

DESIGN FOR LIFE

SIMPLICITY AND CLEAN, PURE SHAPES FORM THE SIGNATURE STYLE OF DESIGN 3, THE HAMBURG-BASED AGENCY BEHIND DAIKIN EMURA



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WOLFGANG WAGNER

DESIGN 3



Wolfgang Wagner, principal/owner, believes in the qualities of classic German design: "Attention to detail is very important. We aim for simplicity, to find one big idea rather than gathering lots of small ideas that don't make up the story. This kind of approach, creating something that has a very simple form but maintains the highest level of functionality, is nearly always the hardest to achieve. But isn't life complex enough? In the end we want to make life simpler for people."

And whilst the quest for simplicity is not easy, it certainly appears to be a successful formula for Design 3. The agency has notched up an impressive 85 international design awards in recent years, including an iF gold award, red dot award 'best of the best' and a prestigious design prize of the Federal Republic of Germany (Gold) as well as several ID Awards (New York) and G-Marks (Tokyo).

Mr Wagner explains the process: "When we approach a new design project we speak to the client and make sure we have all the technical background information, and then our first step is to really try and understand how people use and experience the product. For Daikin Emura we spoke to sales people and installers to understand their perspective and then visited Italian and German consumers at home to observe them and talk to them to get some real in-depth feedback."

"We quickly realised that people absolutely depend on the functionality of an air conditioning unit, especially during a hot summer, but nearly all dislike the way their unit looks on the wall. Generally the feedback was that air conditioning units look really ugly and stand out like a household appliance rather than blending in with the interior."

"We decided not to look at how air conditioners look today, or coffee makers, or toasters. Instead we explored the interior world, and that gave us the push to develop the exterior design."

The result is that Design 3 made the unit as simple and unobtrusive as possible, hiding the vents and openings to create one simple, softly shaped surface. This is what makes Daikin Emura so special. The soft and pleasant contour expresses the function of the unit: to make people feel good. At the same time it is quiet and withdrawn enough to ensure that it does not dominate any environment.

The design of the handset received just as much care and attention from Design 3 in order to match it perfectly to the unit. The idea was to create something so beautiful that it would never be put away. As with the main unit design, much of the functionality of the handset is concealed by a sleek exterior in white, to complement the look of Daikin Emura.

Mr Wagner concludes: "I think that when you look at the interior world, the balance between form and function is really important. We all want the latest technology and high performance goods but we also have much higher expectations from design. If you look at TVs for example, most of them are big black objects and appear quite alien in a nicely designed interior. Now there are many more with softer shapes and subtle colours so that they become part of the environment. The more premium market is really about simplicity and allowing individuals to develop their own lives and ideas."

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