

Expressive minimalism and
how to bring technology
elegance, that stands out
and blend in

Some fundamentals
about what it takes to make
designs that stands out for
all the right reasons

valeur
designers

1. Aim for a charismatic chameleon that stand out and blend in

Products that enter people's own space shall be designed so they are welcome there. We believe you do that by making them stand out and blend in at the same time. Like a charismatic chameleon. Like a musician in a band that plays well and harmoniously but does the solo when attention is drawn on him.

When you have spent much attention to your own space and carefully curated it with object that matters to you, the additional product should add to the table, give something to the room. With a strong attitude and character as a product you are proud to have. At the same time, you do not want that product to dominate your interior. Instead, it should respect the uniqueness of each interior and blend in well. The products are in the homes of people must be polite and they should mentally disappear when your focus is elsewhere.

Our designs often have a strong visual attitude - a presence when you look directly at it. When you turn your attention away it blends into the surroundings in an unobtrusive way, adopts the flavour of the surroundings like a chameleon.

Beocom 2 has a strong character, instant recognized and remembered. When you focus on it, holds it in your hand, you sense the personality, and it feels like a treasure you are proud to own. But when it stands among other things, it blends in, steps into the background and you almost forget it is there. Like a polite thing should do.

The same goes for Beolab 18. Very personal shape, full of attitude and originality, the opposite of indifferent. At the same time, it has the ability to have a very subtle presence in an interior. It is easy to place in any interior where it finds the visual tune and blends in.

Key point: The shape of an object must stand out and blend in at the same time to be truly welcome.



2. Add nothing useless

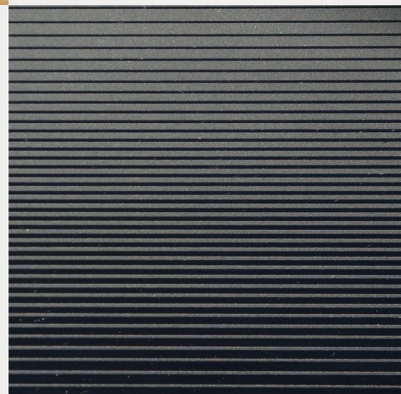
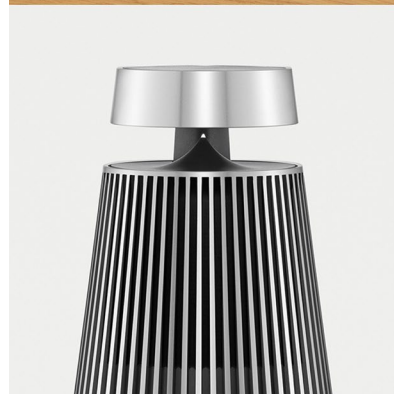
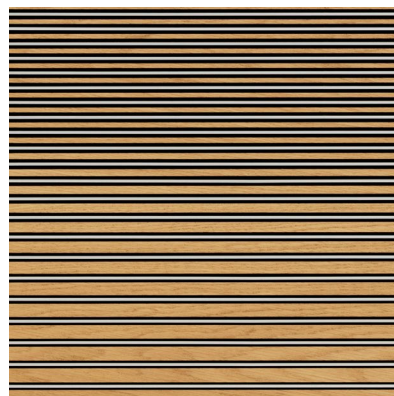
Those designs that appear clarified are the ones we fall in love with. When the beauty is achieved through form and proportions and the idea is standing clear and pure.

Beauty is not created by adding details for decorations, which just create visual noise and are seen as redundant. It may even seem like makeup on a lesser offer. Real aesthetics are not artificial. To make a beautiful object, we do not add decoration, we make the necessary details beautiful. The details should always follow and support the design narrative of the product.

Details like part-lines and screws and the details that are required by the hardware like ventilation or antennas are unwanted as they do not add value to the design. We aim at removing or hiding these unwanted details by the shape or a pattern. Working with the shapes, we often try with the shape itself to incorporate part-lines and all the details that we can't avoid. The goal is to make these unwanted details appear fully integrated with the main shape, so they become invisible.

