



FONDAZIONE PIRELLI

PRESS RELEASE

PIRELLI REVEALS ITS "RUBBER SOUL" WITH AN EXHIBITION AT TRIENNALE DI MILANO

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Milan, 20 June 2011 – Pirelli reveals its "rubber soul" with an exhibition curated by the Fondazione Pirelli and hosted from June 21 to July 24 by Triennale di Milano museum. **"L'anima di gomma – Estetica e tecnica al passo con la moda"** ("Rubber Soul. Aesthetics and Technique in step with Fashion") is the title of the exhibition that recounts the history of Pirelli clothing and its advertisements through original artwork and multimedia installations, from the time of the company's foundation, at the end of the 19th century, to today. Over a century of industry and social customs distinguished by research applied to materials and processes, which characterize all Pirelli's activities, illustrated across four exhibition spaces: one dedicated to walking (rubber soles and heels), one to clothing (outerwear and raincoats), one to the sea (bathing suits and other products for the beach and water) and one for Pirelli PZero, Pirelli's current project of industrial design applied to clothing. Rubber takes the starring role and, in the form of small multimedia ball, guides the visitor through the exhibition, it illustrates the properties of a material which, through various processes, becomes tyres, elastic thread, fabric and object.

Beginning with the caucciù tree, "the tree that cries", whose gum was used by the Maya as early as 500 A.D, the first three exhibition spaces are dedicated to the past using innovative multimedia representations and showing, for the first time since their recovery and restoration, original sketches of the twentieth century advertising for Pirelli signed by leading names in graphic design and photography nationally and internationally: Jeanne and Franco Grignani, Alessandro Mendini, Bruno Munari, Ugo Mulas, Ermanno Scopinich and others. This material, which constitutes an important body of work and is conserved in the Historical Archives of the Fondazione Pirelli, will for the first time be shown in public after its careful recovery and restoration. It will be a "premier" as it was only recently discovered during the archival process, even an advertisement from 1952 with Marilyn Monroe modelling bathing suits in Lastex, an elastic fibre of the time produced exclusively by Pirelli. The last room, in conclusion, is dedicated to the current Pirelli PZero.

These spaces house images of Pirelli's technology, innovation and communications, all of which attest to the continual exchange of knowledge between the different areas of production: from tyres to raincoats, from rubber soles to boots, from bathing suits in elastic fibre to swimming caps and all the other objects which accompanied generations as they dreamed of, prepared for and lived their holidays by the sea.



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The exhibition was launched today by the Chairman of Pirelli and of the Fondazione Pirelli, Marco Tronchetti Provera, and the President of the Triennale di Milano, Davide Rampello, together with Germano Celant, Alessandro Mendini and with a video commentary from Umberto Eco. "Exhibiting – Germano Celant commented - shifted from a "museum-like" collection of objects, exposed and illustrated, to a specific staging, to an exhibiting which is pure non-material communication, fed by highly technological media". "There are no objects, but representations, so as to shift our focus from the tangible aspects of fashion to the level of dreams: a portrait image of fashion", commented Umberto Eco, underling that "nowadays everything is multimedia, and in this way looking back on the past can be quite enjoyable".

The exhibition

The three rooms dedicated to the past are based on the advertising of the time and are developed along two tracks. The first is historical-iconographic: the exhibition of original advertising artwork, from the 1910s to the 1950s, while the second is technological, with a series of multimedia installations that allow the viewer to relive advertising campaigns of the past in a contemporary key. Among these, an animation of Bruno Munari's 1953 advertisement for the Coria sole (also held by MoMa in New York), and an animation of the photo shoot by Ugo Mulas for raincoats, set atop the Pirelli skyscraper, one of Milan's symbolic buildings. In the room dedicated to the sea, visitors, greeted by an exceptional testimonial for the bathing suits in elastic fibre (Marilyn Monroe, in 1952), will find themselves visually immersed in the sea, seeing floating above them a number of Pirelli dinghies, while young men and women dive among the waves, wearing Pirelli bathing suits, goggles and flippers, naturally.

A whole room is dedicated to the consultation, both analogic and digital, of Pirelli's rich patrimony of images, catalogues, posters, magazines and videos which constitute a history of communication in Italy and the world. A consultation both analogue and digital, thanks to the multimedia installation, "the hand operated archive" produced by NABA (New Academy of Arts in Milan). And for the first time, the public can also see full photo shoots for the advertising campaigns, including backstage images.

