

Michele Cogo

25
~~Ten~~ years without
squeezing a lemon

*Semi-semiotic tale
about the Juicy Salif by Philippe Starck*



ALESSI



Starck and the duck-billed platypus

In many ways, the citrus squeezer is a very similar case to the platypus in Umberto Eco's 1997 essay *Kant e l'ornitorinco* (Kant and the platypus): how do we react to something when we don't know what it is? Let's think back to when the platypus was first spotted by English naturalists in the 1700s. What is it? It has a beak but it also has teeth and fur, so it can't be a duck. It milks its young so it could be a mammal, but it lays eggs. And so on, until the naturalists tasked with classifying it decided that this was impossible and instead created a specific category just for this animal: the monotremes.

So what is the Juicy Salif? How can it be defined and classified? With the help of Umberto Eco, in 1998 Michele Cogo presented the object to 113 Communications Science students in an interesting experiment at the University of Bologna. This workshop gave rise to a fun book project named *Dieci anni senza spremere limoni – Ten years without squeezing a lemon*: a narrative reproduction of the most interesting material created by the students when faced with this ambiguous and stimulating design object. The book was then placed in a drawer as we felt we needed more critical distance to decide if the project was really worth celebrating in this way. Having finally established its importance, to mark the 25th anniversary of the citrus squeezer's birth we decided to print it, complete with a written update from Cogo and a broad summary of the project's iconographic history.

With help from Michele Cogo I have come to the understanding that this citrus squeezer's capacity to generate discussion on its nature and meaning resides in its excellent representation of what semiologists call the "decorative veil", which is destined to cover every object ever created by man, albeit usually in a less overt way.

Jean M. Floch ("Il fondamento antropologico del design: il coltello Opinel" – "The fundamental anthropology of design: the Opinel knife" published in M. P. Pozzato's *Estetica e Vita quotidiana*, Lupetti, 1995) analyses how human recognition of an object is based on a code of experience, namely a series of characteristic traits of a certain category of objects. These traits make an object recognisable precisely because it bears qualities we have already encountered as characteristics of the category the object belongs to. However, it is not clear if these traits are natural or rather the localised product of a particular culture. In other words, we don't know if Form follows Function or if Form is nothing more than a datable product relating to a specific historical context.

Using the Leroy-Gourham theories which consider the notion of "functional approximation" as a determining factor, Floch emphasises the fact that there is always a "certain freedom in the interpretation of the relationship between Form and Function". This continuous interplay between Form and Function goes on to create this decorative veil which, whether we like it or not, shrouds every object. Floch goes on to consider this decorative veil as "the manifestation of the object's mythical and aesthetic dimensions", as defined by Greimas and which Eco's students used in their experiments... but I don't wish to go any further down this particular road. I only want to underline how in the end, in terms of the company's role as an artistic mediator, we should not be concerned by the fact that the inspiration which finally came to the designer was not consistent with the original briefing as the Juicy Salif went on to become the most controversial citrus squeezer of the 20th century as well as an icon of 1990s design, and remains one of the most playful, intelligent and provocative objects in the Alessi collection.

Alberto Alessi

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Lima - 5 March 1998, 3.02 p.m.

From: m.hernandez@ulima.edu.pe
To: UMBERTO.ERTO@unibo.it
Subject: Collaboration proposal
Cc:
Bcc:
Attachment: Dribbling.pdf

Dear Mr. Erto,

My name is Morris Hernandez and I am Director of the Semiotic Research Centre at the University of Lima; we met in Buenos Aires at the semiotics of football conference in November at which you presented your remarkable study *Fiction and dummies, from Borges to Maradona*.

I am writing to you because I believe I have a very interesting piece of work on my hands. It was produced by one of my assistants, Dr. Teodoro Maspes, who a few months ago began work on a study of the *Juicy Salif* citrus squeezer designed by Philippe Starck and manufactured by Alessi spa.

Beginning with the straightforward question: "Why isn't it clear that Starck's citrus squeezer is in fact a citrus squeezer?", Dr. Maspes came to a number of conclusions that now require serious examination.

Dr. Maspes's idea is to test his work with some exceptional Science of Communications students at a different university. I immediately thought of you and your students in Bologna.

I would therefore kindly ask you if you could receive Dr. Teodoro Maspes at your university and make a hundred or so students from your degree course available to him for just one day.

Hoping I have not been too intrusive, I thank you for your kind collaboration.

Best regards,
Morris Hernandez.

PS. I attach my study *Dribbling: a search for meaning*, which was also presented at the aforementioned conference. I would be very interested to hear your opinion on it.

Bologna - 21 April 1998, 9.37 p.m.

From: UMBERTO.ERTO@unibo.it
To: m.hernandez@ulima.edu.pe
Subject: Re: Collaboration proposal
Cc:
Bcc:
Attachment:

Dear Mr. Hernandez,

Prof. Erto has reviewed and accepted your proposal.

The Professor has allocated Wednesday 3 June 1998, the date of his final Text Semiotics lesson, for this purpose. The venue will be lecture theatre II of the Faculty of Humanities and Philosophy, 38 Via Zamboni, from 11 a.m..

The Professor would prefer to spring it on the students, without telling them first.

Your assistant can meet with Prof. Erto that morning at 10 a.m. at the Istituto di Discipline della Comunicazione at 2 Via Toffano.

Yours sincerely,

Gabriella Santorini
Secretary to Prof. Umberto Erto

PS. The Professor asked me to ask you if, through your assistant, it would be possible to have some tins of those very fine Peruvian anchovies. Unfortunately he can't quite remember the exact name of the brand but he thinks it is something like *Azul Anchoa*.

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Lorenzo Tinca
student ID 1221-23064

1.

I am a student at the Faculty of Humanities and Philosophy at 38 Via Zamboni in Bologna. When I have lessons I go there. I go up the stairs, I enter the lecture theatre, I sit down, and for two hours I listen to somebody talking about a subject matter of their choosing.

This year I am attending semiotics lessons by the multi award-winning illustrious and much lauded Professor Umberto Erto.

I have trouble explaining what semiotics is. To me it seems like the science of all the things not covered by the other sciences.

For example, if you want to study a vegetable soup recipe as if it was Joyce's *Ulysses*, you can. Semiotics is fun because nobody understands it.

Prof. Erto wrote a book called *Kant and the Platypus*. Kant is the philosopher who invented Kant's theory of categories, a theory with which he basically wanted to create order in the world. The platypus, meanwhile, is an animal that is messy by nature. The platypus would have created problems for Kant's theory but luckily Kant died without ever discovering the existence of this animal.

2.

Prof. Erto uses the little story about Kant and the platypus to tell us that we have drawers in our heads that we use to give order to the things in the world. These drawers are full of things that resemble each other; for example, one is full of birds and another is full of mice, and if you see a duck, even if you have never seen one before, and you see that it has feathers, you put it in the drawer with the birds and you can relax.

But when you see a platypus for the first time and you know nothing about it, you'll definitely have a problem because the platypus has bits of all the other animals.

It has a duck bill but it has fur, it is a mammal but it lays eggs, it feeds its young milk but it has no teats. Its teats emerge when it feeds its young. But they aren't normal teats. These teats don't have nipples, they basically ooze milk that the little platypus licks up.

3



Michele Cogo¹

WHAT DO YOU DO WITH A CITRUS SQUEEZER?

2000-2015: another fifteen years without squeezing a lemon

You can use Michelangelo's *David* to squeeze lemons. All you have to do is cut them in half and press one of the two pieces against the nose of the statue, its bent elbow or its big toe. It will be quite a sight to see the juice

¹ Thank you to Eva Brugnattini and Jacopo Donati (Bottega Finzioni) for their help in the writing process.

flow smoothly and unhindered down the marble before dripping into the container that we quickly place under the part chosen for the juicing.

Michelangelo's *David* doesn't look like a citrus squeezer, it doesn't have a filter for catching the peel or pips, it doesn't have a specially-shaped dome on which to pierce the lemons or oranges, and it doesn't have a container for collecting the juice. Yet Michelangelo's *David* can carry out this function quite well. Besides, if there is a *Juicy Salif* why can't there also be a *Juicy David*? At the end of the day they belong to the same category of objects - it has been said in every possible way, in all corners of the globe and in all languages: the *Juicy Salif* is a little statue that can also be used to squeeze lemons, just like Michelangelo's *David*.

It is true that the same thing could be obtained by squeezing citrus fruits against the corner of a table, on a screwdriver, or on the horn of a rhinoceros. But the latter, in its living form, does not make for a very appropriate ornament.