When there is a pattern it serves a purpose, by providing the needed acoustic transparency, or by giving quality to the surface. Or making the surface visually become smaller or lighter by a gentle grading of the pattern. The aim is that pattern, like all other elements must appear as naturally integrated in the overall identity and shape, and never appear as an added-on decoration.

Key Point: Splendour alone is meaningless. Even decoration should serve a purpose.



3. Shape with lasting appeals tells a strong story without noise

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4. Control the details

An attractive design with lasting appeal must feel like it is completely solved, like a Sudoku. Though there are many right solutions to a problem, the solution you choose must appear like it is the only right solution.

A significant example is a hole pattern. Often needed for acoustic transparency or ventilation.

We want to transform this necessity to an elegant flawless solution, where all holes are placed right, and the overall surface has the right character with a play that transform it from indifferent banality to a living elegant surface.

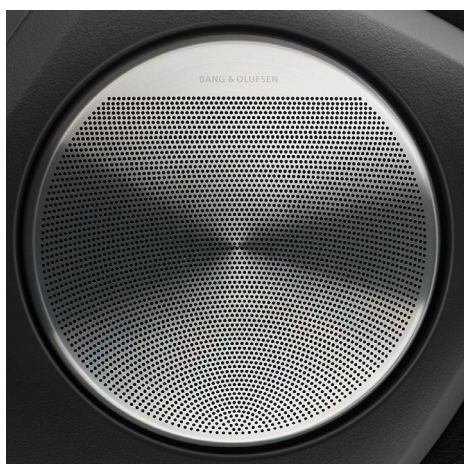
To make it right is difficult, especially what the odd shapes of automotive speaker grilles. The edge must be clean with smooth borders and no half holes.

We have some tools for that. It is about controlling the focus direction, so the right structure of the hole pattern comes in focus. Angel the array of lines according to your view position will guide the eyes. This is one of the tools.

Then there is the handwork. Experiment back and forth until the puzzle is made, paying attention to the constrains that comes from mechanical stiffness, speed of production and acoustic performance/transparency.

From the first day Bang & Olufsen entered the automotive world and throughout the years, we did all the speaker grilles to Audi, Aston, Martin, Mercedes AMG and more.

Key point: Every detail must fit and appear completely solved, like it is the only right solution.



5. Sculpt your way forward

Working with sculpture is a true three-dimensional process. When represented through a screen it becomes flat, whereas in real life you can directly sense it through eyes and body.

Pay us a visit at our studio in Copenhagen, and you will immediately notice that it looks a lot like a sculptor's workshop with large sheets of cardboard, pieces of aluminum and unfinished models made from wood.

The reason is our love for working with full-scale models, which we find to be the most direct way to read and understand an object. At the same time, their physical presence keeps your focus on the essential and serves as strong sources of inspiration.

This process is very direct and hands-on. Models are not made for presentation but for the process. It allows us to drift by intentions and discover solutions on the way. Solutions we could not foresee or plan. Models give you instant feedback and this guides you forward if you keep your senses open.

Key Point: The right solution is not constructed; it is discovered during a hands-on direct process with open senses.