The room dedicated to Pirelli's PZero clothing is instead occupied by a 14 metre interactive installation through which the visitor becomes the protagonist in an imaginary universe of gestures, movement and actions represented in the opalescence of a dreamlike world. The fashion is not physical, without substance. The products fade into desires and visions. The images that appear in this large setting talk to us of a world that appears two-dimensional, in which we glimpse people and objects. The rubber ball comes into play and gives this world its incredible properties which permit us to do things that appear impossible.



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**“L’ANIMA DI GOMMA – ESTETICA E TECNICA AL PASSO CON LA MODA”
 (“Rubber Soul. Aesthetics and technique in step with fashion”)**

Location:	Triennale di Milano, viale Alemagna 6 – Milan
Curator:	Fondazione Pirelli
Starting date:	21 June 2011
Closing date:	24 July 2011
Entry:	free of charge
Hours:	from Tuesday to Sunday 10.30-20.30 Thursday and Friday 10:30-23:00
Set and multimedia planning:	N!03
Executive architectural planning:	Federico Colletta, CO3 architetti associati
Art direction and graphic planning:	LeftLoft
Information:	Pirelli Press Office - tel. +39 02 64424270 www.fondazionepirelli.org



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“RUBBER SOUL” SEEN BY GERMANO CELANT

The term “rubber” evokes a material whose primary identity manifests itself in a wealth of products, almost becoming the enigmatic density of the object itself, because its mysterious adaptability engages a remarkable span of our senses of sight and touch. It connects with the active weightiness of the functions of expansion and protection, of resistance and consistency, so much so that it occupies a wide expanse of services and situations. Its original liquidity can be seen, in fact, in the solidity of the objects and things, with a material integrity which is elastic and trembling, solid and inviting, permeable and impermeable at the same time, almost alive. Its existence registers as a permanent and compact fluctuation, wave-like and circulating which could also be registered in the context of the carnal, where the gaze is always forced to linger on the surface of the body, here on the industrial product.

We become aware of rubber only through visual perception, beneath the plane of an object or thing. And this perception shows through and is translated into significance in the beauty of its epidermal manifestation or its cutaneous splendor, whether it materializes into a sole or an umbrella, a raincoat or swimming cap. What counts is the seductive and honey-like consistency which evokes a fleeting and sensual softness, where surfaces are translated into desire or a density which closes and distends according to external solicitations and stimulation.

The modalities of rubber’s appearance being so many, no image can conjure its identity, because the carnal or material flow cannot be contained in a single body, but must refer to the infinite and concrete variables of the adaptable and the liquid. In fact the body of images which regard it, conducted through a visualization which transits from poster to advertising, from film to exhibition, purports only to transform a non-consistency into a consistency, or rather to give the latter a state of unique reality, the form and figure of a product. And as the original given is fleeting, the rubber’s identity cannot be attributed to this or that landscape of things and objects, but must be affirmed as uncertainty itself which prevents us from fixing it in one state or another. From this comes the experience, perhaps fundamental, of a sensual disturbance, which is continually present-absent in its submission to perception and touch.

Wishing now to communicate the sense of this industrial protagonist, in which substance seeks to be prolonged into an epiphany of contemporary living, the vital provocation cannot continue to be conveyed through the deification of the objects and the things to which it gives body, but needs to find a dimension which goes beyond traditional physical perception. A terrain of comprehension and seeing in which objects can complete themselves through further action and action of a different order, where their concrete presence leaves space to an interpretation.



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This is what “L’anima di gomma” seeks to do, gathering together the imaginative dimensions of communicators, graphic artists, filmmakers, visual designers and artists who have worked on the evocation of rubber, articulating it through the virtual dimension of the message, and therefore through the functionality of the senses, not the material. Exploration is here carried out not on the body of things and objects, but into the soul of the matter that constitutes them.

But what does soul mean? It is the non-material principle which attaches itself to the body. An entity which connects to a certain collection of operations and events, psychic and spiritual, which constitute the manifestation of a being. Something which constitutes the body itself, but not its material limits. A substance with a reality of its own, which in the case of the chosen subject are the “mental” and “visual” activities which convey its values, when they are offered as a guarantee of meanings, mutating through the course of time and history.