The origins of species

Even the walls know that Michelangelo regarded sculpture as the noblest art because it does not allow for changes of heart. The form that has always been trapped in the block of

marble has to be carved out and brought to life, freed from the chains of its stone prison. Sometimes not even the sculptor knows what kind of living form they are about to free, it is a risk they have to run.

Perhaps it is the same for design. Probably not even Starck knew what he was unearthing from his imagination when he made the first sketches of the *Juicy Salif* on a restaurant napkin.



The platypus also has a deadly spur which will kill you if you touch it because it is venomous.

Put simply, the platypus is strange and if you want to put it in the drawers you have to kill it and cut it up and put one bit here and one bit there.

Or you make a drawer just for him, which is also semiotics, says the illustrious Prof. Erto.

Everyone laughs.

Applause.

3.

I have a friend called Arturo Caggiano who makes coffins for a living.

Art doesn't go to university but he comes to Prof. Erto's lessons because he says it is the best way of meeting young ladies.

Art always turns up late for lessons because, in his opinion, the ladies notice you more if you arrive late. And, having got into the classification spirit too, he calls young ladies *people with breasts*.

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Lima - 29 April 1998, 8.41 a.m.

From: t.maspes@ulima.edu.pe

To: info@alessi.com

Subject: Ten years without squeezing a lemon

Cc:

Bcc:

Attachment:

Dear Sir,

I am a researcher from the Semiotic Research Centre at the University of Lima. A few months ago I began a study entitled *Ten years without squeezing a lemon*, which is based on your *Juicy Salif* citrus squeezer, which has been at the centre of the global design scene for ten years now.

Through my research I sought to establish the reasons why it isn't clear that your citrus squeezer is in fact a citrus squeezer, and I asked myself what else it might resemble.

On 3 June 1998 at 11 a.m. I will be at the University of Bologna to test the results of my research with the Science of Communications students supervised by Professor Umberto Erto.

I would like to invite you to attend the presentation of my research that afternoon at 2.30 p.m. in lecture theatre II of the Faculty of Humanities and Philosophy, 38 Via Zamboni.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Teodoro Maspes

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That's right, because Alberto Alessi tells the story of the time that Philippe Starck was on holiday with his family in the summer of 1987 and he went to see him. Alessi took the opportunity to ask him if he had managed to work on the stainless steel tray he had been asking him about for years. Philippe Starck told him that unfortunately he hadn't yet had any inspiration as regards the tray. They finished their lunch talking about this and that, including food trends and, in particular, the large-scale consumption of citrus fruit that had taken hold in those years. They then said their goodbyes and Starck headed for the island of Capraia, just off the coast of Tuscany².

² Cf. Alberto Alessi, "Com'è nato Juicy Salif" ("The genesis of the Juicy Salif"), 2000. Text published to go with the special 10-year anniversary edition of the Juicy Salif, and included in the product box.

However, according to Starck, that meeting did not take place in the summer but at Christmas, and the object Alessi asked him about was not a stainless steel tray but a dish for serving butter. Starck, who does not eat butter, thought that it was a very strange commission³.

Regardless of whether it was Christmas, the summer or Carnival time, or whether Alessi commissioned Starck to design a tray, butter dish or travel teapot, **the fact is that while eating squid in a restaurant on the island of Capraia and squeezing some lemon juice over it, Starck began to make some sketches on a napkin.** From which you can see how a squid can turn into

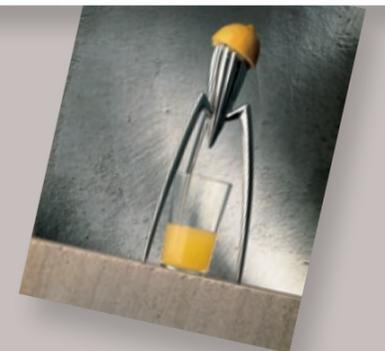
³ Cf. Philippe Starck, *Starck explications*, Paris, Éditions du Centre Pompidou, 2003, pp. 198-199.

the *Juicy Salif*, the best-known citrus squeezer in the world, which did not look like any other citrus squeezer ever designed until that time and which remains one of the most widely discussed design objects to this day. This is how things come to pass, or at least that's what they say.

Tell me about him

It is difficult to say how many lemons the *Juicy Salif* has squeezed in the last 25 years but it is quite evident how it has got people talking. As

of 1990 it became part of the collections of almost twenty museums across the world, including the MoMA in New York and the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris. It can be found everywhere, from San Francisco to Sydney to Teheran, and has appeared in a dozen films and TV series and on the covers of dozens and dozens of books. The success of the *Juicy Salif* was such that in a very short time it became one of the symbols not only of Italian design, but also of international design.



Milan - 11 May 1998, 11.54 a.m.

From : rocco.guaresi@newadvertising.com
To: t.maspes@ulima.edu.pe
Subject: Ten years without squeezing a lemon
Cc:
Bcc:
Attachment:

Dear Dr. Maspes,

I am the marketing director of New Advertising, the advertising agency that manages the image of Alessi spa.

I have been informed of your research *Ten years without squeezing a lemon*, in which you ask what else this object could be, given that it looks nothing like a citrus squeezer.

It immediately seemed like an excellent idea to me and, having spoken about it with my creative team, we are evaluating whether to take your idea to the market, establishing new product identities for the *Juicy Salif* to exploit the potential created by the object's ambiguity.

I will also be present at 2.30 p.m. on 3 June in order to meet you and to discuss possible project developments.

Yours sincerely,

Rocco Guaresi

New Advertising
Marketing Director

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**University of Bologna
3 June 1998, 11.17 a.m.**

1.

Today the irrepressible Prof. Erto is not alone, he is joined by a guy who must be 30 or so. This bloke is wearing khaki-coloured trousers with big pockets and a faded beige cotton shirt, and looks like a young explorer.

The lecture theatre, with its ascending rows of desks, a bit like the South Stand at the stadium, is full of us students.

"Good morning everyone", says Prof. Erto, standing behind the lectern. He then looks at the clock. "It's eleven on the dot so thanks for getting up early just for me". We laugh because we like it when the illustrious one makes fun of us.

"So", he says scratching the back of his neck a little distractedly, "the principal quality of a final lesson, which for thousands of years has set it apart from all of the others, is the fact that after the final lesson there are no more lessons". He then looks at us with those clever little eyes, which are drowned out by his unkempt beard and chubby cheeks.

Some people laugh and elbow each other.

"Those of you that don't know Chinese put your hands up", he continues.

The elbowing and laughing tails off but nobody puts up their hand because it is clearly a joke.

He looks at us and then starts reading some stuff that nobody understands, which must be Chinese. He stops and looks at us.

Silence.

"Those of you that don't know Chinese put your hands up", he repeats.

This time, very slowly, a bit like a snowball that gets bigger as it rolls down a hill, we all put our hands up.

"Good", he says very seriously. "As the majority of you seem to have forgotten your Chinese I will now read, just for the forgetful among you, the translation of the text I just read to you in Cantonese".

He takes a sheet of paper, brings it up to his face, touches his glasses, and begins: "Even if the sun has risen every morning for billions of years, it doesn't mean it will rise again tomorrow". He puts the sheet of paper down and looks at us. The silence is deafening. We all look at him.

"I am not quoting this saying coined by Lao Tse, which you all know, to say that the sun won't rise tomorrow because you won't have any more lessons with me",

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It is therefore clear that the primary function of the Juicy Salif is not to squeeze lemons but to stimulate conversation, as Starck underlined in a famous statement: "It's not that it's an excellent citrus squeezer, this isn't its only function. I thought that when a couple marries, it is the type of thing they might receive as a wedding present. So when the parents of the groom go to see him, he and his father sit in the living room having a beer in front of the TV while the new mother-in-law and the bride sit in the kitchen and try and get to know each other better.

"Look at this present we were given"⁴, says the new bride. And so they start chatting away.

You could also say that Philippe Starck was designed for conversation, as his continuous provocations suggest. In fact, we could say that in the end Starck is also a design object - some of the images in which he poses with his objects, becoming part of them in some way, act as proof of this.

⁴ Conway Lloyd Morgan, *Starck*, New York, Universe Publishing, 1999 (tr. it. *Starck*, Milano, Rizzoli, 1999, p. 9).



There are images in which Starck appears like a puppet hanging from a rail, others in which his lamps come out of his mouth like the tongue of a chameleon or grow on his head like the horns of a bull. Others still in which he has bright eyes and a strange object planted on his head, or is in a kind of wooden diving suit from which only his head and a hand stick out, probably the model of one of his offices.

In other words, Starck seems to be more of a design object than a designer, somebody that wants to become something, in this way showing his deep love

for objects. To the point where he not only transforms himself into objects but also his relatives too, and his children in particular. Proof of this can be seen in the fact that many of Starck's objects are named after them, or vice versa.

