THEMES IN KITCHEN DESIGN

1920 - 1987

Joan Maher

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JOAN MAHER

DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRIAL DESIGN

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Introduction

Design for the kitchen has been linked to popular perceptions of the role of the housewife throughout the twentieth century. The aim of this thesis is to trace trends in kitchen design from the 1920s to the present day in relation to changing perceptions of the housewife's role. It is not conceived as a conclusive history of domestic appliances, nor, indeed, as a history of housework. Rather it is an examination of the sociological relationships which have existed between appliances and users. To this end a series of case studies and discussions of major trends have been used.

Kitchen appliances, along with the vast majority of manufactured goods, are designed with one overriding objective; profit for the manufacturer. Design is part of a marketing exercise which also enlists advertising and social research to further its one aim - to sell. In a complex society, selling is a highly sophisticated art and the job of design is to apportion to a product the correct ingredients for a particular market. Price, function, aesthetic and ideology must all be sold as part of the design. It is the latter commodity, ideologies, which will be discussed here in relation to kitchen design.

If it is to sell itself, then a product must sell ideas; ideas about the buyer/user, about society, and about the buyer/user's role and status in society. For the design to be profitable these ideas must be acceptable to the intended market, they must reinforce the buyer/user's own preconceived ideas about himself/herself. In short, they must conform to the mythologies of a particular society or culture. Design is not a tool for social change, rather it is a tool for social conservatism.

By their nature, manufactured goods have far greater power for the propagation of mythologies than the more ephemeral media of advertising and information systems. Manufactured goods are 'real' in a sense in which advertising or mass media are not. They exist in the solid state and are used regularly. The message conveyed by a domestic appliance which "belongs" in the home is far more difficult to refute than the messages brought into the home by television or printed matter. The design of kitchen appliances makes firm statements about the role and status of housework and housewife in society. These statements are a reinforcement of the mythologies of housework propagated on a broader plane by and throughout society. The mythologies, their relationship to reality, and the means by which design for the kitchen propagates these mythologies are the subjects of the following discussion.

Chapter 1:
Mythologies of Housework

The definitive study of housewives attitudes towards their own role is The Sociology of Housework, written in 1974 by Ann Oakley. In this book, it becomes clear that women, regardless of class and social status, are under no illusions as to the nature of the actual work in which they are engaged. Overwhelmingly housework is disliked as physically exhausting, monotonous, repetitive and socially isolated. Even potentially enjoyable tasks, such as cooking, which is at least an opportunity for creativity, have their enjoyment value negated by lack of time, lack of the right environment or tools, lack of appreciation, the insistent repetitiveness of it all (three meals a day, seven days a week) and the knowledge that one pleasant task will only be followed by countless less pleasant ones (washing up, cleaning).

But, despite their dissatisfaction with housework, women tend to identify positively with the housewife role, which is seen as an integral part of being wife, mother, and woman. The first, basic mythology of housework is that it is part of being a woman, linked to childbearing, loving and caring for a family and that to reject the role of housewife is to reject one's femininity. Thus, housework is seen as being an expression of love rather than a job as such. People are housewives in a far more total sense than they are, for instance, Bank Clerks, Road workers, or Engineers.

The idea of housework not being a 'real' job is evident again in the second mythology. This is that the housewife, being identified in conventional economic theory as a consumer rather than a producer, is a non-essential member of society. Linked to this are all the contradictions of a consumer society in which an important criterion in the allocation of status is the class of commodities consumed, but which does not accept the consumer as a serious contributor to economic life. The housewife's role in maintaining the workforce is regarded as non-productive (non-profit making) and, therefore, non-essential.

The third important mythology, again proving that housework is not a real job (as it involves no real work), is that technological advances and labour-saving kitchen appliances have removed the hard work from housework. This seductive mythology was examined in detail in "Time Spent in Housework" (Scientific American: November,1974). Using Government research findings from 1926 to 1966 the article examined the changing situation of both employed and non-employed women in relation to the application of technology to housework. It found that non-employed women "devote as much time to housework as their forebears did." It also found that the housewife's working week, at an average of fifty-six hours, was longer than the working week of an average person in the labour force. The nature of housework, however, had been changed by technological developments. Less time was spent on producing food and clothing and more on shopping and managerial-type tasks.

Interestingly, the article found that time spent on laundry, where one would expect the load to have been lightened by automatic washing machines (and dryers) had, in fact, increased since the 1920s. These findings echo suspicions expressed as far back as May,1930, when an article in American magazine Ladies Home Journal complained that:

> "Because we .... have the tools to reach it, we dig every day after the dust that our grandmothers left to a Spring cataclysm."

Instead of saving time by allowing jobs to be completed faster, labour-saving appliances had merely resulted in these jobs being done more often. The Scientific American study proved in 1974 that what women had instinctively known in 1930 was, in fact, the truth. Domestic appliances had, in fact, resulted in more work for the housewife.

To return to the nature of mythologies; structuralist theory, epitomised in the work of Roland Barthes, argues that mythologies belong essentially to the political right and that their role is to uphold and universalise bourgeoisie ideology. Although Barthe's work relates specifically to France in the

1950s, his theories are equally applicable to all societies in which mythologies operate to promote the dominant culture to the status of natural order. In Western societies the dominant culture is white, male and middle-class and the mythologies of housework clearly operate in the interests of this culture. In fact, it is essential to the continued dominance of this culture that one half of the adult members of the society in which it operates should be unpaid, marginalised and, above all, willing workers in the support and maintenance of the other half. The mythologies discussed here are designed to ensure the continued willingness of these workers. While not meaning to negate the changes in attitude occasioned or expressed by the "Wages for Housework" branch of feminism (1970s style), it is nevertheless true to say that the vast corps of housewives accepts and propogates society's image of its role. The mythologies which ensure their continued co-operation are re-affirmed constantly by advertising, by the cultural media and, most insiduously by the imagery employed in the design of their tools of work.

Chapter 2 :
Early Appliances ; '20s & '30s

"White goods are readily recognised
symbols of affluence and of
industrialisation."

(Design: February,1980)

White goods are at the core of the kitchen's appliances. They include refrigerators, washing machines, cookers, and more recently, deep-freezers, fridge-freezers, and dishwashers. White has been considered the appropriate colour for these goods almost since their first appearance on the market, although recent trends in the case of the cooker are towards more variations in colour. Nevertheless, the lion's share of the market for these appliances is for white goods. The colour white is associated with hygiene, and hygiene has been accepted as a suitable imagery for domestic appliances since the 1920s and 1930s. The reasons why this is so are rooted in the house-keeping reforms which occurred in both America and Britain in the 1920s.

The housewife of the early twentieth century had suffered a lowering of status occasioned by the centralised mechanisation of work which had traditionally been done by the housewife at home. As it became cheaper to buy commercially made clothes, bread, soap, butter and other goods than to produce them at home, the housewife was left with increasingly less varied chores. Her importance to the economic life of the family was considerably diminished and her status suffered accordingly. In America, the housewife affected by these changes was likely to belong to the articulate middle-classes. Her discontent at the downgrading of her role gave rise to the concept of Domestic Science in the 1920s. This new 'science' promoted an educated approach to homemaking (as opposed to housework). In theory, the homemaker was to be granted the status of scientific expert, equal to experts in other fields of science. During this time the busy and efficient housewife became the accepted ideal for the new twentieth century woman. Since by now housework consisted mainly of cooking and cleaning, one result of the Domestic Science reforms was that standards of

cleanliness became near antiseptic. The pursuit of hygiene became a crusade.

However, the "expert status" of the homemaker was soon revealed as an illusion and control over the science of homemaking quickly passed into the manipulative hands of marketing corporations. The pursuit of hygiene, in the hands of manufacturers of household appliances, became the pursuit of the imagery of hygiene. The Domestic Science reforms had succeeded in instilling a sense of guilt into housewives about standards of hygiene which they now knew had an effect on the health of their families. This guilt was quickly harnessed by manufacturers as an aid to selling their products.

The English experience was somewhat different to the American one, but the end result was the same. In Britain and Europe a far greater number of households employed servants before 1914 than did in America. It was considered improper for middle-class women to do housework. Indeed, they were not encouraged to do any sort of work at all. The English middle-class housewife was assumed to give the house its personality by organisation of furnishings, servants and through the expression of her own personality. So closely was house identified with mistress that flaws in the home were taken as a sign of flaws in the woman's personality.

A reforming crusade against dirt, dust and disease swept Britain in the twenties as it had America, but it was related more to the middle-classes exercising control over working-classes than to any interest in re-asserting the status of the housewife. Housewives were working-class in Europe and their status, or lack of it, was never considered a public issue as it had been in America. However, between the wars, there was a large rise in new aspirants to middle-class status. These new middle-classes had been instilled with a mixture of scientific facts and emotional conditioning about the relationship of disease to dirt; and these were the people who were to buy the new appliances coming on the market. Manufacturers learned that by employing the imagery of hygiene in their products they could appeal to the feelings of guilt and anxiety about dirt which had resulted from the hygiene reforms of the twenties.

Fig. 1: Cresta Electric Refrigerator 1930s.

Fig.2: 1929 Electric Refrigerator

COLDSPOT

REG. U.S. PAT. OFF.

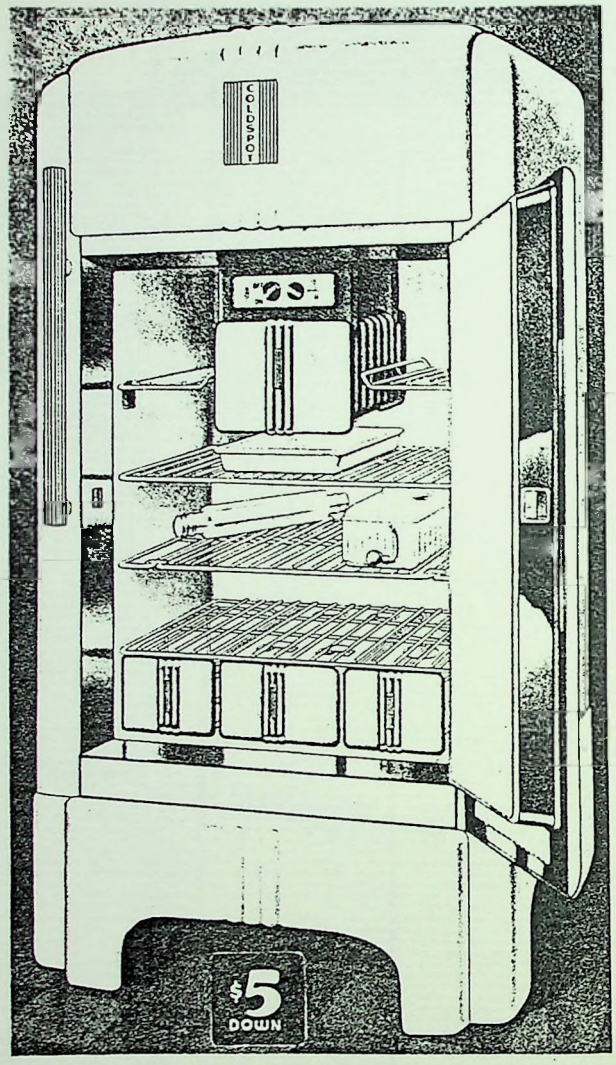
"Super Six"

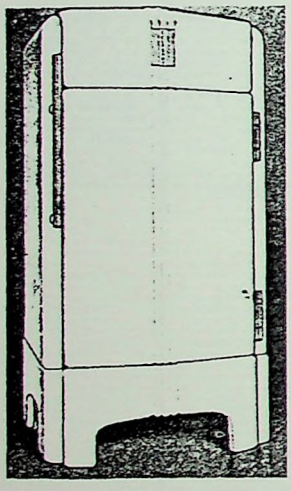
Lovely Modern Design
Super-powered "Package Unit"
Full 6-cubic foot size
About half usual price

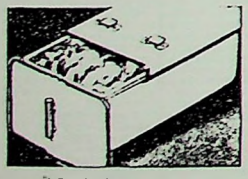
A NEW COLDSPOT for 1935 and a NEW Standard of Value in electric Refrigerators. By Value we don't mean just a lower price. You will never appreciate the Value offered in this COLDSPOT merely by looking at its price. Here is all we ask: Forget the price for the moment and consider this COLDSPOT purely in terms of Quality. Study its Beauty. Check its features. Analyze it strictly in terms of what it offers you. Then compare it with any other refrigerator of similar size, selling in the $250 to $350 class. We say that you will find the COLDSPOT actually a *Better* refrigerator, *In spite of the Fact That It Costs Only About Half as Much.*

USE YOUR CREDIT. You don't have to pay cash. See Easy Payments Prices and Terms on page at right.