Appearing before the gaze of the visitor to “L’anima di gomma”, curated by the Fondazione Pirelli, are then the imaginings of the creative individuals who sought to pursue, looking forward, the deciphering of this material, from the discovery of the caucciù tree, always going further in its immersion in the world, changing industrial production, but also our way of dressing and our actions. That which the exhibition attempts to communicate is not so much the product as the transformative play of the creative imagination which, from the beginning of the 20th century, took the form of sketches and photographs, texts and visions for advertisements or to document the informational impact that rubber had on the media, from newspapers to magazines, establishing a correlation between writing and industrial product based on its links to daily life.

In fact, the logic of the exhibition at the Triennale di Milano further updates the modalities of “exhibiting”, that which began with the universal expositions of the 19th century, the intent of which was the promotion, aesthetic and economic, of a national identity, implemented through a process of communication and presentation nurtured but a perceptual acceleration and intensification of physical and mental experience on the part of the visitor. A way of projection which, during the past century, saw an ever greater virtual acceleration of the message being “exhibited” and the physical reduction of the product. With systematic gradualness, exhibiting shifted from a “museum-like” collection of objects, exposed and illuminated, to a specific staging, to an exhibiting which is pure non-material communication, fed by highly technological media. “L’anima di gomma” draws on these extremes of exhibiting which makes of the communicative vehicle, from the poster to the film, from the two-dimensional projection to the multi-sensory environment, an instrument of pure information, of pure conscience.



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Thus, the presence of the “archeological” object, such as the old raincoat or tyre, the bathing suit or umbrella of another time, is not used here, as an element of memory, but leaves space for its “representation”. Its simulacra solidity, from Giuseppe Cappadonia to Giorgio Dabovich, to Bruno Munari and to Alessandro Mendini, up to the animation of photographs by Mulas and the interactive installation of Studio N!O3, today substitutes the repetition of the original product, even as it serves for its consumption.

Moving through the exhibition it is possible to perceive the multiplications and variations of an identity, which divide among themselves the various objects. But the underlying continuity of a mark, however, remains understood. And if the graphic and photographic, textual and cinematic contributions change object, they move with the regular step of new technology, the path sustained by a unifying strategy which has lived and lives through flexibility, multiplicity and lightness. Like rubber.



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“RUBBER SOUL” SEEN BY UMBERTO ECO

An exhibition that begins with a body of historic work. And seeks a current, contemporary language to describe it. Anything but a contradiction. It is quite normal, in fact, for the container of an exhibit of Greek pottery to be one of modern architecture. Nonetheless, there is still a difference between content and container. Here we have a collection of tools of advertising and communication within another tool of communication, that of the exhibit “L’anima di gomma – Estetica e tecnica al passo con la moda” (“Rubber Soul. Aesthetics and Technique in step with Fashion”), but with the slight difference that, throughout the history of the Pirelli advertising we see here, what was at our disposal then was the still image on posters or other adverts, now on display within a multimedia container. In fact, nowadays everything is multimedia, and in this way looking back on the past can be quite enjoyable.

A few things may be said about this. The first concerns the fact that, in the minds of a great many people, fashion is something tangible, physical—fabric, objects, things. In this wholly intangible exhibit, one made of images, history and interpretation, we see not the portrait of fashion, but a portrait of the image of fashion. And in that we see the novelty in this presentation. Many of these clothes or swimsuits would have a worn appearance even if they had been preserved in a museum, much like when one visits a museum that features clothing from the 16th century. But the image of Renaissance fashion that Carpaccio gives us in his portraits of courtesans is something else entirely. It comes to life and speaks to us and enables our modern eyes to better understand history. The same could be said of the advertising and graphic design of this exhibit, which brings us to another aspect.

MoMA has included the Olivetti Lettera 22 as one of the great sculptures of the 20th century. In the same way, in the not-so-distant future, when we talk about art in the latter part of the 1900s, we will see that many advertisements were more innovative and showed greater creativity than many paintings.