But without trespassing into the private domain, it is enough to see how Starck himself presented his youngest daughter to the press, as if she was a design, someone to whom a "functional" name, *Justice*, had to be given. And of whom he says: "When you create something - and a child is a creation - it must immediately



he says, putting both his hands on the lectern. "I read it to introduce you to an extraordinary event which you will have the fortune of being the only witnesses to, one of those moments about which you'll be able to say "I was there too".

Pause for effect.

"Let's come to the point", he says while caressing his beard with great satisfaction. "For the first time in thousands of years a final lesson will be followed by two more lessons".

Unflinching, he doesn't try to placate the protesters, he doesn't go into the whys and wherefores. He nods to the guy dressed like a young explorer that came in with him.

Silently and very slowly, this chap takes a black bag from under the table. He puts it on the lectern. He opens it and takes out a metal thing that looks like some kind of 3-pointed weapon from outer space. He gives it to Prof. Erto who holds it for a little bit, looks at it in silence, looks at us, and then places it upright on the lectern. It must be 30 centimetres tall and now I can see it better it looks like an alien spider or a model spaceship.

Prof. Erto nods at the young explorer again and the same scene is repeated. Black bag. Space weapon. Looks, and now there are two things standing next to each other. Another alien silence.

"Those of you who know what this is put your hand up and keep it up", says Prof. Erto. Given how the Chinese question went, a few people put their hands up. Erto quickly counts them.

"Fourteen, fifteen, sixteen", he says. "Good, the sixteen that know their stuff are kindly asked not to tell the others what they know".

One of the sixteen is Sandra, a girl sitting next to me. She turns for a moment, I look at her as if to ask what that three-legged thing down there is.

She doesn't look at me, doesn't want to reply. Her faith in the great vizier of global semiotics is practically absolute, with no exceptions.

Nevertheless, as we are in a class of communicators, forty seconds after Prof. Erto's request for silence, word starts to spread that the thing in question is a designer citrus squeezer.

4.

The door creaks and slowly opens. It is Art.

Prof. Erto turns, watches him shut the door and then, before he can sit down with us, says: "Excuse me, don't sit down", and lifting up the metal thing, "do you know what this is?"

Art stares hard at the thing, looks at the sixteen people standing up and then,

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without hesitating, doesn't answer yes or no. He says: "A fly scarer".

Everyone laughs.

Umberto Erto puts the thing back down and says: "Very well, take a seat".

Art is happy with himself, comes and sits near me and, nudging me, says: "I got him this time didn't I?"

"People are saying it's a citrus squeezer", I point out.

He looks at me in silence and then says: "Crap. It's a fly scarer".

5.

"Good", says Erto, "we can begin".

"Excuse me Professor", calls out a guy from Naples sat in front of me.

"Yes?"

"I don't understand this business about the last lesson being followed by two more".

"Don't worry, it won't come up in the exam", replies the unshakeable one.

Everyone laughs. Even the student from Naples.

Prof. Erto touches his glasses, takes the thing in his hand and begins: "From here I see you, you are all in front of me, sat behind your desks, one next to the other. But it is an illusion. In reality, each of you is on your own in a large lecture hall at Cambridge University. You are wearing white lab coats and on the wall there is a calendar with today's date: 16 October 1779. Like every morning for the last five years you have come here to classify the animals that the explorers of the kingdom send to you stuffed and packaged in strong wooden boxes. This is a special morning though. A few days ago you were informed that a species that none of the explorers had ever seen before was arriving". He stops, lifts the metal thing up high and whispers: "the platypus".

We are all dumbstruck having been sucked into this special spatial-temporal Arabian Nightsque trip. Art and I can already feel the white lab coats on our backs.

"When they receive something new, before they've even understood what it is, the first task of a good 18th century naturalist is to describe it in the most impartial and objective way possible", Erto tells us, before nodding at the young explorer who takes a bundle of papers from his magic bag.

"This is Teodoro Maspes", says Erto, "he is a young academic from Lima who has carried out semiotic research into this object. He will now hand out some forms on which you will write down your description of this unknown item. You have half an hour because His Royal Highness is anxious for news of this miracle of nature", concludes Prof. Erto, his eyes emanating pure hypnotic light.

9

be useful for everyone: every time we address her or talk about her, we evoke the concept of justice. One of the most noble. One of those that is disappearing". He then adds: "Designers are also at the end of the road, only dieticians and personal trainers will survive because we will become the product ourselves"⁵.

In the same way, Starck is a designer who wants to transform things into someone, who wants to breathe life into objects and make them characters, as he did with the *Juicy Salif*, as we will soon see.

In other words, we could say that Starck destroyed the barriers that separate the animate from the inanimate. He has made objects more alive and made people more similar to designs. We don't know where this road leads, for now we only know that he has created objects that have invaded the planet and that get people talking. None more so than the *Juicy Salif*.

15 years ago

As we saw in the previous text, *Ten years without squeezing a lemon*, in 1998 several Science of

Communications students were convinced that Starck's citrus squeezer was a whale hook, a fly scarer or a new type of knife, and many thought it had some kind of sexual function.

There is something alien, something phallic, something animalistic about the *Juicy Salif*. All of these elements evidently conjure up various images in the minds of people when they see it for the first time, and thus begins the roulette of conjecture and reflection. This is probably why the new mother-in-law and the new wife will have a way of starting to get to know each other, talking about what comes to mind when looking at this strange object.

Putting mother- and daughter-in-law to one side, it would certainly be interesting to repeat the experiment with Science of Communications students and see what they know and think about the *Juicy Salif* today.

But perhaps there is no need. Unlike fifteen years ago, today it is easier to analyse the photos that circulate on the social media and get hold of articles published online and in magazines across the world. Today we can see the real place that is reserved for objects such as these in the world. And so we will realise that, more than conversations, this object stimulates the images which are afforded space on the Internet, on Instagram, in trade magazines or in art books.

⁵ Interview with Philippe Starck in "Io Donna", *Corriere della Sera* weekly supplement, 7 April 2012, p. 38.



Now the object will be passed around so you can see it up close. You don't need to guess what it does, you only have to describe it in the most objective way possible and that's it.

6.

University of Bologna, Science of Communications and all that nonsense is written on the sheet passed to me. You have to write whether you are male or female, your age and your name and surname or a pseudonym. Sandra, the girl next to me, fills out her sheet correctly. Female. 21 years old. Name: Sandra. Surname: Taddei. Pseudonym: Sailor Moon. Next to Sandra is Mirco, the class heartthrob. He tells her that giving yourself a pseudonym is wrong because you should take responsibility for your actions and as such he will only be putting Mirco Zardi, 21 years old, male.

7.

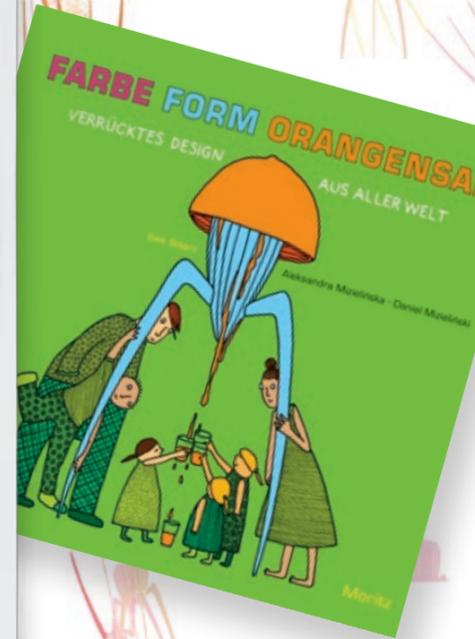
Now I have the metal thing in my hand it really looks like something quite rude, like the technological version of one of those black rubber or pink plastic things they sell in sex shops, primarily to pleasure women. But given that we are now 18th century English naturalists and we have to describe it seriously, I write the following: "The object in question is around 35 centimetres high and weighs around 200-300 grams, and appears to be made from solid metal. It is made up of a central body shaped like an upside-down teardrop (with the pointed end facing down and the rounded end at the top), supported by three legs...". "What are you doing", says Art, elbowing me in the ribs, "writing a police report?". I don't respond to the provocation. "This is how you talk about this thing", he says, "listen to my *incipit*". And then, in a serious voice befitting of a formal occasion, he reads: "Mutant spider. Chromium-plated octopus. Silvery phallus, cast in the starry night...what do you reckon? It's very futuristic, very metaphysical, very...". "Very 18th century English naturalist", I tell him. "Silence please everybody!", shouts Maspes. Art turns away and continues writing. I do the same, I return to my policeman's uniform.

