

BOOKS

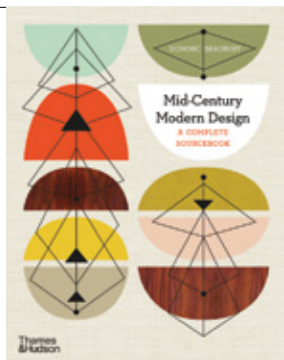
edited by Stanley Abercrombie

Dieter Rams: The Complete Works

by Klaus Klemp

New York: Phaidon, \$60

344 pages, 300 color illustrations



Dieter Rams is one of the most gifted and influential of modernist industrial designers of consumer products. But because his name did not appear on those products, they are better known than he is. This is therefore a very welcome book. It's divided into five chronological chapters, the first dating to 1947 when Rams, having grown up in Germany with a master carpenter grandfather, was a student of architecture and interior design at the Wiesbaden School of Art, the first image shown being a sketch for an armchair inspired by Marcel Breuer and Mart Stam. The last section ends in 2020, its final image of his recently designed wall-mounted desk.

Between these bookends are almost 300 of his designs. Some of them, notably leather-upholstered seating on fiberglass bases and wall-hung shelving systems, were and are for Vitsoe. But the bulk of Rams's output was for Braun, where he began designing in 1955, became director of product design in 1961, executive director in 1988, and retired in 1997. His pieces included all manner of furniture and wall systems, radios and TVs, clocks and watches, bathroom and kitchen equipment, door and cabinet hardware, computers, and lighting.

The book's fine design is by the appropriately named Order. But the exciting part of it, and of Rams's work, is not its quantity, variety, nor impeccable minimalism but its consistent high quality. In the preface, Rams himself writes of his "primary insight... a simple one: Less, but better... Less and less of the products whose production and use squander resources and are a burden on the environment" and better products that offer "the facilitation, enhancement, and strengthening of our lives."

Mid-Century Modern Design: A Complete Sourcebook

by Dominic Bradbury

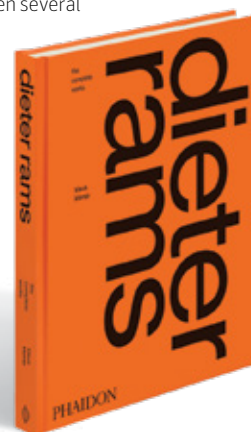
New York: Thames & Hudson, \$50

544 pages, 915 illustrations (893 color)

Perhaps not since Mel Byars's 832-page *The Design Encyclopedia*, reviewed here in 2004, has there been such a comprehensive one-volume body of information on modern design and designers as this. It is unsurpassed in its quantity and quality of illustrations.

The subject is approached from three viewpoints. "Media and Masters" examines Furniture (from Eero Aarnio to Edward Wormley), Lighting (Achille Castiglioni to Gino Sarfatti), Glass and Ceramics (Hans Coper to Russel Wright), Textiles (Florence Broadhurst to Marimekko) Product, and Industrial Design (Corradino d'Ascanio to Ettore Sottsass), and finally Graphics and Posters (Saul Bass to Paul Rand). "Houses and Interiors" shows 20 such examples, from Alvar Aalto's Maison Louis Carré near Paris to a house in Armonk, New York, built for himself by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill's Arthur Wittthoefft. Most of these are given several well-illustrated pages. Last, there is an "A to Z" section providing illustrated biographies of more than 300 designers and manufacturers.

Introducing all this is Bradbury's six-page history of mid-century modernism. Adding to the factually dense pages is a baker's dozen of more philosophical essays by such authorities as Steven Heller and Richard Wright. End matter includes brief biographies of these contributors, notes, an extensive bibliography, picture credits, and an index.



What They're Reading...

Creativity Inc.: Overcoming the Unseen Forces That Stand in the Way of True Inspiration

by Ed Catmull and Amy Wallace

New York: Random House, \$21

368 pages, 22 illustrations (20 color)

"I was looking to fine tune my business-management skills when I started reading this e-book. I was instantly drawn to the fact that not only was it about the amazing legacy of Pixar but that it also speaks to the growth and management of a creative company—something that was lacking in most of the books I'd come across, which tended to be very product driven or about business development in other industries.

I was happy to find there's a lot of crossover between an animation studio and an interior design studio—from studio planning, structure, and dynamics to problem-solving and the creative process itself. In the last few decades, there has been a lot of structure that has developed within studios that has defined the way we work and communicate with each other in a creative space. This book examines how Pixar was able to challenge those processes and successfully re-imagine the creative process under ever-changing corporate and economic restrictions—something that applies now more than ever in the unprecedented times of the current global pandemic.

I ended up loving the e-book so much, I purchased a hard copy for my partner and myself. It'll be a staple in our library as an inspirational re-read."



Kevin Chan
Partner at Nivek Remas