The other aspect, which most intrigued me, is that sometimes the advertisement is older than the object. Other times, instead, perhaps the object is older than the advertisement. I will give you an example: of the enormous quantity of work on show, I chose two images typical of Pirelli advertising, for the Tacco Stella, with elements similar to the illustrations of the humorous novels of the 1920s like “Cretinetti e Beoncelli”. Well, these images are old, today we would not accept them anymore. But the thing they are selling, that is the rubber heel, still does exist and function. Let’s look at two other wonderful images from Jeanne Grignani ads for raincoats. Because of their design, the raincoats themselves are a bit out of fashion, but the elegance of the images is very much in fashion. In still other cases, both the object and the image are modern.



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So this advertising evokes some very interesting thoughts about fashion, the presentation of style, and the shape of customs and of consumption—reflections on modern day. There are two things missing from this exhibit that I would like to point out. I know, it's not your fault, because you didn't make the fabric. Nonetheless, the exhibit is missing the trench coats of Humphrey Bogart and Lieutenant Colombo. You might say that you could recreate them. Good idea, if you come to an agreement with the traditional producer of Bogart-style trench coats. As for Colombo, his old, mistreated trench coat suggests a sense of long life and strong fabric. And this, too, is a value to be taken into consideration.

But let's come back to the images. The exhibit features the work of graphic artists, designers and photographers who began working for Pirelli when they were very young and so not yet famous. And the multimedia installations in which their creations have been reinterpreted would seem to suggest a bridge between a language of the past and the language of the future—an original, contemporary idea. Although I confess that I have serious doubts as to the longevity of multimedia compared to the force of the graphics of historical advertising. Nowadays, multimedia artists are 20 to 30 years old, creative, and in touch with the times. But when they reach their sixties, media techniques will have evolved so much that they will likely not be able to keep the pace. In other words, the frenetic innovation of technology shortens the lifespan of an artist.

There is one last aspect of the exhibit that deserves our consideration. As we have already said, there are no objects, just representations, so as to shift our focus from the tangible aspect of fashion to the level of dreams. Indeed, fashion evokes and produces dreams, especially now. In the 16th or 17th century when styles changed, and did so slowly, fashion followed a change in the people themselves. Today, things are quite different. One just needs to see a fashion show to see how clothing manufacturers are forced to come out with new models and new styles every year, maybe even going back to one from five years earlier, then coming back to one from five years later. The relationship with the market and with the consumer is terribly artificial, and even the passing of time becomes fiction. Take worn blue jeans. Once upon a time they had the appeal of real wear, of something worn for a long time, evoking an idea of familiarity and use through the slow passing of the years. Today, they're sold already worn out. Fiction, fake. Something to think about, just as this exhibit calls upon us to do.



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PIRELLI AND FASHION

Pirelli traces its history in clothing and fashion back over a century. As a line of business it started in 1873, one year after the company was formed, with its first technical articles in rubber. Already in 1877 its “health wear and haberdashery” products were on the market. They included waterproof clothing: rubber soles, heels, and galoshes, as well as bathing caps and “bathing buoyancy rings”. While very much in the spirit of functionality and practicality, elegance and style were not lacking, as shown in Pirelli’s graceful selection of ladies overcoats. Technology, too, was a constant feature of products by the company, which in 1901 patented its first tyre. The 1920s saw the development of special treatments for waterproofing fabrics and in the 1930s output began of “Lastex”, a tough, elastic rubber latex yarn that was thin enough to be woven like normal yarn. It was in the years after the Second World War, however, that Pirelli clothing really took off. In the early 1950s a new type of synthetic sole was put on the market. Coria, the “sole for modern-day walking”, combined the qualities of leather and rubber: lightness, toughness, water resistance, and modest pricing. Assorted models then appeared to cater for various types of walking with different soles and contact surfaces: Accademica, Alpina, and Aprica, when in the mountains, and Belpasso, Viavai, or Lungarno for footing it on the flat. For those who liked walking with a springy step there was Ripple: “it does the walking for you”. For those more concerned with appearance there was Levanto, a sole that elegantly alternated hollow and solid portions.

Since the post-1945 period Pirelli has also led the way in ready-to-wear clothing. In Arona it opened a new manufacturing facility for raincoats and overcoats. Its research into materials yielded groundbreaking patents. These showed through in the innovations it brought to the market for waterproof fabrics: its “elastomerized wool”, which included a thin core strata of vulcanized synthetic and natural rubber between two air-filled cotton strata; its “sporting” item, wool tweed with velvety rubber; and its “wool rub”, obtained by processing two types of wool with a special treatment.