8.

Half an hour after handing them out, Maspes collects the sheets with our 18th century English naturalist or futurist policemen's descriptions, and gives us a second form. Like before, this also includes a load of bureaucratic nonsense but, in addition, it also says VERIFICATION OF THE LEVEL OF UNDERSTANDING OF THE OBJECT. "Is there anybody in this theatre experiencing an identity crisis?", asks the irrepressible Prof. Erto, who then slowly scans all of our faces. I feel sick already, this time he's going to catch me out. I act as if there is no problem. I look at the others as if helping him to try and find those suffering an identity crisis. The others do likewise. "The only identity crisis allowed today", the ineffable one continues, "is the one connected with this object. So please sign all of the forms that will be given to you with the same name or pseudonym. End of lecture". He then heads towards the exit but, before disappearing through the door, says: "I'm going to leave you with Dr. Maspes for half an hour. Go easy on him". Everyone laughs. Maspes also laughs.

9.

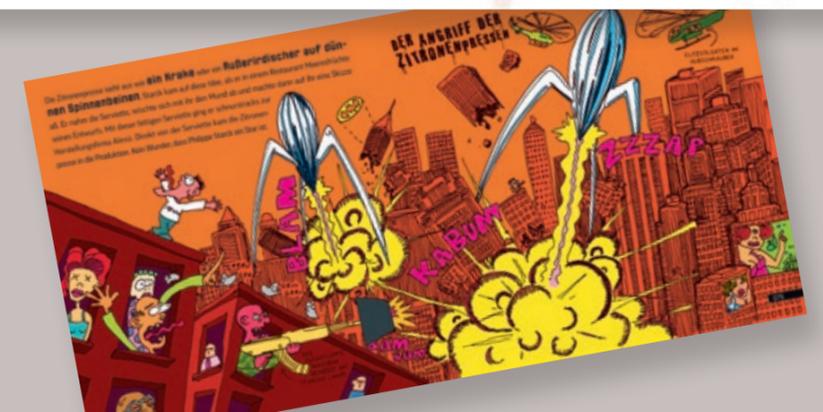
There are seven questions on the second sheet; the first is WHAT DO YOU THINK IT IS? I don't know but the two Neapolitans in front of us keep repeating: "It's a *struppone*, it's a *struppone*" (plunger). I don't even know what a '*struppone*' is. Art says that in Naples the '*struppone*' is used for unblocking the toilet but in any case it isn't a '*struppone*' but a fly scarer. Behind me there are two Goth girls. I can hear them whispering things like: "I think it is an idol from Uranus with special powers". "Yeah, or a satanic ritual object for invoking the trinity". They then snigger like little hamsters, hee hee hee. I peek at Sandra Sailor Moon's sheet and I read: "It is a lemon squeezer". Plain and simple. Next to her there are three guys who are always together. I don't know their names but I see that they call themselves "*Tranqui*", "*Supergiovane*" and "*Ciccimerlò*". They knew the story of the citrus squeezer and now they don't know what to do. If they write that it is a citrus squeezer they are worried that the invincible Erto will remember the faces of the sixteen that know their stuff and then fail them at the exam. If they don't write it perhaps they will write something incorrect and



Images

When seeking to create some order among the materials collected by Alessi on the Juicy Salif over these years, spanning press reviews, publications and images taken from the Internet, we can clearly see how Starck's citrus squeezer has become an icon of international design. We find it on the covers of global design history texts, both for adults and children, either photographed or drawn. For these publications, the Juicy Salif is the incarnation of the discipline itself, the iconic object whose form and function chase after one another but never catch each other.

In a publication on the history of design for children, for example, the Juicy Salif is depicted on the front cover, out of scale, bigger than people, with the parents supporting the three legs and the children collecting the juice that drips down from the main body. The inside pages have an illustration of the scene in which Starck eats a plate of fish with a giant octopus, and on the following page there are a few Juicy Salifs made to look like alien spaceships attacking Earth, firing yellow rays that destroy a city. The terrorised people try to escape, and some try to defend themselves.



the terrible Erto will fail them all the same. So they decide to go down the road of honest dishonesty: "I thought it was a citrus squeezer and a friend confirmed this". I don't know if it is a citrus squeezer or not. It isn't very nice to say but to me it looks quite phallic, like a vibrator or an *anal intruder*.

10.

The second question is DO YOU KNOW WHAT IT IS CALLED? Another blank. I haven't a clue and this time neither does Sandra Sailor Moon. The only ones that seem to be sure are the two Neapolitans who are really excited by their certainty.

"See, see?! It has a name - *Struppone*".

DO YOU KNOW WHO MANUFACTURED IT AND WHEN? is the third question.

Sandra Sailor Moon calmly writes "it was manufactured by Alessi s.p.a. in 1990". The handsome Mirco does the same.

The two Goth girls say that it was Uri, the god of needs, the dead and sex; and then "hee hee hee", like two little hamsters.

I really don't know but if I think about what it reminds me of I would have to say that it was manufactured by Magic America, a company that produces pornographic materials and which also made night-time programmes to sell the videos of pornstar Cicciolina. Perhaps it was a free gift for those who purchased a certain amount.

To play it safe, *Tranqui* and *Supergiovane* answer the question WHERE CAN YOU BUY IT? by saying you can buy it in a shop. Clever clogs Sandra Sailor Moon looks at them in pity and writes "in design stores". The Neapolitans say that you buy it in hardware stores because it is a *Struppone*. I reckon you buy it in sex shops.

Art has gone all quiet.

"What are you writing?", I ask him.

"Don't disturb me, I am concentrating".

"Guys it isn't a debate", says Maspes, "fill out the forms in silence".

The fifth question, HOW MUCH DO YOU THINK IT COSTS?, sparks a bidding war. Prices range from 10,000 to 200,000 lira. The Goth girls say there is no way people buy it; at the most, you can find it in Kinder Eggs. I don't know how much it costs but if it vibrates it must be quite dear.

Supergiovane replies to the question WHY DO YOU THINK PEOPLE BUY IT? in perfect marketing director speak: "As I am unable to identify its function, I cannot speculate as to the reasons why people purchase it". *Ciccirimerlo* says that

12

people buy it because it is attractive and useful, even if he doesn't know in what way.

The Goth girls keep talking about Kinder Eggs.

Mirco the Handsome asks Sandra Sailor Moon what she thinks.

"It's to make squeezing lemons more exciting", she replies with a candour that is almost boring.

"Unbelievable", he says, "that is almost exactly what I thought but I wasn't sure that...".

"Ok guys what's the deal?", shouts Maspes, "If you carry on like this I'll have to move you".

Leaning out a bit I manage to see what Art is writing: "People buy it when their houses are invaded by flies".

The seventh and final question says: WHAT CATEGORY OF OBJECTS DOES IT BELONG TO IN YOUR OPINION?

There you go, I knew Kant would spring up sooner or later with his damned categories.

For me, it is part of the category of instruments for sexual recreation.

I hear Sandra Sailor Moon telling *Mirco the Handsome* that it is easy to work out which category it belongs to; all you need do is identify whether its form or function is dominant. *Mirco the Handsome* looks at her and says: "Sure... and so?".

"Oh, well that's up to you. I have an idea", and she continues writing.

Mirco the Handsome looks at her for a bit, probably also asking himself to what human category such a woman belongs. He then looks at his sheet and writes "Ornaments".

University of Bologna
3 June 1998, 11.58 a.m.

1.

Teodoro Maspes hands out the third form, promising that it is the last one and much, much more fun than the other two.

It looks like the second one but says INTERPRETATION TEST. Maspes says that this form is used to examine the *semantic substance*^d of the thing.

^d "What substance does it examine?", Art asks me.

"The semantic substance", I tell him, "but don't ask me what it means because I can never remember".

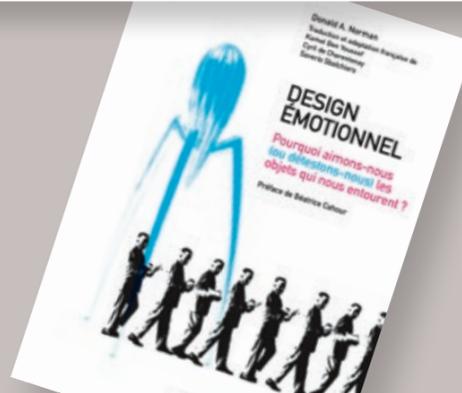
"Very broadly speaking", interjects Sandra Sailor Moon, "*semantic substance*" means the number of possible meanings of a thing, in this case the object, get it?"