All Prices for Mail Orders Only.

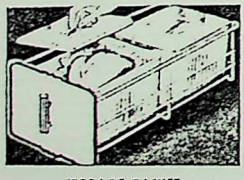






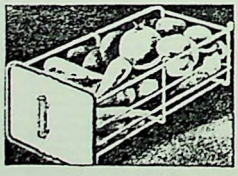
VEGETABLE FRESHENER

Large, covered, porcelain enamel vegetable freshener for keeping lettuce, celery, tomatoes, etc. in a fresh, crisp condition. Easy to keep clean and sanitary. Slides in and out exactly like a drawer.



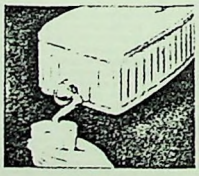
STORAGE BASKET

Large wire basket, containing two oversize covered glass dishes to keep butter, salads or left overs from absorbing the taste of other foods in the box. These dishes can be removed for kitchen use if desired.



STORAGE BASKET

An open wire basket for holding coarse vegetables, fruits etc. to eliminate breakage. (This container and the 2 shown at left suspend from lower shelf like drawers.)



WATER COOLER

Covered glass water cooler with no down faucet. Holds about a gallon liquid. Can be used for iced tea lemonade or other beverages. Especially desirable during the hot months.

Fig. 3: Coldspot Refrigerator, Raymond Loewy, 1937.

Fig. 4: HMV Streamline Refrigerator
British design, 1930s

Thus, "white goods" were introduced to the market and have been firmly entrenched ever since.

The refrigerator was the original white box. This is appropriate since keeping food fresh by storing it at low temperatures was stressed as being of particular importance by hygienists. The first electric fridges were housed in wooden cupboards, like the Cresta Electric Refrigerator in Fig.1. This was a hangover from the wooden ice-boxes which preluded the refrigerator. This particular model was designed in the 1930s as a refrigerated cocktail cabinet for the dining-room and was more of a status-symbol than a necessity. It was designed as dining-room furniture rather than kitchen appliance, which accounts for its expensive oak finish and semi-circular Art Deco style vents. It's interior, however, was in hygienic-looking white enamel. As an exterior finish, wood was very soon outstripped by enamelled steel and from the earliest appliances white or off-white was considered the appropriate colour. Fig.2 shows a 1929 model which had the first all steel and enamel cabinet. At this stage the compressor was top-mounted and the cabinet stood on legs above floor level. However, it soon became standard to have all working parts hidden away under a smooth white exterior box. Raymond Loewy's Coldspot refrigerator designed in thirties' America was the next stage in refrigerator design (Fig.3.) Changes were largely cosmetic and towards a more hygienic appearance. The compressor was totally housed within the cabinet, corners were radiied and surfaces curved to give the smooth, easily-cleaned streamlined imagery of depression America. Streamlining, with its imagery of fast forward movement into a technological future, was adopted as the appropriate style for consumer durables of all sorts during the American Depression. Although this style was truly relevant only in the atmosphere of thirties America, it nevertheless, transversed the Atlantic and was adopted (although less pervasively) in English appliance styling. The HMV Streamline, illustrated in Fig.4, although an English design, was directly related to the Coldspot. It is interesting to note how the legs of the refrigerator were shortening with each design development and the appliance was moving towards being plinth-based. The plinth would

appear to be a more hygienic solution as dirt could easily build up under both the Coldspot and the HMV Streamline. But as yet the problem of uneven floors in kitchens had resulted in the more practical legs being used. Yet it surely showed a contradiction in values, that for all their imagery of hygiene, these refrigerators should continue to feature such a dirt trap in their design. The obvious conclusion is that both manufacturers and purchasers were more concerned with the imagery rather than the actuality of hygiene.

In Britain, the early marketing strategy of the Electricity Development Authority contributed to the spread of white imagery. Between the wars the all-electric home was marketed as the new, clean, bright way forward to Utopia. The EDA needed to sell domestic appliances to use up generating capacity at non-peak times. Their advertising made extravagent claims for electricity:

> "Of all the gifts that electricity brings almost the greatest is the relief from the burden of mechanical, monotonous toil."
>
> (EDA publicity pamphlet)

or:

> "What used to be the labour (hard labour) of hours is now accomplished almost without effort in a matter of minutes."
>
> (EDA publicity pamphlet)

Labour-saving became an important claim for domestic appliances. In England, this concept was linked to the desire of the newly-emerging aspirants to middle-class status to be accepted as such. It was essential to their aspirations that the newly middle-class women be seen not to work, yet they could not afford to employ servants to do the housework for them. The myth of the labour-saving appliance as mechanical servant was a popular solution to a dilemma.

The labour-saving value of early domestic appliances was wildly exaggerated. The electric washing machine, for example, which began to be widely sold in America around 1925, was undoubtedly an improvement from its forerunner, the mechanical

washer and mangler, but it still left the housewife with an enormous amount of hard work. She still had to fill and drain the machine, drag heavy wet clothes out after washing (the machines were always top-loaded) and pass them through a mechanical wringer. The 'servant' certainly did not do all the work. The electric cooker is another example of an appliance for which extravagent claims were made. Early advertising copy implied that the cooker did all the work involved in producing a meal while the housewife watched. But, even leaving aside all the work involved in the preparation of food, the cooker involved other work such as the cleaning out of the oven , a job which had (and still has) the double disadvantage of being grimy as well as tiring.

Chapter 3 :

The Housewife as Consumer; 1945 - 1960

WHITE GOODS.

During the war housewives had become, for a short, critical period, machine tool operators, welders, rivetters and other skilled factory workers. But after 1945, with the men returning to look for their old jobs, it was considered essential to the 'national interest' that women should leave the factories and return to their proper place as housewives. These were the years when advertising of domestic appliances really began to make its mark. The propaganda skills learned during the war were put to use now in the pursuit of profit for manufacturers. Directly after the war domestic appliance design was taken up with questions of technical efficiency. Advertising copy ran along the lines of "She's used to the best in war, she'll expect the best in peace." (Myers: 1986).

Manufacturers stressed their products' technical superiority. In Design, March, 1949, an article on electric cookers discussed its topic purely in terms of efficiency; comparing models which claimed economy in heating the oven to cooking temperature, with models which claimed economy in keeping it hot; contrasting the advantages of plinth or legs; and discussing whether the oven door should be hinged at the side or the base. Manufacturers such as G.E.C. made great advertising copy out of their oven doors opening at base and providing a shelf for heavy, dripping roasts. The main advantage of side-opening doors was that they facilitated easier cleaning of the oven, but this was never stressed in advertising copy. Advertising was, by now, sophisticated enough to realise that to evoke the idea of the boring, and often filthy, hard work of cleaning out an oven was no way to sell their appliances.

During the 1950s, the role of housewife became intrinsically linked with the role of consumer. The advertising world was not slow to recognise that women were responsible for domestic

decisions and aimed many of its sophisticated messages at the housewife. (Fig.5) "The purchase of the right products of capitalist industry became a major element in the definition of what housework involved" (Malos, 1980). In the labour of love which housework was presented as being, it was a woman's duty to care for the family by buying "Model X" washing machine this year and replacing it with new, improved "Model Y" next year. Particularly in America the 1950s were the years in which planned obsolescence came into its own and consumer goods were designed to go out of fashion and favour and sometimes even to fail.

During the 1950s in Britain 'white goods' began to be less the preserve solely of the middle-classes and were more widely available to a majority rather than a minority of households. Cookers, refrigerators and washing machines retained their white, hygienic imagery. Streamlining was totally discarded as an idiom and refrigeration styling retreated into understatement to the point of blankness. The Prestcold Packaway Refrigerator (Fig.6), which was awarded the Duke of Edinburgh's prize for Design in 1949, was a white enamelled steel rectangular box, with square corners and one narrow graphic strip across the top to relieve the monotony. This is the point at which refrigeration styling seems to have frozen. The Prestcold would hardly look out of place in a 1987 kitchen.

Cookers, on the other hand, were still showing some variations in style. Grills were alternatively positioned above or below the hob. Doors opened downwards or sideways. Controls were positioned above the hob, below the hob, or as in the G.E.C. cooker of 1949, vertically alongside the oven door. Competition between gas and electric cooking was strong, with gas selling more cookers, but electricity appealing to the upper middle-class end of the market. British cookers tended to have a cast-iron or cast-aluminium frame with enamelled sheet metal panelling. This resulted in the cooker being a white box detailed with a black frame as in the G.E.C. model illustrated in Fig. 7. American designs tended to be all sheet metal, resulting in an all-white box. The emphasis in general was on a smooth, neat easily cleaned exterior. After the austerity of war, it was now also permissible to

"I'd never go back from Electricity to old-fashioned cooking now"

"Do come and inspect the new pride and joy of my kitchen.

"It's electric—and what a difference! In the first place, it is *clean!* That's what I particularly like. No grime, no dust, no ash to dirty my kitchen. The cooker only needs a quick wipe while it's still warm—and it's as bright as a new penny!

"I find cooking by electricity a lot easier. The oven temperature, for instance, is controlled automatically by the thermostat. A special switch for the hotplate gives perfect heat control—from slow simmering to fast boiling.

"And then my electric water heater! No work with it. I don't have to light a fire to have constant, instant hot water. I don't have to put up with the discomfort of a boiler alight in the kitchen on hot summer days, either. I'm very vain about my kitchen now—and the thought of the fuel I'm saving makes me feel I'm really doing a public service too!"

For friendly advice and information, go to your Electricity Showrooms or Service Centre. They will be glad to help you.

They can also let you have details about easy payments—and the new free book, full of useful ideas for saving work, **ELECTRICITY IN YOUR KITCHEN**; *or write for a copy to E.D.A., 2 Savoy Hill, London, W.C.2.*

"Breakfast for four, all on the grill boiler—that's economy for you!"

ELECTRICITY *a Power of Good*

E.D.A. 1/8

How you can prove that Persil washes whiter than any other washing powder!

