

The Olivetti Showrooms in the world



Franco Albini, Olivetti Showroom, Paris, Rue du Faubourg de Saint Honoré, 1959

For Adriano Olivetti, the showrooms should not be merely places in which the products are presented but they should also embody the style of the company. For this reason, he wants the showrooms to be in accordance with the ideals of innovation, beauty, and functionality that are inherent to the company. The Ivrea-based business is extremely thoughtful to the workplace: architecture and town planning are correlated to production and there is no difference in the quality of each element. Products should be manufactured and communicated as a continuation of the same culture that had created them. Since producing designer objects is not enough, Olivetti creates around them an aesthetically-adapt space. Hence, great importance is given to the architectural solutions of the showrooms in order to emphasize the quality of the exhibited objects. Adriano commissions many of them both in Italy and abroad: Brussels, Buenos Aires, Johannesburg, London, Mexico City, Paris, San Francisco, Tokyo, Vienna... In New York, a showroom is open in 1950 on 5th Avenue with colorful typewriters, furniture, Venini lamps, sculptures, and bas-reliefs. By doing so, Olivetti introduces an avant-garde, dynamic, and experimental company to the world.



Did you know...?

***Luciano Gallino**, a young sociologist who was asked by Olivetti to do a study on the company, wrote in 1960: "Adriano's Olivetti was an exemplary case of a market-oriented company [...]. Modernization and incessant innovation were top priorities [...]. Adriano developed a very pugnacious marketing strategy [...]. His Olivetti [...] created its own market with unusually advanced objects by precociously understanding the direction of the industrial development".*



The first Olivetti showroom in Rome, via del Tritone



Renato Guttuso, Boogie Woogie, Roma, Olivetti Showroom, now in Ivrea

Already by 1942, Olivetti establishes a new way to conceive a showroom. The experiment starts with the store in Rome whose very modern design was created by the Mantuan architect **Ugo Sissa** (1913-1980). The real protagonist is the eye-catching painting by **Renato Guttuso** (1911-1987) on popular dances, placed on an 8-meter high wall. In the 1970s, when the shop was closed, the painting was moved to the Olivetti plant of Scarmagno. The operation caused a scandal for the high cost but Guttuso said that he had asked to be paid by the hour, exactly like any skilled worker.

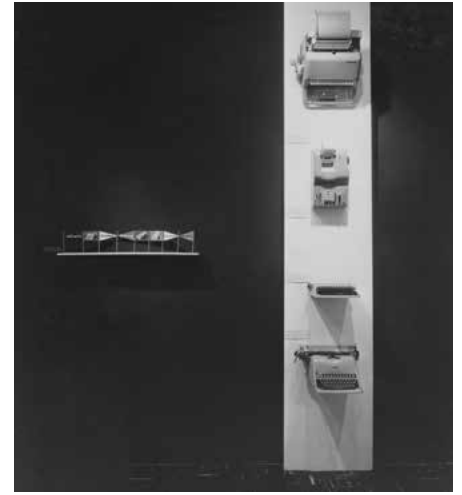
The Olivetti Store in New York City ("the finest of 5th Avenue" according to the press of the time) is signed by **Belgiojoso, Peressutti**, and **Rogers** (the well-known firm BBPR, whose other partner, Banfi, had died in 1945). 23-meter long and 8-meter wide is a brilliant synthesis between innovation and tradition, industry and art. The recessed window makes for an area in which a typewriter was placed to be tested by the passers-by. The products are exhibited on supports that rise from the floor. A splendid bas-relief by the architect and sculptor Costantino Nivola (1911-1988) enlivens the left wall.



Olivetti Showroom, New York City, 5th Avenue



Lettera 22 available to passers-by outside the New York store



A room of the exhibition Olivetti: Design in Industry, MoMA, New York, 1952



Adriano Olivetti receives the Compasso d'Oro, 1955

nascente institutes in 1954 the **Compasso d'Oro** Prize to give recognition to industrial design. It aimed to create a modern aesthetics of the product grounded in the relation between art and market, form and function. The first Compasso was awarded to the *Lettera 22* typewriter and the following year to Adriano Olivetti himself. It is a season of many rewards: in 1952 MoMA of New York opens an exhibition about Olivetti (*Design in Industry*); in 1956 the manager receives the Grand Prize of Architecture by the Cercle d'Études Architecturales of Paris.