13

In the same way, probably being his most famous object, the Juicy Salif often appears on the covers of monographs on Starck. It also features on the cover of the book *Emotional Design* by Donald Norman, author of *The Psychology of Everyday Things* previously, because evidently for Norman (and his publishers) it is the most significant example of this new global design trend.

People's emotional connection with the *Juicy Salif* is expressed in many different ways. Just a few examples are necessary to demonstrate how it stirs up the imagination. There are those that have it tattooed on a calf or shoulder, and who knows what it must mean to them if they choose to have it indelibly marked on their skin. There are those that use it as a source of inspiration for

musical compositions, even putting the image on the cover of the CD, entitled "Juicy. Spectral studies for a citrus juicer". There are those that use it as a model for iced biscuits or for *ragnini bread*, very common in Ferrara and Central Italy in general. There are those that imitate it with three wooden sticks holding up a pine cone, subsequently printing the image on a t-shirt. Or those that reconstruct it using kitchen implements, such as knives for the legs and bent forks to hold the central body, which itself is a metal whisk, the kind used to beat egg whites or whip cream.



The first question is WHAT IS THE FIRST THING THAT COMES TO MIND WHEN YOU LOOK AT IT?

“What questions”, says Sandra Sailor Moon, looking at *Mirco the Handsome*. “What comes to mind? A spider, no?”

Mirco the Handsome nods.

“Uhm, I don’t know”, says one of the two Neapolitans, “the only thing that comes to mind is something my granny wouldn’t like”. The other one laughs and says that he sees an egg supported by three little sticks.

“OK... well I can say it reminds me of one of Godzilla’s claws then”, says *Tranqui*, “but now we are just saying anything”.

“Alright”, replies the Neapolitan, “but who was asking you?”.

“It’s people like you that ruin market research”, says *Tranqui*. He then turns and writes: “One of Godzilla’s claws”.

IN WHICH FILM MIGHT YOU FIND IT?

I write *Basic Instinct* because of the perverse sex thing.

Mirco the Handsome says he has an idea: the perfect film is *Alien*, you know, because of the mutant monster and... Sandra Sailor Moon says yes, yes, OK, she had already thought of that, actually strangely enough she had already written it too.

“I envisage it in the film *Dead Ringers*”, says one of the two Goth girls, “the one by Cronenberg with the twin gynaecologists and those instruments...”.

“THAT’S ENOUGH!”, shouts Teodoro Maspes, trying to increase his semantic substance. There is silence for a few seconds before the crescendo of voices rises again.

“Listen”, says *Ciccirimerlo* to *Tranqui* and *Supergiovane*, “I reckon to play it safe it is best to put something like *Pulp Fiction*, which is famous and full of stuff, and always a good bet”.

They take the same approach for the following question: IN WHICH COMIC STRIP?

They write *Mickey Mouse* or *Dylan Dog*, answers with which they can’t go wrong.

“Listen”, says Sandra Sailor Moon to *Mirco the Handsome*, “as I don’t read comics can you tell me one?”. *Mirco the Handsome’s* face lights up, he is happy. Finally he can say something too. It is clear that the budding mass media expert is trying to think of something to wow her.

“Well, I think it would fit nicely in a comic like *Akira*. I don’t know if you’ve heard of it, the famous Japanese com...”.

“Akira? What are you talking about?”, Art interrupts him. “You don’t know

Art looks at me and says nothing.
“The things that come to mind when you look at it”, she says impatiently. She then turns away and *Mirco the Handsome* immediately asks her another question.

anything about comics. You’d only find that piece of metal down there in *Flash Gordon*”.

Art likes appearing superior to weaker people, particularly when a *person with breasts* is involved.

I see that the two Neapolitans have written: “The dreams of Paperoga” I can only think of the porn comics we used to steal as kids from a cupboard in Bar Paradiso. Luckily, the most eagerly anticipated question of all is then asked: WRITE DOWN THREE THINGS YOU WOULD DO WITH THIS OBJECT.

Art, of course, writes: “Frighten small insects”. He then adds: “Breaking coconuts” and “I would go to the cinema”, although I don’t know why.

Mirco the Handsome says to Sandra Sailor Moon: “Are you going to write ‘squeezing citrus fruit’ or ‘squeezing lemons?’”.

“Why would I write citrus squeezer if it is a lemon squeezer?”.

“I don’t know, I just meant that...”.

The Goths girls are very explicit: one says that, first of all, she would masturbate with it, then she would use it to terrorise her 80 year-old granny and then, if there is still time, she would use it to torture virgins. The other completely agrees, says yes, yes, me too, and then also adds “disembowelling sacrificial victims”.

Tranqui and *Supergiovane* try to think of more day-to-day uses, such as collecting dry leaves, using it as an ornament or as a hook for catching whales.

For me, there is no need to say it, it is already clear.

2.

The last two questions are GIVE IT A NAME and WRITE A SLOGAN TO SELL IT.

“In ten minutes I’ll be collecting the forms”, Maspes reminds us.

The two Neapolitans say the moment has come to give concrete form to their idea of the ‘*struppone*’. It needs a simple, short name that is easy to remember.

“Guoppo”, one of them says.

“What does that mean?”, says the other.

“I don’t know, you said something simple and short that is easy to remember. Guoppo sounds good”.

“Fine, what about the slogan?”.

He thinks a little, even puts his hand on his forehead like real thinkers, and says: “Buy the Guoppo”.

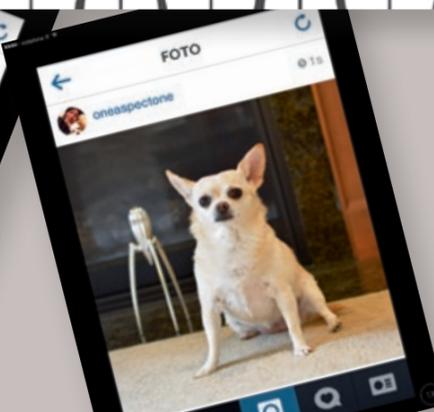
Sandra Sailor Moon says to *Mirco the Handsome* that as she has seen the real advert for the lemon squeezer, unfortunately she can only think of that and can’t think of anything else; maybe they could think of it together?



Some people have even made it the subject of works of street art in which we see the Juicy Salif running away on its three spider’s legs, or with a roll of toilet paper inserted on the central body with the wording “Thanks Starck” next to it.

Another emotion-stirring use of the Juicy Salif sees it appear as the leading character in a series of compositions in which it interacts with other subjects, often versions of the user, who clearly want to have a more direct relationship with the object.

Some have it being hugged by a wooden mannequin or a small-scale armed warrior, some have it walking around Lego men,



who collect the juice in a jug, and some have it interacting with their dog. Lastly, there are those that take photos of themselves in such a way as they appear to be the same size as the Juicy Salif, enabling them to directly interact with it. A bit like when tourists take photos of themselves trying to straighten the Leaning Tower of Pisa.

Another type of involvement, certainly more mental than emotional, is the kind involving the invention of new functions for the Juicy Salif. As it does not look like a citrus squeezer, it can appear to be something else.

Mirco the Handsome agrees because he isn't all that creative. He then rests his hand on his forehead and thinks, thinks, thinks. Sandra looks at him and waits, waits, waits. *Mirco the Handsome* looks at me from under his hand but there is nothing I can do. I have thought of both a name and a slogan. Its name is *Anal-squeezer* and the slogan is: "Some like it cold".

3.

Boom goes the door as it is slammed open. It is Prof. Erto returning to the scene. He nods at the young Dr. Maspes as if to say: time's up = hand in. The young explorer does what he can to carry out the order. "Good", says the unflinching one. "Sometimes it is difficult to distinguish between things like advice, threats or promises". He always worries me when he starts in such an obscure way. "University was not created to provide answers, certainties", he continues. "University was created so people can learn to ask questions and come to their own conclusions". I'm even more worried now. "As I said at the beginning, after this final lesson there will be two more lessons or something of the kind, as they will both take place this afternoon. Of course you don't have to attend, just as you are not forced to attend university. However, given that the natural conclusion of every university course takes the form of an exam and given that you will have to take this exam with me, I can tell you that those who attend the next two lessons will be in a better position to tackle the exam". Art looks at me laughingly. "I'll leave it to you", continues Erto, "to decide whether to view these words as advice, a threat or a promise. Enjoy your lunch ladies and gentlemen". He turns on his heels and leaves. Teodoro Maspes is opposite us. He puts the two metal things in his magic bag and leaves too. Before disappearing through the door he turns and says: "Goodbye", but nobody hears him.

16

University of Bologna
3 June 1998, 2.43 p.m.

1.