TAKE two white things, equally soiled—say a couple of towels, or handkerchiefs, or pillow-slips. Follow the instructions on the packets and wash one article in Persil, the other in any other washing powder you choose. One article will come up whiter than the other—much whiter! *WE SAY IT WILL BE THE PERSIL ONE.* Yes, Persil washes whiter because it washes *cleaner!* The Persil laboratories make sure that Persil is always one step ahead of *any* other washing powder!

And Persil is kind to *all* your wash—whites, woollens, coloureds, fine things!

Do take care of your hands

Women are now thinking twice about using detergents that are harsh to their hands. The blessing of Persil is that it is always kind to your hands—you can *feel* it is!

The BIGGEST-SELLING washing powder in the country!

PERSIL washes whiter!

—and that means CLEANER!

PER 1277-1196-80

Fig. 5: Advertisements from Good Housekeeping. September, 1953

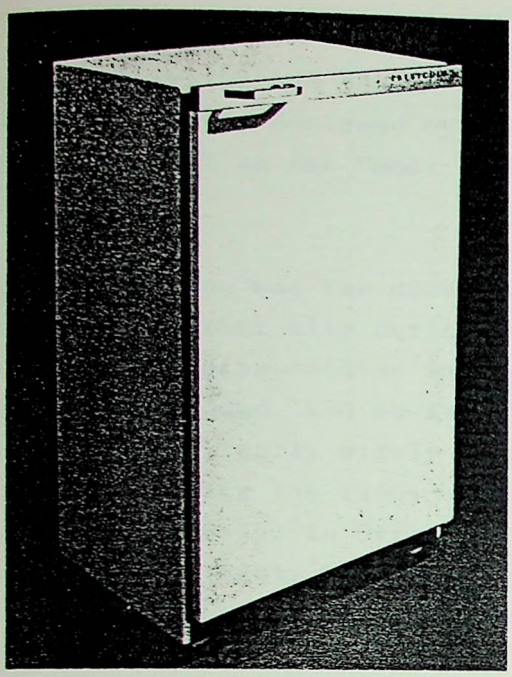


Fig. 6:

Prestcold Packaway Refrigerator
U.K., 1949

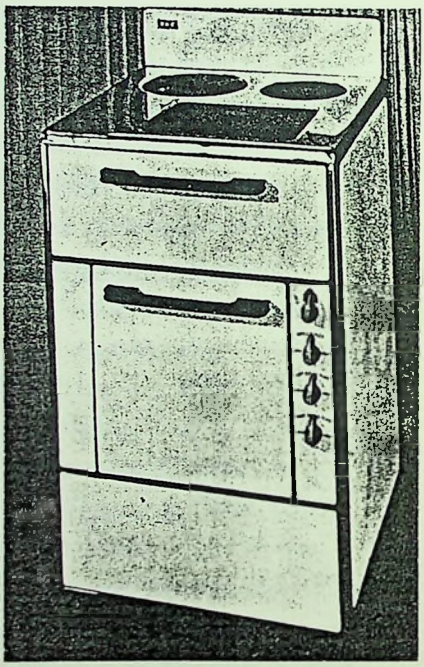


Fig. 7: G.E.C.cooker.
U.K., 1949

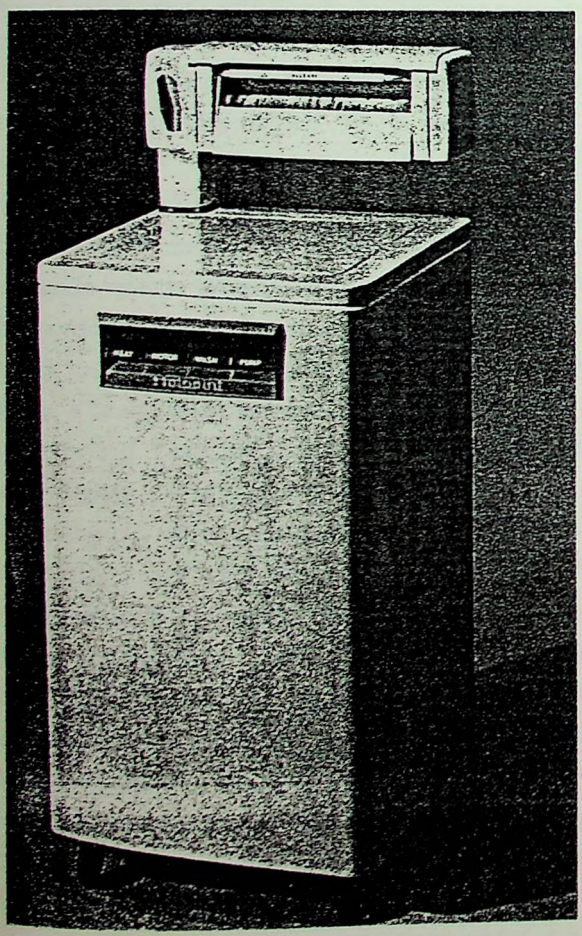


Fig. 8: Hotpoint Countess washing-machine
U.K., 1959

appeal to snob-value and status again. The Raymond gas cooker, for example, designed by Loewy (hence the name) was advertised in 1951 as the "most luxurious and most expensive of gas cookers."

The washing-machine was the domestic appliance which perhaps developed most technically during the fifties. In America the automatic washing-machine and spin-dryer became widely available from around 1950 onwards. In Britain these machines were not really widely available until the late 1950s. Nevertheless, during the 1950s ownership of washing-machines increased dramatically in Britain, from two per cent of households in 1947 to twenty-three per cent in 1957 and fifty per cent in 1960. The Hotpoint Countess (Fig. 8) is the sort of washing-machine which was available in Britain in the fifties. It was top loaded with a detachable electric wringer and stood on castors for ease of movement. A machine of this sort needed to be moveable as it was filled through a hosepipe attached to a sink tap and presumably would be stored elsewhere and moved to the sink when in use. The Hotpoint Countess was examined in Design: February, 1959, in one of a series of articles called "Design Analysis." The operating procedure for the machine makes illuminating reading. Four manual controls were provided; "Heat,' 'Motor,' 'Wash,' and 'Pump.' The machine was filled from the hot tap, the 2kw heater being intended only as a booster heater. Washing took place using a motor-powered gyrator within the tub, but there was no rinsing facility; the manufacturer's intention presumably being that clothes be transferred to the sink and rinsed manually. The wringer was also motor-powered with the water draining from the wet clothes into the tub. The used water could then be pumped back through the hose-pipe into the sink. The article mentioned many operational problems; such as the tendency of clothes to get caught under the gyrator; the tendency of the body of the machine to get uncomfortably hot when the water is boiled; the absence of a rinsing facility; the dangerous opening action of the lid, which comes off by pressing on one side to tilt it, whether or not the tub is full of boiling water, and the tendency of small pieces of one of the rollers on the wringer to flake off in use. Yet, the Countess was recommended by the Consumers' Association

Limited as one of the best non-automatic washing-machines available. (Design: February,1959; p.38). Taking all this into consideration, it is obvious that washing clothes was still a laborious and time-consuming task for the housewife. Yet the exterior of the Countess; a clean, white box with a well-integrated wringer and neat control panel; suggests a self-contained unit which does all the work. The reason for the absence of handles on the lid was given by the manufacturer as being for appearances sake, yet the result of having the lid open as it did was to put the housewife in danger of getting badly burnt by steam. Yet again, as with the refrigerators discussed in the previous chapter, it was a case of the image being more important than the actuality.

THE BUILT-IN KITCHEN.

> "It is the group that determines when a luxury becomes a necessity. This takes place when there comes together a sort of critical mass. In the early stages, when only a few of the housewives on the block have, say, an automatic dryer, the word of mouth praise for its indispensibility is restricted. But then, as time goes on and the adjacent housewives follow suit, in a mounting ratio others are exposed to more and more talk about its benefits. Soon the non-possession of the item becomes an anti-social act - an unspoken aspersion of the other's judgement or taste ..... Item by item the process is constantly repeated, and the norm never stays still. As soon as a certain range of items becomes standard in the neighbourhood group, its members grow restive for a new necessity."
>
> (The Organization of Man; Whyte, 1956)

'White goods' were, by now, accepted as necessities for the majority of middle-class housewives. The American ideal of the appliance-filled dream kitchen had spread to Europe. Following on its heels, came the desire for built-in kitchen designs to unify the resulting clutter. The 'fitted-kitchen' concept took off in the 1950s. Ergonomic studies

of kitchen design, based on a one-at-a-time user model - always female - with a regular, unvarying work pattern, advised on the best arrangements of cooker, sink, fridge, washing-machine and work surfaces. Designers had a field day playing with the concept. The following advice was given in Design: January, 1959:

> "Make the kitchen the core of the home. A factory, mechanised to produce food, to wash and boil, launder, replenish and preserve. An object for designer's skills, to invent new ways of saving time, reducing effort, of doing things a new and better way. Silent servants, at the housewife's beck and call, clothed in cases of enamelled steel, responding at once to the turn of a dial, the snap of a switch, masters of their respective robot trades ..... Give it colour with laminates for work-tops, tables, polythene buckets, basins and bowls, patterned tiles around cooker and sink; paints and papers. Give it richness with wood and chrome and lighting planned with care .... Focus now on the kitchen in a new year of prosperity, easy credit, competition, expansion, export .... Relax in the kitchen, machines do the work, the bowls will not break and a wipe will suffice to keep everything clean."

The new kitchen was clearly designed to be a consumer's dream; easy credit, no work involved, lots of modern materials (plastic bowls, formica worktops), and all kept clean with a wipe. In appearance the fifties' fitted kitchen belonged to the idiom of white goods. The cupboards and worktops were built around washing-machine, cooker, and fridge and were almost always white or cream. The 1953 Poggenpohl kitchen in (Fig. 9)is an example of an early fitted kitchen by a German manufacturer. European manufacturers were to become the market leaders in kitchen design. This kitchen won the gold medal at a Dusseldorf Exhibition called "Everyone should live better." "Living better" in this context meant owning more consumer durables. The fitted kitchen was the ultimate appliance; the kitchen as appliance. In the 1950s it was little more than a dream for the majority of European housewives, but it was a well-advertised, eminently desirable dream. It was designed to be the dream that every housewife/consumer would aspire to.

1953
Gold medal at the Düsseldorfer Exhibition "Alle sollen besser leben" for form 1000

1967
Paris International Trophy. The Comité internationale de Promotion et de Prestige honours Poggenpohl for the elegance and beauty of their kitchen furniture.

1972
Lambardia Premio Qualito Milano. Modern kitchens and interior design award.

1979
"Gute Form" Federal Republic of Germany Design Award for form 2000, CH 60 blossom white.

1980
International Product Design Award USA for form 2000 HR.

Fig. 9: Poggenpohl Fitted Kitchens
1953 - 1980

Fig.10: Atomic Expresso Coffee Machine
Milan, 1947

THE SMALL APPLIANCES.

