

Juicy Salif Lemon Squeezer

But Can It Squeeze Lemons?

Does this look like a squid to you? According to Alberto Alessi, Philippe Starck drew the first concept sketch on a napkin while eating calamari at a restaurant. He squirted lemon juice on the calamari, for flavor and perhaps for inspiration. Or does this product resemble, rather, a three-legged spider? An alien octopus? A spaceship?

This extraordinary lemon squeezer debuted in 1990. Around the same time, Starck's design for the Asahi Beer headquarters in Tokyo was also attracting comment. It is a 300-ton "golden flame" perched on top of a curved, black-granite exterior. This flame is a favorite motif for Starck, especially in his interior designs. Both the flame and the lemon squeezer could be considered "objets d'art"—art objects. One could also say that they exist at the outer limits of what is practical or reasonable.

In 1990, Starck had only recently turned 40. He was the son of an aircraft designer. He studied at the École Nissim de Camondo, a Parisian school specializing in interior and product design. By the age of 18 he had set up his own industrial design office. Then, as Art Director for Pierre Cardin starting in 1969, he produced about 65 furniture designs. After that he turned his attention to all sorts of industrial design, architecture, and interior design. He became famous in the 1980s after designing the interior of a café in Paris, and then the apartments of the French President at the Élysée Palace, as well as the interiors of major hotels, worldwide.

Starck has created one of the most famous chairs in the history of design: the W. W. Stool. It was for a fantasy studio for film director Wim Wenders. Like the Juicy Salif, this is also an art object, almost a pure sculpture. It is barely functional. Starck says that in such cases, he is indeed thinking mainly in artistic terms, such as Surrealism or Dadaism. You can buy an authentic W. W. Stool yourself, to use and/or admire, for less than \$4,000.

The Alessi "design factory," for which the Juicy Salif was created, has been a family enterprise since its founding in 1921 near Lake Orta in Italy. When Alberto Alessi entered the firm in the 1970s, the company began to enlist the services of famous designers and architects such as Achille Castiglioni. Starck's involvement with Alessi dates from 1986.