

The Museum of Modern Art

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ELEGANT DESIGN OF SOUND EQUIPMENT FOCUS OF MOMA SHOW

The visual elegance of the sound equipment designed by Jakob Jensen for the Danish firm of Bang & Olufsen is the focus of an exhibition in the Goodwin Galleries at The Museum of Modern Art from April 14 to June 18. This is only the fifth time in the history of the Museum's Department of Architecture and Design* that the products of a single industrial firm have been so featured.

Directed by J. Stewart Johnson, Curator of Design, the exhibition of thirty-four pieces of sound equipment includes receivers, radio sets, turntables, tape decks, loudspeakers, earphones, microphones and television sets.

"There is a consistently high quality in the design of the company's sound equipment," notes Mr. Johnson. "Too much of today's equipment has been designed without any concern for its visual impact on domestic interiors. Or, even worse, they've had the wrong kind of impact--ersatz Spanish Colonial consoles, for example. Bang & Olufsen, on the other hand, design their sound equipment as beautiful objects in their own right that do not inordinately call attention to themselves."

Unlike much recent Japanese design for sound, which has tended toward a macho aesthetic of crowded dials and knobs, Bang & Olufsen's products are distinguished by an understated elegance. Surfaces are smooth, controls operated by the touch of a finger or, in some cases, entirely hidden from view when not in use. There is an emphasis on rich materials, including such finely grained woods as rosewood, teak and oak.

Most of the objects in the exhibition were designed by Jakob Jensen, an award-winning Danish industrial designer who has worked in the field since 1952. Designs by Acton Bjørn and Henning Moldenhawer dating from the 1960s are also included, as are television sets designed by the team of Henning Moldenhawer and David Lewis.

Many of the items shown are available in this country, although some "classic" pieces are no longer in production. All of them suggest the firm's abiding interest in visual design. A number of the objects are in the Museum's Design Collection which was established in 1934 and now includes over 2500 mass-produced or handmade objects. These range from Art Nouveau vases to industrially produced objects such as tools, appliances, silverware, china and crystal as well as 20th century crafts. They have been selected on the basis of their quality and historical significance to illustrate the development of design during the past eighty-five years.

There will be a press preview on Friday, April 14 at 6:30 p.m. to which members of the design community have been invited.

* The others were: Thonet, Olivetti, Chemex, Braun.

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