So far the emphasis has been on the large appliances which dominate the kitchen setting. But, of course, alongside these 'white goods,' the smaller appliances such as food-mixers and processors, toasters, coffee-grinders and percolators, irons, fruit-juicers and countless others were developing. During the forties and fifties the styling of these appliances was quite disparate but if any single look was prominent it was that of a silver-coloured metal (stainless steel, aluminium, chrome) combined with black plastics. This look was partly attributable to the materials from which irons, toasters, kettles, and coffee machines were manufactured, but, it also owed something to the American "teenage" style of juke-box, diner and fast cars. At the top end of the market, Italian designs in chrome and black had an image of "Style" and sophistication, a cut above the "Mrs. Average Housewife" of advertisements. Appliances such as the Reflector expresso machine designed by Gio Ponti for La Pavoni in 1948 and the Atomic expresso and cappucino machine manufactured by Robbiati since 1947 (Fig.10) were a different type of status symbol for the kitchen. The curvy, aluminium body and black, bakelite knobs and handles of the Atomic suggest aggressiveness and self-confidence, two qualities which were not recognised as dominant in a housewife. The inescapable conclusion is that these machines were designed for the kitchen run by someone other than the traditional housewife; either a professional career woman (a rare enough species in 1947) or a professional man.
Not all stainless steel or chromed appliances were so aggressively styled, of course. The chrome plated toasters and irons advertised in Good Housekeeping during the early fifties were much tamer in comparison, but they still managed to suggest a certain air of professionalism and a slightly rakish "cafeteria" atmosphere. But chrome went out of fashion in the late fifties, even before plastics were sufficiently technically advanced to be used in appliance casings. It was replaced by enamelled steel, as in the Kenwood Chef, and yet again the dominant colours were white and cream. But a colour in itself could hardly be called a style and in the fifties small appliances were definitely lacking a

distinct style. Beyond technical efficiency, which there was no sure way of testing until after a purchase had been made, the consumer had no way of knowing which product to buy. There was no accepted standard in appearance by which to judge. This situation was to change dramatically with the advent of an international standard for small domestic appliances set by the German Company, Braun.

THE BRAUN HOUSESTYLE.

The Braun housestyle began to set the standard for kitchen appliance design in the late 1950s, and its influence has pervaded the market ever since. The Braun style , mentored in its early years by Hans Gugelot and later by Dieter Rams, both from the Hochschule fur Gestaltung in Ulm, has been described as "reticent to the point of being invisible" (Sudjic: 1985). Rams himself said about his designs that "They should be there, ready to perform effortlessly well when they are needed, but keep out of the way without imposing when they are not, just like an English Butler." Braun obviously intend their appliances to be no ordinary mechanical servants, but top of the range; the equivalent of "the English butler."

In the National Readership Survey Classification of Social Grades, an arrogant but useful system designed in the 1950s, and still in use to-day, all consumers are classified into the following grades according to the occupation of the male head of household:

A	Higher managerial, administrative or professional.
B	Intermediate managerial, administrative or professional.
C1	Supervisory or clerical and junior managerial, administrative and professional.
C2	Skilled manual
D	Semi-skilled and unskilled manual
E	Those at the lowest levels of subsistence; pensioners, widows, casuals, and the unemployed.

(Myers: 1986)

Braun appliances are aimed directly at the AB section of the market. The market for kitchen appliances is fed from the top, with styles filtering downwards. Even in later years, when C1s and C2s became the market sector aimed at, the style which they were sold in kitchen appliances was one which was originally aimed at the AB end of the market. For the past twenty-five years the standard-setters of this style have been Braun.

The hallmark of Braun is that as much as possible of a machine is hidden away beneath a smooth, geometrical housing of classical proportions coloured in shades of white or grey. The Braun housestyle is epitomised by "a square box with slightly rounded corners, grey-on-white or grau-im-grau colour scheme, perfectly cylindrical knobs and buttons, use of sans-serif type faces and the very slight curvatures permitted where unavoidable in the case-work of kitchen goods" (Banham: 1970). In the late 1950s Braun appliances stood out amongst their rivals as aloof and unfussy. The four food-mixers in Fig.11 illustrate this point. The photographs are reproduced from an article on contemporary appliance design published in Design: May, 1959. This article examined four mixers, the Kenwood Chef, the Sunbeam Mixmaster, the Electric 5500, and the Braun Kuchenmaschine from the point of view of function, construction and appearance and had this to say in conclusion:

> "Only the Braun appeared to have been designed with a woman, a kitchen sink and a crowded shelf in mind.....
> It was for these reasons rather than any real mechanical advantages that the Braun was voted by far the most popular of the machines tested, even though it had..... major deficiencies."

But why should Braun's discreet classicism be suited to, of all things, a kitchen sink and a crowded shelf? In a later article "Household Gadjets" in Arts and Society: 1970, the whole idea of Braun bringing "the Absolute into the kitchen" (Banham: 1970) was ridiculed. The author rejoiced in the hope that thus bringing "Absolute" values into "direct confrontation with scrambled egg and soiled nappies" (Banham: 1970) would result in a demystifying of what he saw as po-faced "Good Design" epitomised by Braun. In fact, the juxtaposition of classical design laws and values and the day-to-day actu-

alities of housework, caused by Braun -influenced kitchen appliances, acted as a powerful re-affirmation of all the mythologies of housewlrk. Instead of resulting in a devaluation of classical design theories, the comparison appeared to justify the mythical status of housework. By bringing the "Absolute to the kitchen," the kitchen and, by implication, the work done in the kitchen were themselves raised to the plane of the "Absolute." The "classical" kitchen appliance served to re-assure the kitchen worker of the timeless value of her work. The received message was that, like the proportions of a Braun appliance, the role of housewife was derived directly from nature. This related back to the most powerful mythology of housework; that is that the role of housewife is a "natural" expression of femininity. By so satisfactorily expressing the ideas which the housewife, and society in general, had about her role the Braun housestyle gained for itself the accolade of being the accepted style for kitchen appliances. The style was rapidly adopted by other manufacturers and will continue to appear in mainstream small appliance design right up to the eighties.

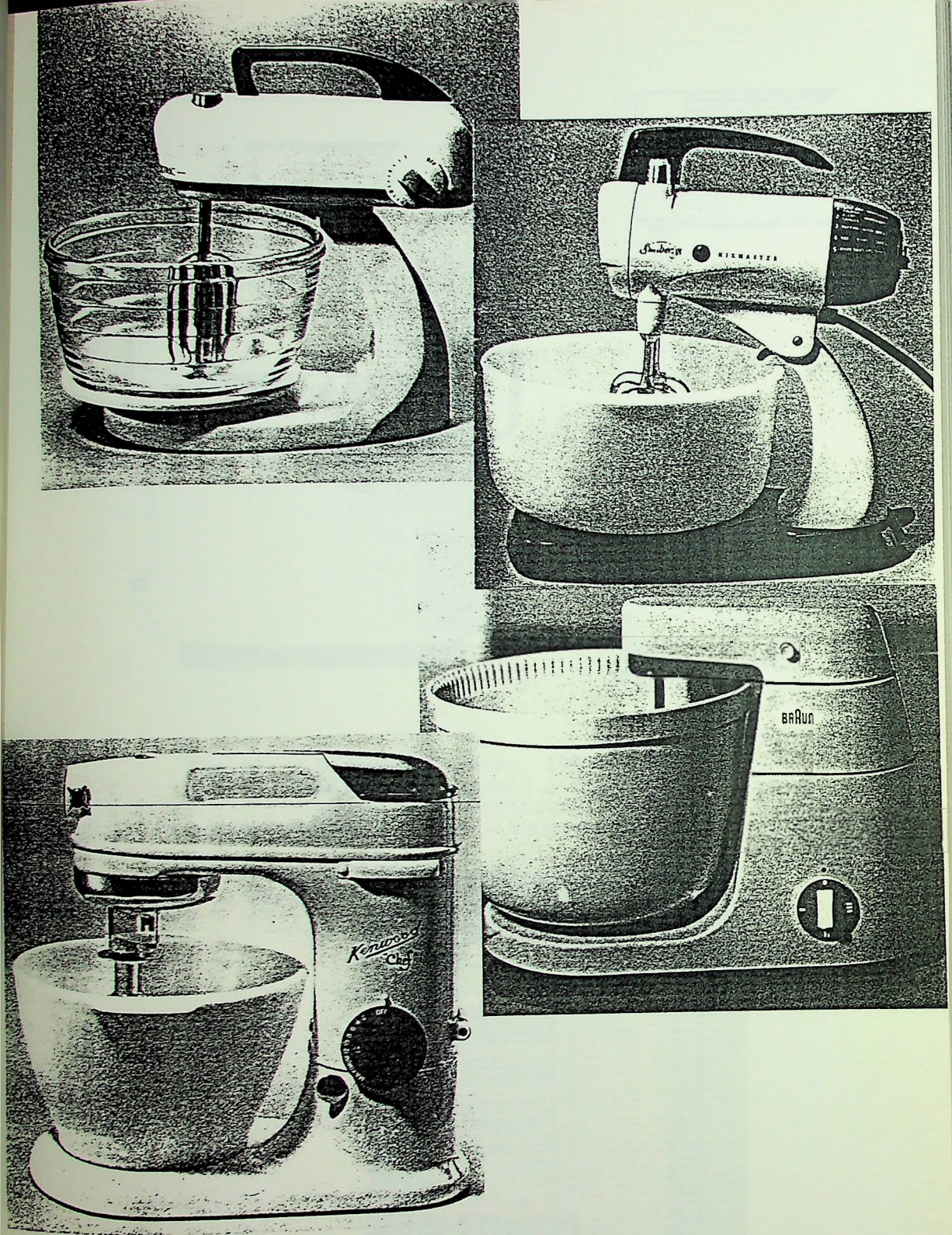


Fig.11: 1950s Food Mixers. From top left clockwise: Electric 5500, Sunbeam Mixmaster, Braun Kuchenmaschine, Kenwood Chef.

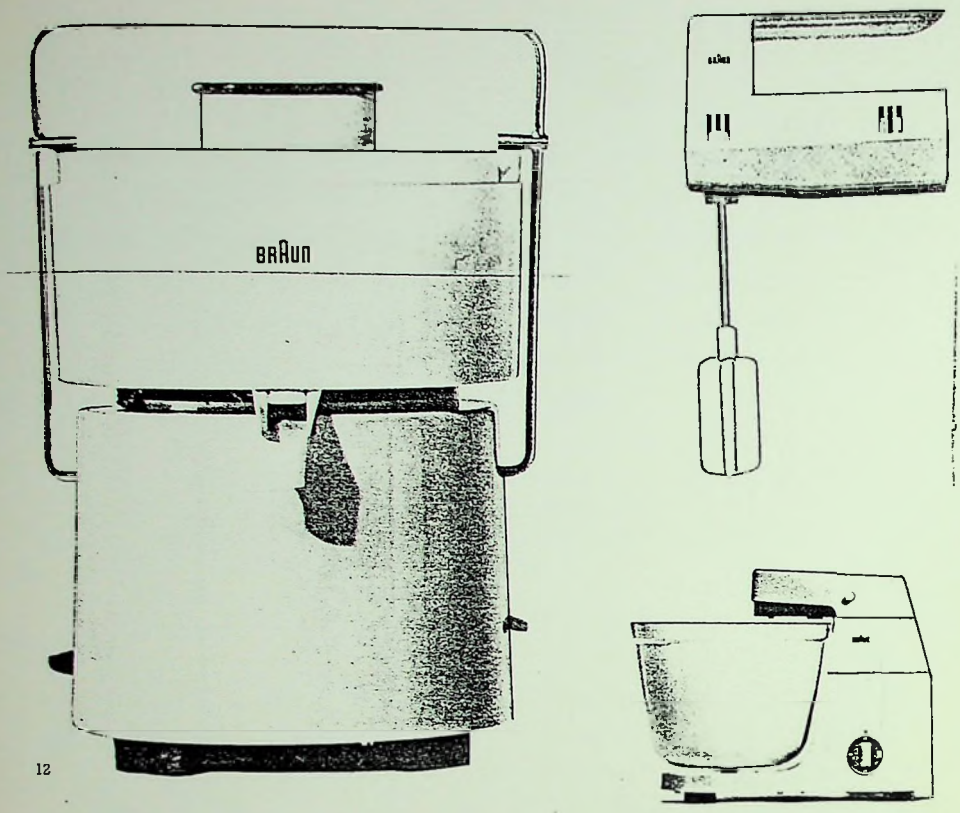


Fig.12: Braun Appliances, 1961
Left - Multipress juicer;
Top right - Multiquirl;
Bottom right - Kuchenmaschine

Fig.13: 1960s Frimatic 140 Refrigerator

Chapter 4:
Glamour in the Kitchen; 1960-1975

The 1960s was a decade of social change which saw the wide acceptance of 'permissive' values and 'singles' lifestyle and a corresponding devaluation of the role of housewife. The "Single Girl" was an image promoted by Cosmopolitan under the editorship of Helen Gurley Brown and it transformed the pitied "spinster" of the fifties into "the newest glamour girl of our times." (Gurley Brown).