Lastex, dubbed in the company’s promotion as “a marvel of a yarn”, is used in the production of corsets and bathing costumes that enhance the female shape but at the same time are practical and comfortable. A fitting endorsement came from an exceptional source: in 1952, Marilyn Monroe, then a very beautiful model and an actress yet to make her name, posed in advertisements for bathing costumes in Pirelli Lastex yarn. During the economic boom years Pirelli rubber was a fixture of the trips to the seaside made by Italians: swimming masks, flippers, aqualungs, diving suits, bathing caps, inflatable toys, water mattresses, boats, and inflatable dinghies. Pirelli was synonymous with the sea - in its myriad aspects, including sailing.

The Pirelli logo badged boat wear in water-resistant fabric. In 1971, in co-operation with the fashion designer, Eva Sabbatini, a new fabric was launched – “Dova”, a waterproofed linen that combined tear resistance with great softness and was used by Sabbatini in a series of models (for powerboats, yachts, water skiing) notable for their futuristic styling, ease of wear for sports activities, and refinement. The above exemplify the use by Pirelli of original technologies in creating clothing that has quality and elegance. Even today these are the characteristics that distinguish Pirelli Pzero, the brand it devised 125 years ago following the production of its first rubberized raincoat and an industrial design project driven by an experimental zeal in which engineering and performance find a dimension where they can lay claims to glamour.



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PIRELLI, THE FONDAZIONE PIRELLI AND CULTURE

Pirelli is a company that occupies a leading position in the cultural history of the Italian corporate world, built on research, quality, innovation, internationalism: elements which have made it the driver of important advances in the fields of industry, design and corporate communications, and one of the pillars of the country's modernization. Over time, Pirelli has become a true symbol of Lombard industriousness, illuminated by the values of social solidarity, modernity and faith in progress. In this context, Pirelli has always been aware of the importance of the relationship between the world of enterprise and the world of art, and is therefore always involved in activities and initiatives aimed at bringing those worlds closer to each other. Maintaining culture's relevance to a company's economy means acknowledging its capacity to produce value by exerting a positive influence on the context in which it acts, and through the dense system of relationships which it generates. The validation of cultural elements in the construction of "corporate identity" is therefore an essential factor in the relationship between a company and the territory, in the pursuit of the values of environmental and social sustainability where Pirelli intends to always be an active protagonist.

The front line in Pirelli's cultural activities is occupied by the **Fondazione Pirelli**, constituted in 2009 with the goal of promoting and spreading awareness of the Group's cultural, historic and documentary patrimony. The Fondazione's goals include the validation and support of cultural initiatives with an affinity and relevance to Pirelli's corporate culture. This commitment has been seen, among other things, in the current collaboration between Pirelli and the Pinacoteca di Brera, the Fai – Fondo Ambiente Italiano, the Peggy Guggenheim collection and the Triennale di Milano. Begun in 2007, the partnership with the **Triennale di Milano** entails a systematic and shared analysis of strategies to validate the "culture of projects" and the "culture of product". A strategic alliance between two of Milan's most important historic bodies, deeply Milanese "by birth", the Triennale - one of the most important institutions in the field of the visual and architectural arts - has today, like Pirelli, a determined international mission.

Pirelli is also founding member of the Fondazione Hangar Bicocca and contributes to the reinforcement of its identity within a cultural precinct solidly rooted in Milan but open to the most stimulating international influences. In the worlds of music and theatre, in conclusion, Pirelli has for many years supported the Fondazione del Teatro alla Scala and is currently a partner of the Piccolo Teatro di Milano and the Teatro Franco Parenti. The Pirelli Group also supports Milan's Institute for the Blind in the 'Dialogo nel Buio' project and is an institutional partner of the Fondazione Isec – Istituto per la Storia dell'Età Contemporanea. The Fondazione is headquartered at Building 134 of the Bicocca, a historic Pirelli building, completely restructured for the purpose. As well as the offices of the Fondazione, the headquarters include rooms dedicated to the Archivio Storico Pirelli and for the organization of initiatives and meetings for the public.