There aren't many of us in the theatre, about half those from earlier. People clearly took Erto's words as advice. Standing behind the lectern is the indomitable Professor Umberto Erto. Teodoro Maspes is sat next to him and there is also another guy, smartly dressed just like a sales rep and tanned all over with a bluish UVA light kind of tan. Prof. Erto nods to Maspes, who once again takes his black bag and opens it. Out comes the metal thing again. Prof. Erto takes the metal thing, holds it up and says: "This lemon squeezer was designed by Philippe Starck, one of the most famous designers in the world. It is called the *Juicy Salif* was made by an Italian company, Alessi s.p.a., in 1990, and can be bought in design shops for about 90,000 lira". "What a load of rubbish, it is a fly scarer", says Art angrily. "He is saying that because they want us to believe this business about lemon squeezers... And sorry but who would spend 90 thousand lira on a lemon squeezer? Especially one that looks like that...". Prof. Erto explains that Dr. Teodoro Maspes has carried out a study on this object and that he wanted to verify his theories with students that were unaware of the facts. The results of this morning's exercise will be revealed at the end of the day but now Maspes will briefly tell us about his research. Roll the opening credits.

2.

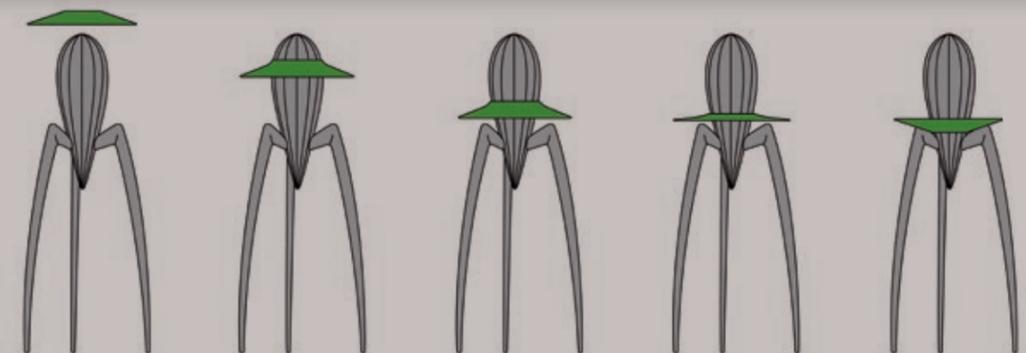
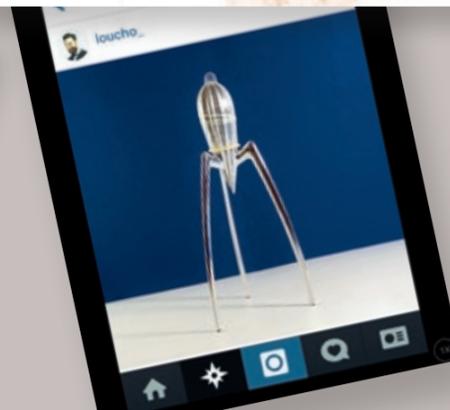
When Teodoro Maspes starts talking about his study, all of my blood quickly flows towards my stomach so I can digest the aubergine parmigiana I ate at lunch. While the tide of gastric juices rises, my brain goes all foggy. When things like this happen I always get the impression that my sight worsens, that I can only see in black and white. Teodoro Maspes, in black and white, talks. His words become increasingly confusing. Slowly this dreamlike fog envelops me like a soft woolly blanket and so, ladies and gentlemen, mesdames et messieurs, bonne nuit.

17



Some use it to hold balls of wool, laying it on its side and inserting the ball on one of the three metal legs so it is easy to roll up the wool. Some use it as a model for testing 3D printers given that it has a fairly complex and unique closed form.

The experiment isn't always successful, some of the 3D copies break, but on the other hand it is a difficult object to create. Some use it to check that prophylactics have not deteriorated or torn, and some propose to make the object more functional, adding a flexible pip filter. In short, it is an object that seems to attract plenty of attention and stimulate lots of creativity, from both an intellectual and emotional perspective.



3.

In my dream I am in the mountains, at night, among the dark fir woods. Rays of moonlight break up the darkness here and there, reflecting in the snow and revealing the outline of a small mountain hut.

The monotonous drip of the icicles can be heard around the hut. The clouds open and the rays of the full moon light up the hut almost as if it were daytime. Carved into the wooden door are the words: *Maison des fleurs 1789*. Some wrapping paper is nailed to the door and above this the words *L'amour est une espèce en voie de disparition* are written in charcoal.

The white light of the moon comes in through the window and lights up the inside of the hut. Other pieces of wrapping paper are nailed to the wall together with the words: *Nous sommes dieu, Demain sera moins, Le civisme est d'avant-garde, L'urgence est revenue*. There are also others but it is dark and you can't make them out.

There are some black shoes on the floor, a pair of black trousers and a beret, black. There are also some dark sunglasses and a red clown's nose. There are geraniums in a terracotta vase, and among the geraniums is a Polaroid of a little boy of 6-7 years old. Lastly, there is a bed with a wooden base and a woollen mattress. No sheets.

A man, enveloped in a brown woolly blanket, sleeps restlessly. He is a large man with an unkempt beard and a head full of curly hair. His eyes flicker behind his eyelids.

The clouds move outside. Outside the hut, a shadow looms on the snowy space as if it were a large screen and the forms of a huge three-legged spider gradually take shape. The shadow gets closer and closer to the hut until it swamps it completely and covers the man's face, who begins to groan: "You again...please...leave me in peace...".

The wind whistles. The black clouds close in. A howling wolf can be heard in the distance.

"I can't help you...". And then, screaming: "Leave me in peace!".

The man turns over, the woolly blanket falls. He is completely naked.

4.

I rub my eyes and see that everyone is heading into the corridor for their essential coffee break.

"I had a really strange dream", I say to Art.

He doesn't reply.

"I said I had a really strange dream", I repeat.

He looks at me and says: "I can't stand people that tell me about their dreams, it's so boring. Let's go and get a coffee".

We get up and as we head to the exit I ask him to tell me what I have missed so far.

18

Art says that Teodoro Maspes basically spoke for an hour and a half without saying anything that even his granny didn't know.

He began by projecting the phrase WHY ISN'T IT CLEAR THAT PHILIPPE STARCK'S CITRUS SQUEEZER IS IN FACT A CITRUS SQUEEZER? on the screen. And he said that to reply to this question you have to know how to answer the opposite question, i.e. "How can you understand that a regular citrus squeezer is a citrus squeezer?", involving everyone, from Aristotle to Donald Duck.

"And do you know what his conclusion was?"

"No".

"You don't have to be a genius you know? He said that we recognise a citrus squeezer because we already know it is a citrus squeezer... I told you that even my granny knew this stuff".

"Yes, but that's not all he said?"

"Of course not", says Art, "he also said that you can't figure out that that citrus squeezer is a citrus squeezer because it doesn't look like a citrus squeezer. Not bad eh?"

Sometimes it isn't possible to talk to Art.

As I'd like a better understanding of what I missed while dreaming about the mountains, I try asking Sandra Sailor Moon.

"Well it's very simple", she says, sipping a freeze-dried hot chocolate, "Dr. Maspes identified the essential *physical traits* that an object must have to be recognised as a citrus squeezer".

I nod.

"The essential *traits* are: the juice container, the filter for the pips and, most important of all, the dome-shaped protuberance on which the citrus fruits are squeezed".

Art looks at her in silence.

"Starck's citrus squeezer", continues Sandra, "is missing 2 of these 3 traits: the pip filter and the container. The dome is there but it has an unusual shape, like an upside-down teardrop. As if that wasn't enough, Starck then added those three legs that have nothing to do with the citrus squeezer world. And so", concludes Sandra, throwing away her plastic cup, "the quantity of information required to communicate the message 'I am a citrus squeezer', through that which Prof. Erto calls the *code of experience*, i.e. previous experience of certain forms that becomes an *archetype*, is practically zero". She turns and says: "Sorry, I'd better go, they are going back in".

I look at Art. He throws away his plastic cup without saying anything and goes back into the theatre.

19

However, between the *Juicy Salif* and women things seem to take a different turn. On the basis of the compositions we found, and of which we provide you with a few examples taken from magazines and images from all over the world, it seems that women are not a big part of its life, and when they are, it is always fairly aggressive women with red or black nail polish, and metal studs and rings. Women that seem to want to dominate the *Juicy Salif* with bites, scratches and even dangerous kitchen implements. Housewives with aprons and maternal curves are nowhere to be seen. These women are always edgy valkyries similar to creatures of the night, almost vampire-esque.