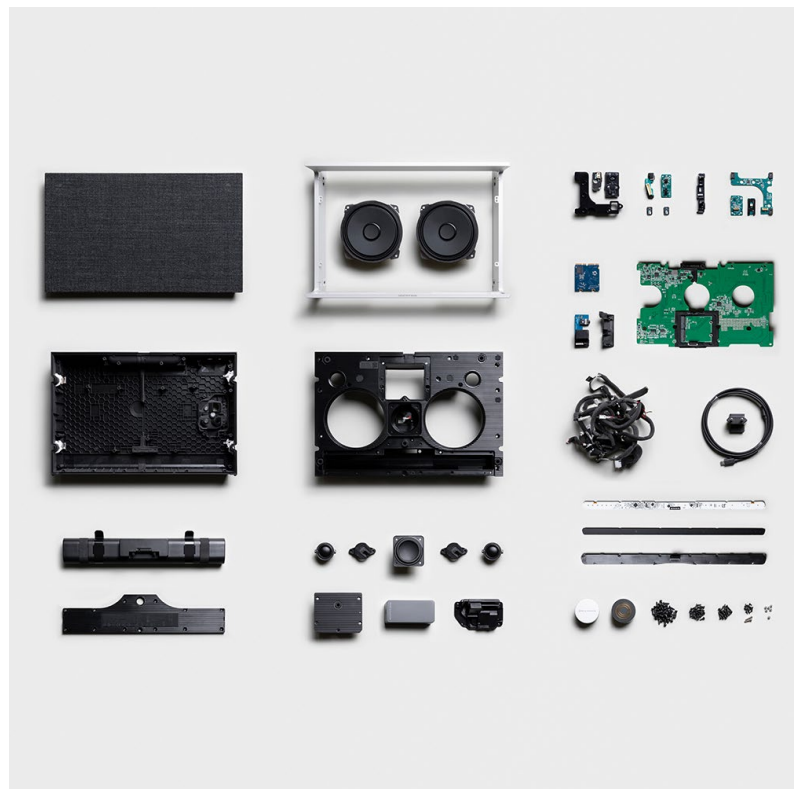
6. Master the proportions

A great performing product depends on a variety of specialists that elevate different aspects of the product's quality. Therefore, a designer's work inherently depends on interdisciplinary collaboration. In this regard the designer must have holistic knowledge in engineering and other fields that might be relevant in their respective design field.

If you want your products to surprise positively, to punch above its weight, it is never enough just to focus on designing the outside. We should pay equally attention to what is inside. When we design, we spend much time on understanding the inside, working with the elements, trying to rearrange them and see which new opportunities are given to us. While design choices depend on engineering possibilities, designers must challenge the boundaries of engineering. We can do that when we have the technical knowledge and understand the engineering reality.

Beosound Level is a compact sculpture that produces quality sound, greater than one might expect from a speaker of that size. A regardful collaboration took place involving designers, acoustic specialists and engineers. Deciding how to lay out the inner build was a process we naturally participated in enthusiastically. From location of the battery to where we could place the antennas and the microphones for the Google voice assistant. All done driven by the purpose of creating a speaker with a performance that exceed its presence.

Key Point: We can give a product its' right size by playing with hardware and rearranging the architecture during the design process.



7. Use visual manoeuvres

Form follows functions. Yes, when function is understood as objectives. The objectives can be a visual goal, a wish to create an optical illusion. We never shape for the sake of shape alone. We shape to achieve the goal.

Giving shape is like being a wizard playing with perceptions. You use all the visual tricks in your toolbox to achieve the right perception. Steering the appearance in the right direction by conscious use of your knowledge of shape. Understanding the cultural references and the humane reaction to shapes. Knowing how eyes read a shape and control the flow of view.

For many years this has been a large part of our work when designing televisions for Bang & Olufsen. When picture tube was the technology, we managed to make the televisions appear slimmer than the rest by carefully shaping around the hardware. In the era of flat screen technology, we still faced the challenge to wrap rather bulky hardware in a desirable shape. High level of performance in sound resulted in much bigger speakers. And even the industrial panels we had to use were often much bulkier than the mainstream. Challenged by this we had to use all our accumulated knowledge to make them appear much slimmer than they were, transforming bulkiness to elegance.

The frame of Beovision 10, 11 and 14 is made so it halves the visual thickness. It's split in two, so you never see more than the halve. One more trick was used, controlling the reflections by the angles of the profile. Seen from the front the frame reflected the colour of the wall behind, seen from the side, the back part of the frame reflected the wall colour and the front part reflected the room colour.

The frame of Beovision 12 and Avant both used two tone to split the depth. Beovision 12 had what appeared as an empty space between the two parts making it lightweight. The Avant had a solid Appearance with facets making for a combination of solid yet slim appearance.

Beovision Horizon went the other way making a frame deep but slim, transforming the screen into a furniture like a mirror frame. The slimness made it appear thin though the panel and build was fatter.

Key Point: Steer the appearance in the right direction by conscious use of shape.

