

I think one of the great things about histories is that they remind you of the development and progression (for the lack of a more neutral term) which has led to the present. Histories remind you that contemporary standards are not ahistorical or universal realities but simply contemporary paradigms and trends. They enable you to really see the contemporary GUI not as a unchanging reality but as a living a breathing designed idea. A history of the GUI allows you to more easily see the pros and cons critically as you have insight on the journey and critical processes that it took to get here.

I find it a little funny how so many of the advances in GUI came from companies simplifying and refining Douglas Engelbart's highly sophisticated demonstration in 62'. It seems to me almost an Apple's telling of the history of the GUI -- from complexity to beautiful usability in the form of simplicity.