We could give more examples but it makes little sense as the *Juicy Salif* is ambiguous and stimulating on so many different levels that we would never be able to list them all without becoming a kind of encyclopaedia of different scenarios.



As such, we can say that in that Science of Communications lecture hall of fifteen years ago, those who immediately wrote that they had a lemon squeezer in front of them were certainly not wrong. Yet those sitting a few rows behind, who said that it was a fly scarer, a whale hook or a metal vibrator, weren't wrong either. Because from marble, as from drawings made on restaurant paper napkins, the only thing we can perhaps be certain of bringing to light every time is that which we are, ourselves. This is what a citrus squeezer is for.



University of Bologna
3 June 1998, 4.04 p.m.

1.

Professor Erto isn't here.

Teodoro Maspes resumes his talk, projecting some large black words onto the screen: DOES FORM FOLLOW FUNCTION?

"The first thing we have to do", says Dr. Maspes, "is to distinguish between *functional object* and work of art. The former involves the notion of *functionality*, while the latter does not even contemplate it. In this sense, a *work of art* does not function, it is".

Maspes continues by saying that Starck's object, like all good design objects, lies somewhere between the world of art and that of *functional objects*; he then tells us about a certain Leroi-Gourhan, a French anthropologist who spoke about something called *functional approximation*; I don't really understand what it is but Maspes explains it like so: "The notion of *functional approximation* expresses the idea that there is always a certain degree of freedom in the interpretation of relations between form and function and that this continuous game creates a *decorative veil* that covers all objects; a *veil* that can only be created by a particular culture, even if broad like our own"².

STARCK DESIGNED THE DOWNTIME is the new sentence.

"A citrus squeezer", says Maspes, "is an object designed for a single use: to squeeze citrus fruits, and that is what it does. It is a highly specialised object, and there are many others in the kitchen nowadays: potato peelers, tin openers, bottle openers, olive pitters, egg cutters, garlic crushers etc.....A series of objects, each of which carries out a specific function, and when they have carried it out the object is no longer needed". Put simply, he says that as a citrus squeezer is always there in the kitchen but rarely used, and if it was used once a day that would already be a success, Starck was clever because he considered the object also when it is idle and therefore designed a citrus squeezer that resembles a nice furniture accessory when it is not being used.

"Therefore", he continues, "it's not true that it doesn't work. It works a lot, even when its colleagues are dormant".

² "Sorry Sandra", I say, "but do you understand what he's saying?". She stops taking notes and turns to me. "Basically", she says, puffing her cheeks, "it is like saying that the form of objects is partly due to their function and partly due to what he calls the decorative veil, i.e. the part of the project in which the designer can express their aesthetic flair: as such, the common form of an object does not derive directly from its function but is the result of a convention, which like I told you earlier is called the code of experience, based on a custom; in other words: we make citrus squeezers like this". She turns back and carries on writing.

FUNCTION FOLLOWS FORM is the new phrase projected at Maspes cinema. "Not only did Starck turn an everyday object like the citrus squeezer into an *aesthetic event*", says Dr. Maspes, "he also transformed its practical function into an aesthetic, turning it into *form*".

"Excuse me Professor...", says the Neapolitan, "I don't understand this thing about the aesthetic event, the form...".

"In simple terms", explains Maspes, "carrying out the same function as a regular citrus squeezer but in such an original way, Starck's citrus squeezer produces a kind of *squeezing spectacle* and we enjoy seeing how the same old thing can be done in such a new way. This means turning a *function* into an *aesthetic form*".

2.

WHY BUY A CITRUS SQUEEZER THAT COSTS AROUND TWENTY TIMES MORE THAN A REGULAR CITRUS SQUEEZER TO NOT USE IT? is the next question.

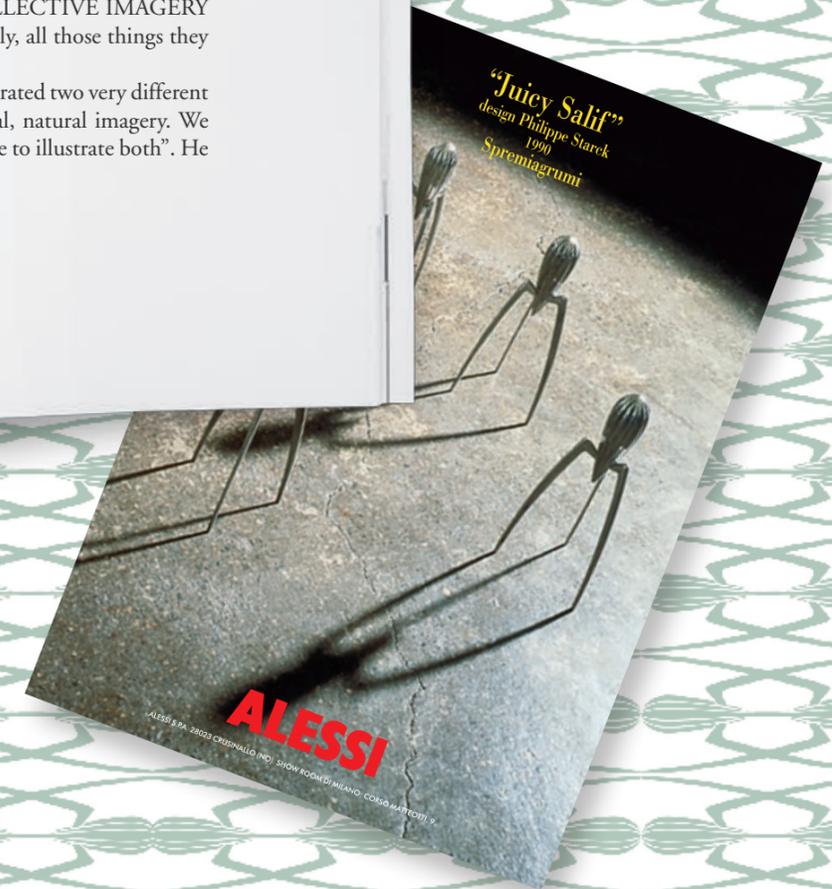
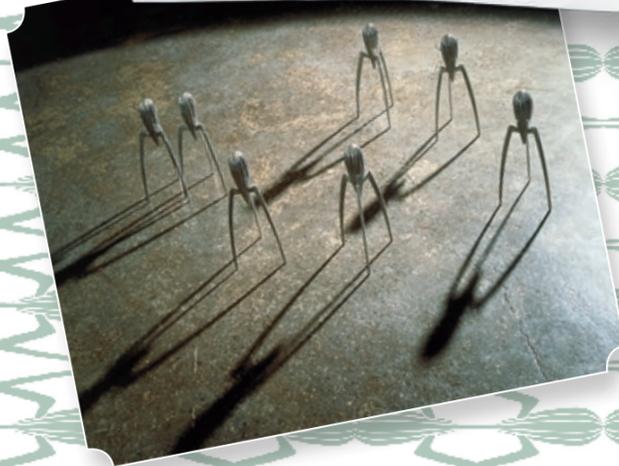
"Because you have loads of money", says Art.

Dr. Maspes says more or less the same thing, just in better words than those used by Art: "Because it is a luxury item, they have always existed and this is how it should be considered. We need to understand that it is an object created mainly to be *observed*, by *us* and by *others*. As regards us, it is a more *intimate* kind of satisfaction. As regards others, it is a more social kind of satisfaction. The hypothetical user is therefore an individual that loves communicating a certain social status, whether fictitious or real, it doesn't matter, at both a cultural and economic level, and to do this they make full use of the prestige of the object".

3.

Teodoro Maspes says that finally, after almost three hours of lesson, we have got to the final part of his study, the bit that looks at the COLLECTIVE IMAGERY stirred up by the object, as is written on the screen. Basically, all those things they asked us earlier about artists, films etc.

"According to my research, until now the *Juicy Salif* has generated two very different kinds of imagery", says Maspes, "sci-fi imagery and animal, natural imagery. We believe that the image used to advertise Starck's object is able to illustrate both". He then projects a slide showing the advert.



people look at when observing a figure".
"Who the hell has ever seen them?", says one of the Neapolitans.
"Him", says the other, pointing at Erto.

3.

"To identify the *connotations*⁴ of the object that emerged from this morning's exercise", says Erto, "again, for reasons of time, we only took account of the answers you gave us about the films, comics and the three things you would do with the object".

He takes a sheet of paper, adjusts his glasses, and begins: "From the indications regarding the three possible uses of the objects", taking the citrus squeezer in his hand, "there were actions related to violence, such as *smashing, killing, stabbing, injuring, perforating, disembowelling*, and actions related to sex, such as: *masturbate, use it as a vibrator, lose my virginity with it* and so on".

