschin Geneva

Tomasz Berezowski Katowice

Tom Hingston Studio London

toormix Barcelona

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Artists

Two fine-artists have contributed artworks to systems. Henry Coleman shows three of a twelve work series, in which bars of colour are a variable element within a set of otherwise static relationships. The resulting ambiguity between necessary and decorative factors recalls a contradictory and ultimately fatal aspect of mid-century functionalism. Rupert Norfolk's sculpture, clock, could easily be mistaken for a Braun wall clock, a classically rational chronometer. Yet examination reveals its body to be not only optically, but actually distorted. The face is elliptical, the numerals irregularly sized, and the concrete facts of the object begin to be clouded by less certain figural meanings – of the contingency of the viewer's 'perspective', perhaps, or the historical deformation of reason...

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Walter Knoll

Host

The company is known as the oldest upholstery brand in Germany. Founded in 1865, Walter Knoll continues to make its mark in the history of furniture; it has created classic pieces and icons of the avant-garde and is a by-word throughout the world for modern design. Since the end of the last century, the company has grown considerably, has increased its output ten-fold and today is one of the trendsetters at the premium end of the market.

Design awards: Over ninety international awards for product design over the last fifteen years, several architecture prizes for the brandland building which was opened in 2006 in Herrenberg, a multiple prize-winning corporate film and accolades for the company's ability to communicate its brand philosophy all bear witness to its endeavour to make a holistic contribution to design. The first Design Management Europe Award presented in 2007 is a characteristic example.

Inviting and prestigious as well as internationally comprehensible in design, Walter Knoll furniture makes the desired quality of life a reality. The furniture is innovative, appealing and instantly recognisable. Our projects worldwide range from the Reichstag in Berlin to the KAUST University in Saudi-Arabia, from restaurants in Stockholm to conference rooms in Tokyo, from the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston and banks in Dubai to the Hearst Building in New York.

Together with renowned architects and designers, including Norman Foster and PearsonLloyd from Great Britain, E00S from Austria, Ben van Berkel from the Netherlands, Kengo Kuma from Japan, and Toan Nguyen and Claudio Bellini from Italy, the company creates furniture and furnishes the interiors of buildings worldwide.

www.walterknoll.de/en/company.aspx

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Das programm

Initiator and curator

das programm is an online archive and gallery specializing in the sale of museum condition Braun Design from the period 1955 – 1995. A philosopher by training, Dr Peter Kapos is director of das programm and is currently developing a research project related to the temporality of modernism with particular reference to German industrial design. These strands are fused in the curatorial premise of systems exhibition, which reflects upon the contemporary reception of mid 20th century modernism within the field of graphic design.

www.dasprogramm.org

Giorgio Del Buono + Michal Polak

Exhibition and graphic design

Giorgio Del Buono and Michal Polak are designers based in London, working at Cartlidge Levene. Their collaborative practice is rooted in the principles of the International Typographic Style. They treat graphic design as a problem of form, communicative economy and beauty, resolved by the careful thinking through of its various aspects, not by reaching for a ready to hand 'look'. In their project the pair seek collaboration within related fields (architecture, product design, curation) as a means to broaden the conceptual basis of their practice. In 2013 Giorgio became a member of ISTD (International Society of Typographic Designers), following a commendation award.

www.giorgiodelbuono.com

www.michalpolak.co.uk

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Braun

Corporate supporter

Braun Design have made the systems exhibition possible through their generous support, including permission for the use of Braun logo and archive materials in works connected to the project. systems has to do with the ways that Braun Design of the twentieth century is understood by designers today. So, it is entirely fitting that Braun have also contributed a poster design to the exhibition, particularly so in light of their recent return to the tradition of Braun Design as a vital resource in the creation of new products. Head of Braun Design, Professor Oliver Grabes, explains: "Braun Design is grounded in a great legacy and is determined to translate its values into future products: strong, innovative and renowned for their modern, functional design. This is what our philosophy "Strength of Pure" stands for – it is the basis and standard for our new design language. Our new Braun design language takes up the legendary legacy of Dieter Rams and his colleagues, above all by adopting their mind set and following their search for appliances that are readily comprehensible and superbly functional down to the smallest detail. It is this approach that inspires our design endeavours today."

www.braun.com/us/world-of-braun/braun-design.html

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