> "The single girl had pizaz which came from facing the real world on the same terms as a man (although for only a fraction of the pay)".
>
> (Ehrenreich and English: 1979)

She worked for a living, was self-supporting and had affairs with the husbands of housewives. By implication, the housewife was, in contract, a parasitic dependent and an object of pity. Her 'caring' role was dull and dowdy in comparison to the 'glamour' role of the single girl (which was, of course, just as much a mythology in its own right). Added to this, the permissive ethos of the sixties spread everywhere but to the kitchen; someone still had to do the dishes while the rest of the family did what suited them.

> "By some curious asymmetry in the permissive ideology, everyone else in the family lived for themselves and she (the housewife) lived for them."
>
> (Ehrenreich and English: 1979)

The popular image of the housewife changed from that of cornerstone of the family to neurotic, drug-dependent victim.

The singles lifestyle was a boon to marketing corporations as one affluent single could outcomsume a family of four in consumer durables. As affluence spread into home and family life, so too did the values and ideals of the 'singles' lifestyle. These were basically the values and ideals of the marketplace, which were given respectability by their incorp-

oration into the "Ideal of the Home." Instant disposability was the order of the day and plastics were the materials which best expressed this. By the sixties the range of plastics had extended so that they were no longer regarded just as cheap and colourful, but also as reliable alternatives to traditional kitchen materials. In November, 1961 Design had this to say about the quality of plasticware available:

> "On the continent, melamine, acrylics and some other plastics have been treated by designers as materials of high quality that can take their place on the dining table alongside glass, china, and stainless steel."

Indeed by 1968 the Ekco range of melamine tableware, Nova had gained sufficient respectability to win the Duke of Edinburgh's Award for Design. This range was stackable, functional-looking, and above all, colourful. In fact, the main development in kitchen imagery during the 1960s was the introduction of bright, vibrant, primary colours. Even the refrigerator, the most traditional of white boxes, got its share of colour. The Frimatic 140, illustrated in Fig.13 was available in a range of colours, including coral, green, ivory, red, yellow, and black, with a choice of either a pink or white interior. Not that this represented what could be called mainstream design. The Hotpoint Iced Diamond refrigerators of 1967 were much more representative of the mainstream, being the traditional white stove enamelled steel box with some technological advances such as polyurethene foam insulation and automatic defrosting. Nevertheless, that the Frimatic 140 should have been manufactured at all indicates the importance which colour now had in the kitchen.

THE FITTED KITCHEN.

The concept of the fitted kitchen as the ideal kitchen continued to gain popular acceptance. In 1964 a British Standard for the Provision of Space for Domestic Kitchen Equipment was published. The intention in publishing the standards was that "the manufacturers will have guidance as to overall sizes which will ensure a wide market for his products, and the purchaser will be assured of an adequate choice of products that can be

fitted into the kitchen." (B.S.3705: 1964). The standards recommended different heights for sink tops, work surfaces, and tops of appliances, but this met with resistance from designers and industry as it would disrupt the 'ideal' neatness of the built-in kitchen. The theory of the ideal kitchen was that large uninterrupted stretches of working surfaces made for a good kitchen; the greater the area of flat-top the better the kitchen. The sizes of large appliances became standardised to suit this plan. The 'ideal' built-in kitchen, however, was arguably more an answer to the manufacturers' problems than the housewife's. During the sixties some alternatives to the built-in kitchen were proposed which would seem to make more sense for a housewife. For instance, the idea of a plug-in kitchen was forwarded in Design: July, 1966. It was suggested that appliances should be rented rather than purchased outright and that they should be smaller, more interchangeable and specialised - separate grill and oven, for example. A system such as this would suit the changing needs of a household and enable less capital to be spent on appliances. In 1963 the kitchen manufacturers, Hygena, even launched their System 70 range of modular units which allowed scope for adjustment, interchanging of parts and adding extensions at a later date, although it was still a case of buying outright. But Hygena dropped this range in the late sixties and the rent-a-kitchen concept never came to any sort of fruition. In a consumer society, with the role of housewife identified as that of consumer, possession of appliances was deemed more important than use of appliances. The actual physical needs of the housewife were overlooked by everyone (including the housewife herself) in favour of her psychological need for a status symbol; a built-in kitchen which was the ultimate labour-saving device.

The new brightly coloured kitchens (see the Poggenpohl: 1967 Kitchen, (Fig.9)) served to introduce some glamour into the kitchen and to re-assure the housewife that she was part of the "swinging sixties." There is evidence that manufacturers of kitchen appliances were aware of the marginalisation of housewives from sixties society; or at least that their marketing divisions were. In an article titled - "Investigating the Consumer" (Design: November, 1965) - the new marketing creed of "motivation research" is described:

> "The psychological relationships between user and product are a difficult area, but a vitally important one..... The designer's brief will increasingly be concerned with comprehensive knowledge of the whole way of life of his future customers rather than of a narrow segment of it..... Detailed information about the social background and learning of the user is of vital concern to the designer."

The illunimating feature of the article, however, was that every case study and example used was a kitchen appliance.

It is difficult not to conclude that by "Investigating the Consumer" the authors actually meant "Investigating the Housewife." The "Mrs. Average Housewife" of fifties advertisements was no longer an adequate image to design for as she just did not fit in in the permissive sixties. The housewife knew this as well as the marketing man, which is probably why 67% of all psychoactive drugs were prescribed to women during this time. It is also why "investigation," with its implications of control, was deemed necessary and why re-assuring "glamour" was deemed marketable in kitchen design. One interesting development in kitchen marketing was the rise of do-it-yourself kitchen assembly units designed for the cheaper end of the market.

WHITE GOODS.

After the discovery of North Sea gas in Britain in 1965 gas cookers began to be marketed as an alternative to electricity in the AB market sector. The advertising concept of "High Speed Gas" was devised with the intention of competing with electricity's clean, efficient image. However, the onslaught of gas cookers on the upper end of the market did little to change the image of cookers. Electric cookers had taken their form from gas cookers in the 1920s, and now in the 1960s the role was reversed and gas cookers slavishly adopted electricity's examples. In 1965 the Gas Council commissioned a study of gas cookers which made recommendations such as having sealed cooking surfaces, fail-safe pilot devices, removable side linings for ovens and flexible modular

units as opposed to one unit combining grill, hob and owen. But, as in the case of the modular kitchen, these recommendations were largely ignored. Gas appliances had to be approved for sale by the British Gas Corporation, and this conservative body gave its seal of approval largely to the free-standing, single unit incorporating all cooking functions. Meanwhile, European Companies, such as the German Neff and French Scholtes developed the concept of wall-mounted, split-level or modular units. During the next decade these were to become the market leaders in cooker design.

In the Scientific American article "Time Spent in Housekeeping," which was discussed in an earlier chapter, it was found that the time spent on laundry had actually increased between 1926 and 1966. Yet during this time the advances in "labour-saving" of the washing-machine had been immense. By 1966 the automatic washing-machine and spin dryer were widely available. In Britain 60% of households owned a washing-machine (I.P.C Marketing: 1978) and it can be safely assumed that in America the percentage was much higher. The automatic washing-machine was another appliance where simplicity of design would have benefitted the housewife, but complexity was pursued. Most British automatic machines had nine different washing programmes, capable of washing the most of delicate fabrics. Of the eleven fabric groups named in the International Textile Care Labelling Code, only two could not be washed in a machine. Yet the very sophistication of a machine which was capable of nine programmes meant five different temperatures, three degrees of agitation, two types of rinse and two spinning times. The complexity involved in providing this service resulted in a far greater risk of breakdown.

During 1972 and 1973, when demand for washing-machines was at its peak, British manufacturers produced over their true capacity and sold shoddy workmanship in an effort to supply the demand. This factor increased the incidence of breakdown even more. Added to this was the fact that the market for "white goods" had become extremely competitive and few manufacturers had the product-development budget necessary to design increased reliability into their machines. In any case manufacturers were unwilling to design improved reliability and maintain-

ability into their machines when complexity, under the name of sophistication was what sold.

Most households only used two or three programmes, and a range of cheaper machines with fewer programmes, simple enough to be serviced by the layman, would have been a much more practical way of marketing a truly labour-saving machine. But the demand was for a high-status multi-programme washing-machine which appeared to be highly labour-saving, rather than for a reliable alternative. For example, the Miniwash, designed by AID in 1975, was a reliable, practical and cheap alternative to the complex white washing-machine, eespecially for singles and couples, who took up a disproportionate share of the market. It had one washing programme and its basic elements were, to put it crudely, a motor and a bucket. But the Miniwash made no discernible impact on the market at which it was aimed. It got the image wrong. The appearance of the machine was nearer to a polypropelene bucket than to a sophisticated piece of white, labour-saving technology.

The 1960s saw three other new entrants into the 'white goods' market; dishwashers, freezers and fridge-freezers. The dishwasher claimed a very small market share; even by 1978 it was still only to be found in 2.7% of households in Britain, and belonged clearly in the AB bracket. (I.P.C. Marketing: 1978). Italian firms Zanussi and Indessit were the market leaders in dishwashers. The only contribution the dish-washer made to kitchen design was to add yet another glossy, white, high-status box to the list of desirables. However, its advent on the market did indicate an awareness of the important purchasing power of a new type of housewife, the working woman who was too busy to be a full-time housewife, but who worked outside the home for "satisfaction" rather than for any real financial need. The new freezers and fridge-freezers catered to a similar market. They began to make a substantial impact on the market in the early seventies, and by 1978 thirty-five per cent of households in Britain owned one. Again there was a clear upmarket bias in owner-ship. Freezers and fridge-freezers in the kitchen had an uncomplicated message. They indicated that the housewife cared for her family by providing them with the potential advantages of a freezer but that she was a busy woman, possibly

engaged in a career outside the home and did not have the time for mundane household chores such as shopping every day, or preparing a family meal during the daytime. They also indicated that she was affluent and that if she worked outside the home it was for satisfaction and independence rather than out of financial necessity. This image of the career woman-cum-housewife was a result of the adoption of singles lifestyle by married couples. The expectation that a woman should be competent at two jobs was the result of decades of persuasion that housework was not really work and did not count as a job. So the situation arose in the mid-sixties where a married woman could be expected to work a full working week plus "an average of twenty-six house of housework". (Scientific American: 1974) This amounted to an additional fifty per cent of working hours. Clearly a new 'Superwoman' was developing.

