functional or appealing?
traces of a long struggle

HaPoC 2015
Pisa, October 8 – 11
preamble

the session title

computing and the modelling of reality
preamble

permutation

reality

and the modelling of computing
preamble

completion

reality considerations
and the modelling of the shape of computing devices
functional or appealing?
traces of a long struggle

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functional and appealing as conflicting qualities
appealing vs functional

an example

Juicy Salif by Philippe Stark for Alessi
assessing the object

appealing!
unexpected
formally beautiful
funny

functional?
scratches on the kitchen
drops of juice out of the glass
inefficient squeezing
Alberto Alessi
“the most controversial lemon squeezer of the century”

Philippe Starck
“it is not meant to squeeze lemons but to start conversations”
back to the history of computing (and philosophy)
lot of possible conversations

about functional and appealing
drawbacks of flat design
touchscreen, nice but limited
16:9 screens and word processing
minimalism and mouse buttons
noisy fans and overheating
P101 as a product that everyone must have
...
just one,
back in time and
tied to Olivetti history
full vs ten-keys
calculator keyboards
there were sliders
in arithmometers, Odhner machines, still used in the Curta
Brunsviga 13
1927
the full keyboard

the first solution

idea by Thomas Hill
refined by Dorr Felt
firstly used in
the Comptometer

Model C
1907
a standard

many functional pros

fast, two or more digits in the same stroke
very fast on the Comptometer
value visible on non-direct action machines

easy mechanical implementation
on accounting printing machines

Class 3 Visible
1914
(ex Pike 1904)
Marchant KC
1922

and scientific machines
yet, quite early...
the ten-keys appear

“Dalton” layout

a quite successful one

Dalton

1912
“Sundstrand” layout

the one we are used today

Sundstrand
1914
ten-keys pros & cons

pros, on the appealing side
essential look, smaller footprint on the desktop
surprise for the elegant solution
values are typed like on a typewriter

cons, on the functional side
value is not visible, just the number of digits
mechanics is much more complicated
less fast, digits have to be typed in sequence
Olivetti calculators, a late entry
essential chronology
1934, s.a. Macchine per Operazioni Aritmetiche
1938, end of the study & design phase
1940, MC 4S Summa launched

a priori characteristics
printing, as they have a bigger market
electrical, modern
ten-keys keyboard, elegant
first clear success

Natale Capellaro
Marcello Nizzoli

Divisumma 14
1947
on the appealing side

clear colour, regular body, soft shapes

the exterior appears as an autonomous design

celebrated at the MoMA exhibition in 1952

on the functional side

four operations, negative results and printing

sort of a general purpose machine

(all the ten-keys cons are still there)
a rational perspective
(reality considerations)
the opinion of Riccardo Musatti

art historian, advisor of Adriano Olivetti

“Design per la Luna”, 1965
published on Rivista Pirelli, v. 18 n. 2-3
and, posthumous, on Notizie Olivetti, n. 84

the Musatti analysis

technological market is becoming emotional
a different beauty can revive a saturated market
good design and bad design or styling
a last episode, still Olivetti
transition to electronics

a 1970 electronic calculator, lot of arithmetic
yet still a mechanical keyboard
and printing only, no display
Mario Bellini contribute to good design by combining aesthetics and ergonomics, raising the overall quality.
conclusions
traces of a long struggle

reality considerations
computing devices are products
they have to consider their market
all qualities contribute to the success

obvious today
still an interesting conversation
a dialectics that started in the past
able to produce masterpieces