He pauses for a moment to adjust his glasses and continues: "Reading this and seeing the types of films you indicated, such as: *Alien, Arachnophobia, Basic Instinct, A Clockwork Orange, Dead Ringers*, and the types of comics mentioned: *Dylan Dog, Flash Gordon*, porn comics etc., I would say that there is no doubt that, in the collective imagination of you students, Philippe Starck's citrus squeezer is connected with connotations such as: violence, monstrosities, mutant animals, mystery, and a disturbing and dangerous future dominated by sexual perversion".
"Cool", squeals one of the two Goth girls.

"In short, the things said by Maspes are largely confirmed, even if they will have to be supplemented with the *sex* and *violence* connotations that emerged from this exercise".

The janitor comes in, looks at the clock and says: "Professor, I'm going to ring the bell". He then shuts the door, slamming it.

4.

The bell goes DRIIIIIIING. All those that have survived this long day, during which they squeezed us like lemons, start putting their things away and galloping into the outside world as quickly as possible.

⁴ "Sorry yeah". I say to Sandra Sailor Moon, "I can never remember the difference between denotation and connotation, you couldn't...".
"Come on... that's something we did in the first year", she replies.
"Yes, but I wasn't around much, I was very busy...".
She, a little annoyed: "Denotation is the primary meaning of a word or expression. Connotations are secondary or additional meanings", she says, snorting.
"Oh yes of course...".

"Before you go, just two more minutes please", says the insatiable Prof. Erto. "I would like to present Rocco Guaresi, marketing director of Alessi s.p.a., to you."

The UVA tanned man stands up and adjusts his tie.

"Guys, you have been great. I am sure we will make good use of your divine imagination", he says. He then presents a slide behind him showing a curly-haired man with the metal citrus squeezer lodged in his head, a piece of wrapping paper in his hand with "*Nous sommes dieu*" written on it in charcoal.

"Shit that's the guy from my dream!", I say to Art. "Maybe it's the guy that...".

"Quiet", says Art, "I can't understand what he's saying. And enough about this dream!".

"That's right", says the UVA tanned man, indicating the slide behind him, "because as Philippe Starck says, when we create we are God".

"What the hell does that mean", Art asks himself.

Basically, explains Prof. Erto, the UVA tanned man came here to steal our ideas so he can invent new uses and new *market niches* for the product, as he calls them. And as we were so good and competent, he says that those who want to work with him and the staff of the New Advertising agency in Milan on producing the advertising campaigns are welcome to do so, even if, unfortunately, we won't be paid, but, you know... it's all good experience.

DRIIIIINNGG goes the bell again.

"Guys, you are great", Guaresi says again, "I'm sure we'll do some great work together". He beams.

Everyone leaves, as do I. I leave the theatre thinking about my dream again, but I don't tell anyone.

Milan - 5 January 1999, 2.27 p.m.

From: rocco.guaresi@newadvertising.com
To: info@alessi.com
Subject: Winning ideas
Cc:
Bcc:
Attachment: JS1.pdf, JS2.pdf, JS3.pdf, JS4.pdf

Dear Sir,

As agreed, please find a copy of the four remarketing and communication proposals relating to the *Juicy Salif* put together by our creative team on the basis of the interesting study by Dr. Teodoro Maspes, *Ten years without squeezing a lemon*.

In a break from my normal practice, in this case I believe that the strength of the ideas and the images requires no introduction or comment and, as such, I will just limit myself to saying that these are four winning and high-impact proposals, *perfect*, I would even dare to say, for the commercial remarketing of the object to mark its tenth anniversary.

I look forward to hearing back from you,

Yours sincerely,

Rocco Guaresi

New Advertising
Marketing Director



3 x 1

ON AVERAGE, STABBING SOMEONE 54 TIMES WITH A REGULAR KNIFE TAKES 40 SECONDS. WITH SERIAL-SALIF, THE BRAND NEW THREE-PRONGED DAGGER, IT TAKES JUST 13.3 SECONDS. SERIAL-SALIF IS A **PSYCHO** PRODUCT



Don't call me Ishmael

My name is Super-Achab and I am the first whale hook on the market

From industry experts Nantuket comes Super-Achab, the hook you can finally use to catch whales just like other fish and enjoy the thrill of optimum performance even in the most extreme conditions.

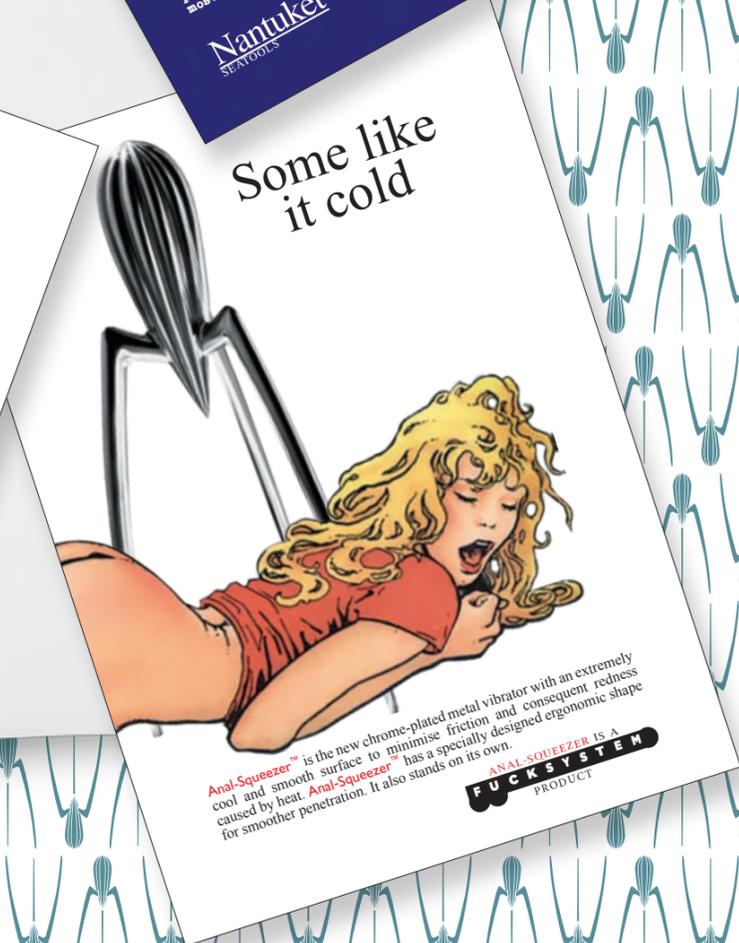
Nantuket
SEATOOOLS



Wouldn't hurt a fly

Aracnos is the first spider-shaped device for scaring rather than killing flies. It is approved by the animal association WWF (World Wants Flies) and is available in all good hardware stores.

ESSIAL



Some like it cold

Anal-Squeezer™ is the new chrome-plated metal vibrator with an extremely cool and smooth surface to minimise friction and consequent redness caused by heat. Anal-Squeezer™ has a specially designed ergonomic shape for smoother penetration. It also stands on its own.

ANAL-SQUEEZER IS A **FUCKSYSTEM** PRODUCT

Closing Credits

The facts narrated and the people involved in the story are not completely fictitious, probably around 50% or so. The exercise at the University of Bologna actually took place on Friday 29 May 1998 in the presence of Prof. Umberto Eco and 113 students on the Science of Communications degree course.

To create this story a number of ideas and texts by Umberto Eco, Algirdas Julien Greimas, Paolo Fabbri, Jean-Marie Floch, André Leroi-Gourhan, Philippe Starck and others, were deliberately plagiarised.

The advertising images were created and produced together with Marco Menozzi of pyxy.it

The communication project *Ten years without squeezing a lemon* was conceived by Michele Cogo, with the help of Prof. Paolo Bettini.

Special thanks go to Emilio Panizio, who helped devise this text.

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Images

©ADAQ -Jean-François WATIER

Jean-Baptiste Mondino
(Philippe Starck portraits)

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Photographer Henry Bourne

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stylist Josephine Norgren

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Photographer Elena Sarapultseva

BUCK ROGERS Series No.1, Story No.5,
“Tiger Men of Mars”: Strip No.19 “Plans Space
Ship”- Strip No.21 “Stages Test Flight”. (Buck
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Richard Buckminster Fuller, “Dymaxion car”,
1933 (Courtesy, The Estate of R. Buckminster
Fuller)

“Psyco”, Alfred Hitchcock, 1960
(Courtesy of Universal Studios Licensing LLC)

Milo Manara, “Il profumo dell’invisibile”, 1986

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**JUICY
SALIF**



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