GADGETRY.

Meanwhile, the style of small domestic appliances continued to be Braun-influenced . An "International Survey of Current Design" published in Design: January,1963, found that design was showing "a continuing progression toward the simplification of forms." The article postulated the growing "appropriateness of form to the function of a product" and gave examples such as the Stulz kitchen mixer. This mixer was simply cylindrical with a rectangular base and begged the question "how does its form follow its function"? The truth was that its form was dictated by marketing rather than functional reasons. Like all mainstream small domestic appliances, the Stulz mixer had adopted the marketable and profitable Braun housestyle. Even where the style was not adopted, the concept was. The Morphy Richards dry iron of 1966, for example, was in the familiar black and chrome of the early fifties. Yet it was called the Classic iron, evoking the same idea of classical belonging in the kitchen as did the entire Braun imagery.

During the late sixties the small domestic appliance market became more and more gadget orientated. Gadgetry really originated in America and many of the appliances which appeared around this time seemed to be more concerned with inventing new ways of doing things than with any actual labour-saving. For example, the American magazine House Beautiful's Decorating listed the following range of appliances for "the brides wedding list" in its Fall-Winter issue, 1971: the Ronson Can-Do which mixed drinks, opened cans, beat foods, whipped cream and sharpened knives(!); the Waring cordless blender which operated on re-chargeable batteries to be used on the patio or at picnics; the Sanyo electric tempura fondue, complete with cover, drain grill, rack and spears; the Remington Hot-House for steam heating day-old rolls and buns and restoring them to freshness; the Farberware Open Hearth broiler (for dipping food into boiling water); and many more. The proliference of gadgets indicates bored affluence more than anything else, and did not exist only in America. The Philips Key to Electric Living (Byers: 1975) listed everything from can-opener to yoghurt-maker to egg broiler (for those who find that "the most expensive timer can never get their eggs boiled to exactly the right consistency," all available in Europe. The old themes of the domestic servant are regurgitated yet again in this book, which claims:

> "Electricity ..... from a cheap source of illumination for the home it has become a domestic servant.....
>
> Women no longer have to spend every day engaged in household drudgery - washing, cleaning and cooking - thanks to their electrical servants."

It was undeniably to Philips' advantage to overlook the extra "washing, cleaning and cooking" occasioned by these gadgets. Psychologically this was also in the housewife's interest, and the imagery employed in domestic gadgetry allowed her to overlook the apparently obvious. The choice was of either classical post-Braun imagery or fun "party-time" gadgetry imagery, and both in their different ways said "this is not work."

Chapter 5 :
Recession Trends;
1975 -

THE 'TRADITIONAL' KITCHEN.

Styles and trends in fitted kitchens have undergone frequent changes since the mid-seventies, but basically two streams have emerged; "traidtional" and "modern." The traditional kitchen harks back nostalgically to the days when the kitchen was a miniature factory (Fig.14) and the housewife's work was vital to the economic life of the family. It is true ingredients would include a large scrubbed wood working table with space for baking trays and rolling pastry, a fireplace with a kitchen range, a walk-in larder, and a dresser full of plates and cooking utensils. In diluted form, however, the "traditional" kitchen can merely mean timber-fronted fitted units, a trend which was introduced to the market around 1975.

The emergence of a modern 'traditional' kitchen style can be seen as a reaction to the 'glamour' styles of the previous decade. The new style gained popularity during the same time that feminist exposures of the mythologies of housework gained a wide audience. The 'traditional' kitchen was in direct defiance of feminist theory. It's role was to re-assure the housewife that her job was unchanged since the days of the pre-industrial revolution housewife. Once again, the 'timeless' nature of the housewife's role was being re-asserted.

In the late seventies the timber fronts of the kitchen units were dark and heavy (Fig.15), but into the eighties blonder woods became more popular (Fig.16). Brass 'antiqued' handles were de rigeur and occasionally the timber was even given fake knots to achieve an authentic rustic look (Fig.17). Accessories consisted of dressers crammed with lots of crockery, terracotta flour or spice jars, copper pots and pans, lots of gingham or Laura Ashley prints and long wooden benches or high wooden stools. The cooker could be built in hob, grill and oven units as in Fig.17, but to achieve the total rustic image a kitchen range such as the Aga in Fig.18 was necessary. The Aga kitchen range was in itself so loaded with symbolism that it was deemed worthy of cult object status in Deyan Sudjic's Cult Objects: 1985 :

Fig.14: Eighteenth Century Kitchen, Errdig Hall, Clwyd.

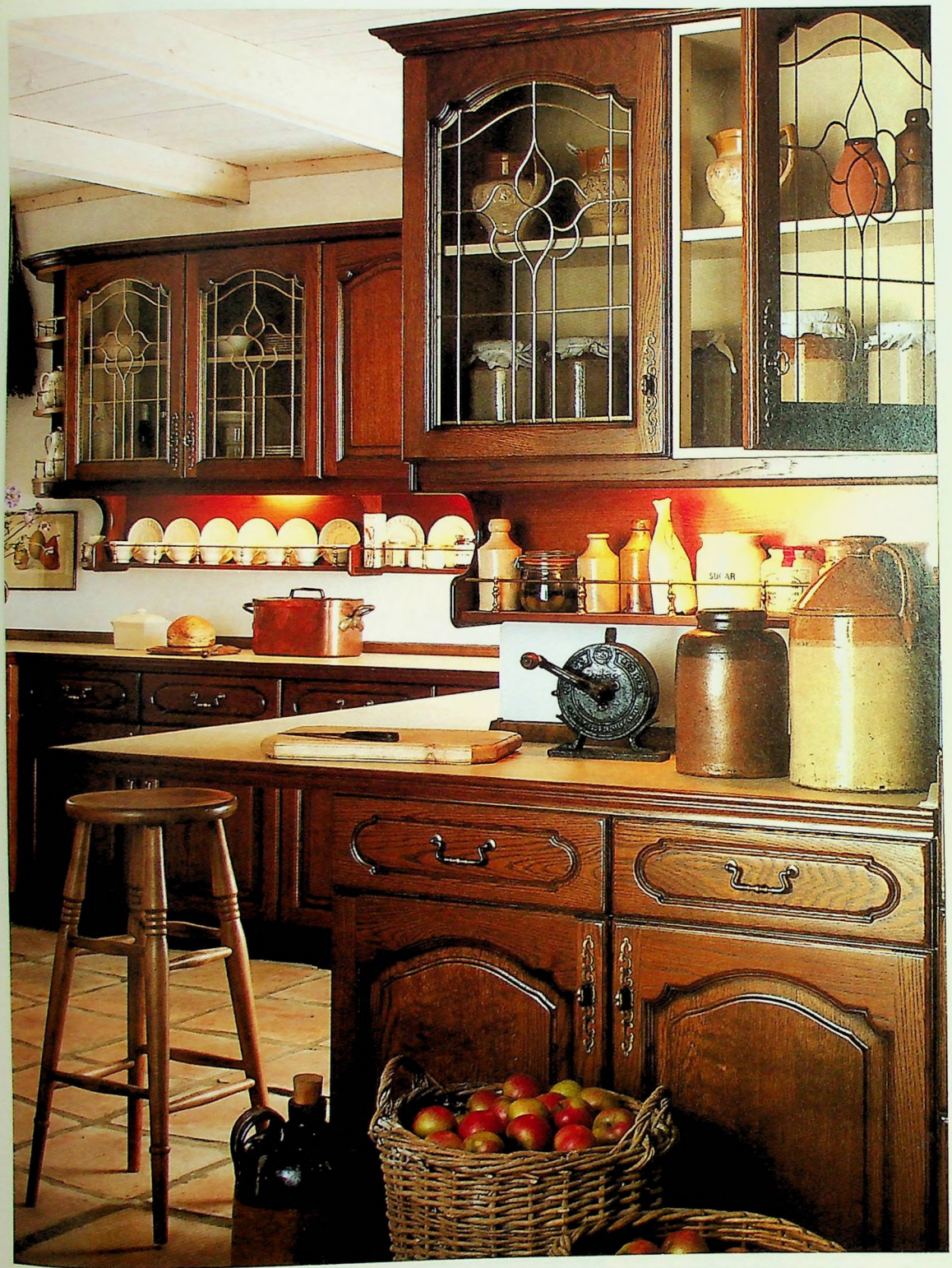


Fig.15: Late seventies dark wood kitchen.

Fig.16: Blonde wood traditional kitchen

Fig.17: 1986 rustic kitchen with knotted timber fronts.

Fig. 18: The Aga kitchen range

> "The Aga .... will instantly place its owner as an aspirant to a very particular kind of wholesome rustic domesticity .... With its combination of heating and cooking functions, it is the earth goddess of suburbia, the last vestige of the hearth at the centre of a home..... contrive(s) somehow to suggest the servants' hall of an Edwardian mansion."
>
> (Sudjic: 1985)

The Aga is manufactured in deep blue, red, or green in keeping with its dark 'earth goddess' image. "Traditional" kitchens were at their most popular in the late seventies, but they still survive as a strong line in mainstream kitchen design to-day.

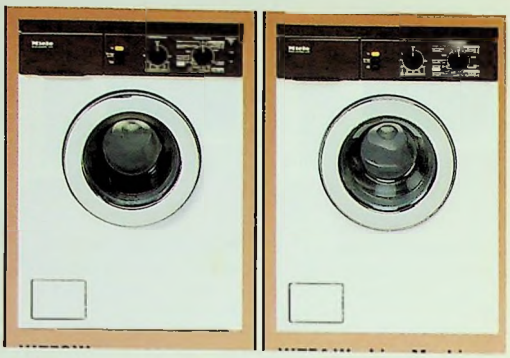
WHITE GOODS.

Into the late seventies and early eighties the market for the traditional white goods became highly competitive, particularly at the lower end of the scale. First purchase sales reached saturation point and the market was now composed almost entirely of replacement sales. By 1977 eighty per cent of British households owned washing-machines and, likewise, eighty per cent owned refrigerators. The most lucrative end of the market was the AB sector, where people were replacing free-standing cookers with split-level units, twin-tub washing-machines with automatic front-loaders, and refrigerators with fridge-freezers. In 1978 I.P.C. Marketing issued profiles of chief decision makers in white goods purchases. The decision maker for an electric cooker purchase was identified as a married woman, aged twenty-five to forty-four, working part-time, with children under ten years old, and belonging to the social class AB. Similarly the decision maker for the purchase of a front-loaded automatic washing-machine was identified as a married woman between the ages of fifteen and twenty-four, with children under one year old, working part-time, and belonging to the social class C1. Sales of fridge-freezers and dishwashers showed similar upmarket biases. The market leading manufacturing firms for these goods were, and still are, Italian firms Zanussi, Indesit and Candy,

German firms Bosch, Neff, AEG-Telefunken and Beekay and the French Miele and Scholtes. As stated in the previous chapter, the trend in washing-machines had been towards ever-increasing sophistication' and the hi-tech imagery, now considered appropriate in appliances designed for the AB woman, was admirably suited to this trend. Dishwashers and tumble dryers employed similar imagery, being practically indistinguishible from washing-machines in general appearance. By the late seventies sizes were totally standardised and most models were front-loaded. In the case of the washing-machine, front-loading was usually via a porthole-type window-cum door which was a welcome visual feature to break up the total whiteness (Fig.19). In other models, however, the control panel was the only feature, and this became alternatively dark brown, chromed, or in a range of colours to suit different kitchen colour schemes (Fig.20). Control panels began to show an increased affinity to electronic gadgetry, with rectangular, push-button controls, as in the Miele appliances in (Fig.21). The overall finish was still in clean sharp-cornered white, or alternatively, the frontage was designed to fit in with a particular built-in kitchen, as in the Bosch dishwasher in (Fig.22).

In general, the trends seen in the mid-seventies had continued into the eighties, with any developments being towards increased hi-tech features and imagery, with little progress being made towards increased maintainability or reliability. Washing-machines continue to be the most notoriously unreliable of kitchen appliances, even at the top end of the market. Front-loading appears to have added further complications, as few machines have a system for draining the water out when the machine breaks down in mid-cycle. Thus, even housewives in the most apparently sophisticated and hi-tech of kitchens have had to deal with the flood after the repairman has opened the door of a water-filled machine. But practicalities such as this have traditionally not been high in either the manufacturer's or the purchaser's priorities. Interestingly, the Miniwash of 1975 has had successors such as the Tefal Washboy and Spinmaster of 1986 (Fig.23). These have adopted elements of "sophistication" which the Miniwash lacked. The Washboy features a fully automatic programme including pre-wash, soak, main wash, and

Fig. 19: Miele Automatic Porthole washing machines.



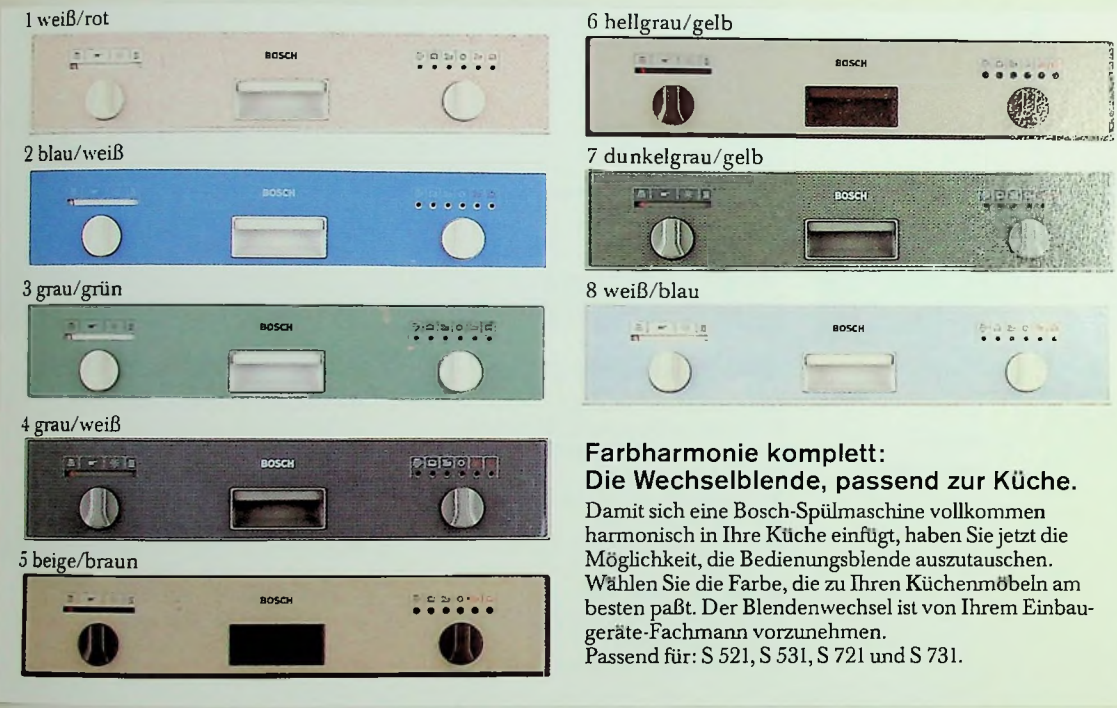


Fig.20: Bosch dishwasher control panel colour range, 1986

Fig.21: Miele dishwashers with push button controls, 1986

Fig.22: Bosch dishwasher to match built-in kitchen fronts, 1986

Fig.23: Tefal Washboy and Spinmaster, 1986

and a choice of three rinsing cycles. Both appliances are sturdy-looking, simple forms in an off-white colour. Tefal claim to have "opened up a whole new market" with these appliances, presumably of small households which have neither the need for full-size machines nor the money to purchase them. Obviously aimed at those who want to economise in style, one wonders if these appliances have got the image right? Their rounded sturdiness is perhaps too far from the sharp-edged, white of the acceptable kitchen status symbol. It is doubtful whether, even in an economic recession, the market will accept practicality above status. Indeed, all the trends in kitchen design indicate the opposite, as if the desire to identify the kitchen as a place of "not work" has been intensified by the need to deny the existence of recession within the home.

HI-TECH.

The recession/depression which has hit even affluent America in the late seventies and 1980s, has added some effects of its own to the role and image of the housewife. Firstly, the work of women in the home has been increased to soften the effect of austerity of their families. Secondly, the deepening recession has forced more and more women to work outside the home for purely financial reasons rather than reasons of job-satisfaction. This work is usually in addition to housework and rarely has any 'glamour' value. And, finally, with jobs scarce for everyone, married women (housewives) are more and more unwelcome on the marketplace and there are often strong emotional and financial (in the form of low pay and high taxation) pressures to keep them in the home. Meanwhile, also as a result of recession, the market for kitchen appliances has contracted and they are once again almost solely within reach of the AB market sector. Manufacturers and designers have responded to this with a hi-tech image designed with the 1980s "Superwoman" in mind. This hi-tech imagery developed first in cookers, in particular in high-speed cookers.

Fig.24: Tricity Microwave Oven, 1980s

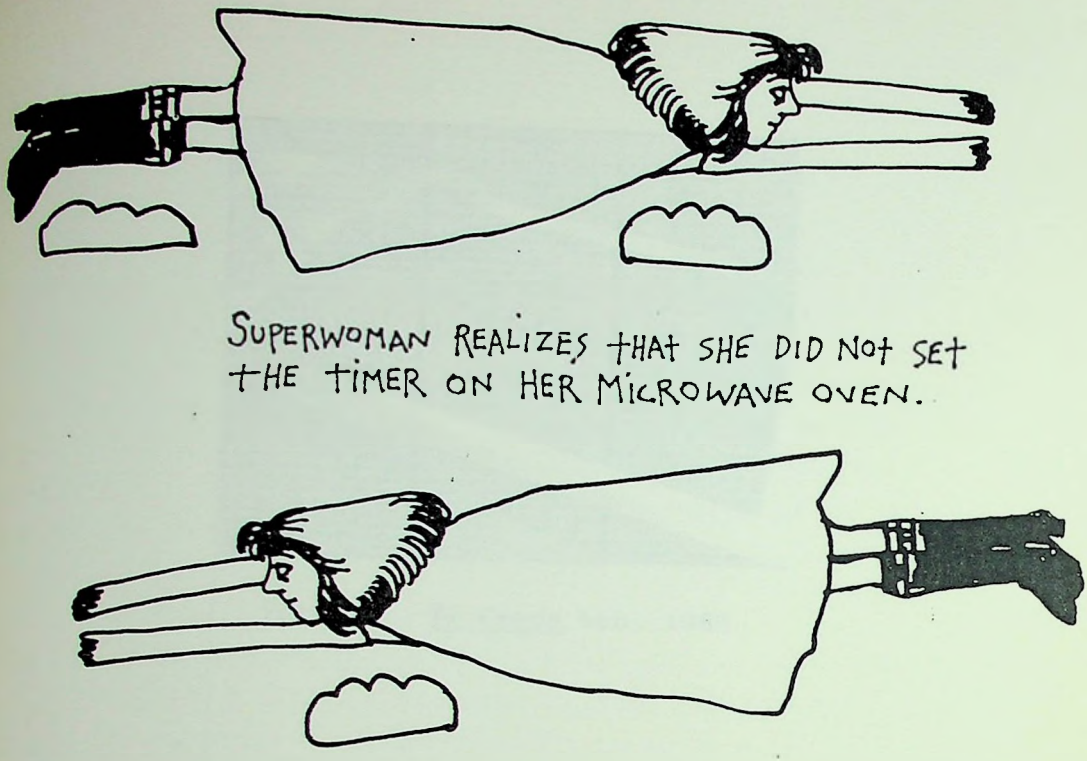


Fig. 25: Sylvia by Nicole Hollander, 1984.

Fig.26:

Neff Oven 1980s

Fig.27: TI Creda hob, 1986

Fig.28: Tricity Sovereign Cooker, 1986

Ultra fast cooking started in the sixties with the introduction of microwave ovens, although these were originally aimed at a commercial market, being mostly used for re-heating and re-cooking. However, with advances in their efficiency during the seventies, their domestic use increased. In the 1970s also, the gas convection oven was developed in Japan. This matched the speed of the microwave but had the advantage of browning food, and this also reached the domestic market. The combination of freezers and microwave or convection ovens is presented as the hi-tech solution to the problems of the career woman-cum-housewife of the 1980s. These are the appliances of "Superwoman." The hi-tech professional appearance of the microwave oven (Fig.24) and its reputation for speed and efficiency make it the perfect appliance for the busy career woman; the professional housewife. The relationship of the microwave oven to the superwoman of the 1980s is aptly commented on in the American cartoon-strip Sylvia (see Fig 25). Superwoman's existence is, in retrospect, an unsurprising side-effect of the persistant insistence that housework is not really work. Only if this is true, can women be expected to have a real job/career and do housework in their spare time. The microwave oven, with its hi-tech smoked glass and digital read outs, is a solid re-affirmation of the old idea that technological advancements have made the kitchen a place of leisure rather than work.

The hi-tech look of the microwave was mimiced by top-of-the-market conventional cookers. As has already been discussed, the tendency in these cookers has been towards split-level arrangements, with grill, hob and oven becoming separate units. The Neff oven, for example (Fig.26) is a wall-mounted hi-tech white box with digital display, flashing linear controls borrowed from hi-fi, and the smoked glass window of the microwave. The Neff's role as a status signifier was described thus in Deyan Sudjic's Cult Objects:

> "Once it had the same touch of exotic stylishness, coupled with modernity, as the Citroen DS, but now it's slipped back a little to become part of the prawn cocktail good life."
>
> (Sudjic: 1985)

In the meantime, the ceramic hob has taken the lead in hi-tech imagery. The T1 Creda electronic touch control hob (Fig.27) is controlled by a panel of touch sensitive key pads with digital indicators. Its smooth seamless surface and button panel board indicate the introduction of the computer into the kitchen. Dark brown now competes with white as the colour for up-market cooking appliances. Even the traditional, free-standing, multi-unit cooker has adopted this colour image. Witness the Tricity Sovereign (Fig.28) with its ceramic hob and dark brown exterior. This cooker boasts the most recent development in electric cooking, the halogen hob, which gives instant heat control, previously only obtainable with gas.

GADGETRY.

Gadgetry has continued to proliferate in the last decade. The Braun idiom has continued to be that of mainstream small appliances. Some colour variations have occurred; in the late seventies everything was in shades of beige and brown (Fig.29), while in the early eighties there was a sudden turn-about to red-and-white (Fig.30). Forms, however, have remained steadfastly true to the Braun tradition and each colour change has been adapted back to suit the white-on-white, or grey-on-grey image (Fig.31). The original Braun Kuchen-maschine does not look out of place in to-day's kitchen.

However, in the eighties, hi-tech has been introduced even into the smaller appliances. The Russell Hobbs microchip toaster of 1981 is an example (Fig.32) The microchip control monitors toasting-time duration and compensates electronically for the temperature of the toaster, allowing for consistent browning. There are seven available settings. This high degree of precision is quite obviously unnecessary in the simple operation of toasting bread. Its presence in the kitchen clearly fills only a psychological need, as a status signifier for the housewife, and yet another denial of recession.

Another important trend which has appeared in the mid-eighties is the return of the post-war chrome or stainless steel - and black look. Italian expresso coffee machines from the 1940s, such as the Atomic in (Fig.10) and the La Pavone in (Fig.33) are now widely available, at least to the up-market consumer. New designs in the same style have also appeared on the market, for example, the Territoire Drink Master (Fig.34). Cutlery too has adopted the stainless steel-and-black look (Fig.35). This look is essentially a "stylish" as opposed to a "hi-tech" way of denying the recession and declaring that all is well. Yet it also belongs to the "professional" housewife rather than the "traditional" one. A host of specialist gadgets for every concievable task have appeared in stainless steel-and-black mode; from garlic crushers to fish scissors to Chinese Woks. This style, and the specialist nature of many of the appliances concerned, implies a certain professionalism of approach to cooking. In Beyond The Kitchen Thomas Cowan claims that:

> "..... the assertive stainless steel of industrial appliances allows maximum concentration in the chef who enjoys solitude and a minimum of distractions."
>
> (1985)

A sneaking suspicion that these appliances were designed for a man to use and a woman to clean is unavoidable. Is their aggressive "macho" appearance an indication of the willingness of the 1980s man to takeover some kitchen tasks - such as creative cookery? Or is their stylish professionalism a sop to the frustrated ambitions of middle-class women educated to enter a professional career but ultimately expected to rear the children and do the housewlrk? Whichever is the case, this style has become firmly established in up-market mid-eighties kitchen appliances and is echoed in the overall look of a certain line in fitted kitchens.

Fig. 29 Tefal Coffee-maker - the brown look of the late seventies.

Fig.30: Tefal Toaster - red-and-white became popular in the early eighties.

Fig.31:

White or grey appliances remain popular. Top - Sunbeam irons; middle - Sunbeam food processors, bottom - Kenwood ice-cream maker, 1980

Fig.32: Russell Hobbs electronic toaster, 1985.

Fig.33

La Pavoni Expresso Coffee Machine 1940s design.

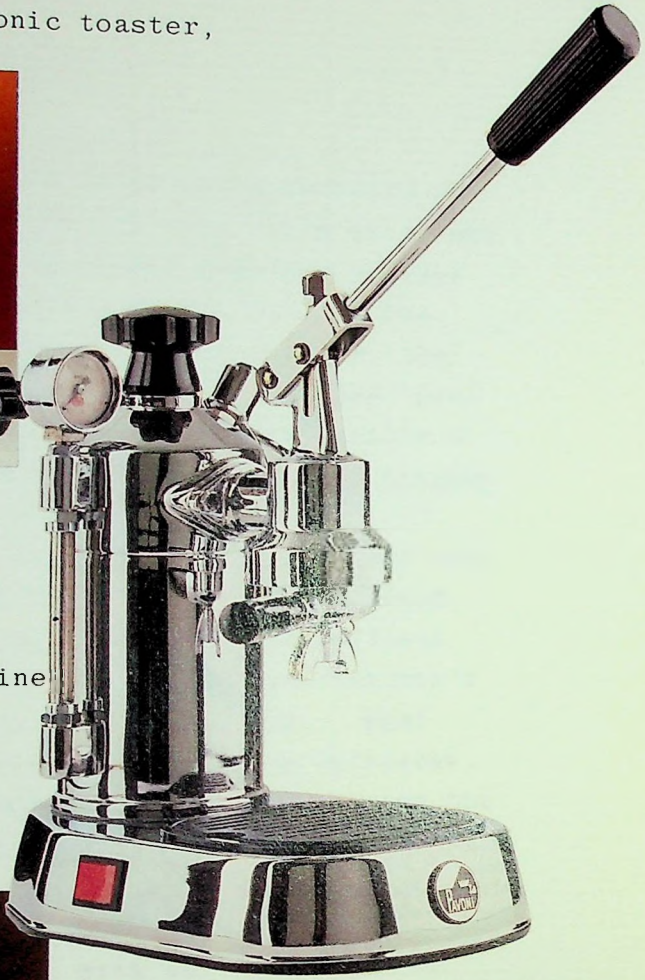


Fig.34:

Territoire Drinkmaster, 1980s

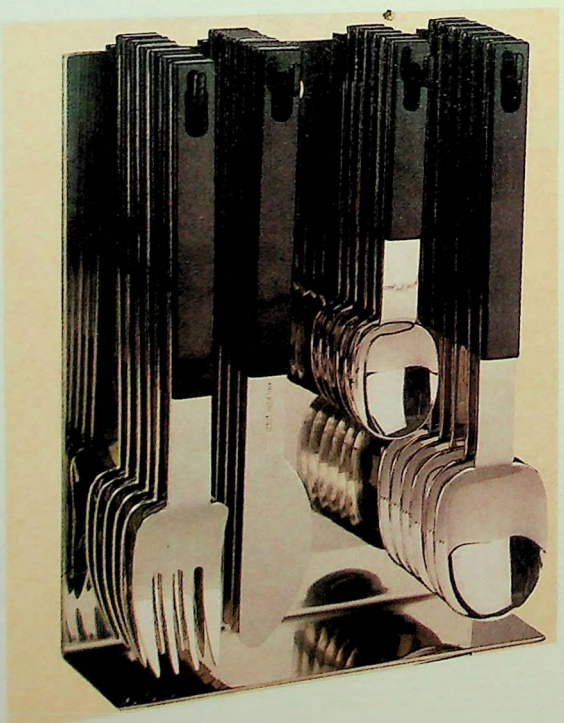


Fig.35: Astrohome black-handled stainless steel cutlery, 1985.

THE MODERN FITTED KITCHEN.

In the 1980s the fitted kitchen is still being marketed as the ultimate kitchen appliance, the one tool which will take care of all the housework. In the early eighties vibrant red-and-white dominated the kitchen's market but, as the economic and social climate became ever more austere, the 'traditional' wood, the 'classical' white, and the new "professional" grey, dominated. Each of these styles sells a different lifestyle to the purchaser. For example, Kitchen Direct traditional kitchen is marketed as Family and, if one is to believe their advertising brochures, it comes complete with cute, blonde kid and mouthwatering gingerbread men (Fig.36). This is obviously selling the traditional "timeless" nature of family life. The same manufacturer's classical kitchen is marketed as Modern (Fig.37). What is being sold here is the familiar labour-saving mythology, wherein the appliances are so modern and white that even the vegetables chop themselves. And finally, the Kitchen Direct professional kitchen is marketed as Design. (Figs. 38 and 39) This is in a "professional" dark grey accentuated with primary stripes and comes complete with all the stainless steel and chrome gadgetry discussed in the previous section, such as a Chinese Work, Alessi cruet set, Territoire Drink Master, and the give-away male designer looking totally bemused by the contents of his Perrier-filled refrigerator.

The "professional" kitchen is the one truly new 1980s trend. It combines elements such as hi-tech large appliances, stainless steel gadgetry, exhibition lighting systems, studded rubber wall and floor coverings, wire racks and chef's knives to provide Cowan's "solitude and minimum of distractions." Fig.40 illustrates the extremes to which the French firm Abaco have taken the concept. In contrast to this almost laboratory-like interior the New World (Fig.41) and Bauthaup (Fig.42) versions look almost cosy; catering centres rather than laboratories.

Fig.36: Kitchens Direct Family Kitchen, 1986.

Fig.37 Kitchens Direct Modern Kitchen 1986

Fig.38: Kitchens Direct Design Kitchen 1986.

Fig.39: Kitchens Direct Design Kitchen, 1986.

Fig.40: Abaco Kitchen, 1986 - the laboratory.

Fig.41: New World Kitchen, 1986 - the catering centre.

Fig.42: Bulthaup stainless steel kitchen, 1986

Fig.43: Miele Kitchen designed for La Pavoni expresso machine users. 1986

Fig.44: Dilusso Kitchen designed for La Pavoni expresso machine users, 1986.

Fig.45: Bulthaup Kitchen designed for La Pavoni expresso machine users, 1986

Fig.46: Moben Kitchen designed for Territoire Drinkmaster users, 1986.

Fig.47: Dilusso Kitchen designed for Territoire Drinkmaster users, 1986.

Fig.48: Moben Kitchen designed for Alessi kettle users, 1986.

Fig.49:

Poggenpohl are still designing their kitchens around the Braun Kuchenmaschine

Conclusion

The task of design for the kitchen is to sell the housewife her own self-image. Throughout the twentieth century contemporary perceptions of the housewife's role have been mirrored in kitchen design. In the preceding chapters the major trends in kitchen design have been discussed in relation to this role. Some styles and trends have been transitory - the streamlining of the 1930s America, for instance; or the aggressive chrome look which seems to be a feature of the most austere years, appearing first in the late 1940s and again in the mid-eighties; or the glamour of the late sixties. But others have shown remarkable lasting power.

White, hygenic, imagery has been considered appropriate since the late 1920s and looks unlikely to be usurped as the most suitable imagery for the kitchen in the foreseeable future. Braun classicism has been accepted in various dilutions since the first Braun appliance came on the market in the late 1950s. The traditional wood kitchen, although it has only been popular since the mid-seventies, also appears to be here to stay for a considerable time to come.

The imageries which have shown lasting power are those which best reinforce the 'timeless' quality of the housewife's role. This is the strongest mythology of housework and, therefore, the most marketable. Other strongly held ideas have also shown themselves to have marketable value. In the fifties the identification of the housewife as a consumer sold millions of appliances. Likewise, faith in the labour-saving attributes of kitchen appliances has contributed to the successful selling of excessive technology. But these ideas have suffered under constant feminist pressure and are no longer considered to be absolute certainties. The idea, however, that the housewife's role is the most 'natural' for a woman has held fast in the face of feminist pressure. The mythology is rooted as firmly in the consciousness of the society

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of the 1980s as it was in the 1930s. It has repeatedly shown itself to be the most marketable commodity in kitchen design. For as long as this is the case, a 'timeless' quality will continue to be designed into kitchen appliances. And for as long as the kitchen has this imagery, the 'timeless' nature of the housewife's role will continue to be propagated by her working environment. The business of selling people their own self-image is bound to result in this circular impasse.

As design, not just of kitchen appliances, but of every saleable item, is largely concerned with this business, it has become firmly identified as a conservative force in society; rather than as a force for social change. Design for the kitchen should not be considered an isolated example in the wider design profession, rather it can be taken as a case study in defining the relationship of the entire spectrum of manufactured goods to the society in and for which they are designed.

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