

PRESS RELEASE

PLAST CELEBRATES ITS TWENTIETH EDITION WITH A RETROSPECTIVE OF ITS FIRST QUARTER-CENTURY: 1964–1989

To mark its twentieth edition, Plast celebrates this milestone with an exhibition entitled "The Origins of Plast", on display throughout the fair in Pavilions 13 and 15, offering visitors photographs and archival materials that document the historical heritage of the event in its earliest phase.

The retrospective begins in 1964, the year of the first edition – held at Fiera di Milano under the name Salone Europeo delle Materie Plastiche e della Gomma (European Exhibition of Plastics and Rubber), which would in time become simply Plast. That inaugural edition welcomed 800 exhibitors and several thousand visitors.

In the years that followed, Plast consolidated its position as an international reference point for the industry. The event was held every four years from 1964 to 1980, before adopting a triennial cycle from 1985 onwards, ensuring greater continuity; its Milan venue, at the heart of Italian capital goods manufacturing, provided a uniquely industrial setting.

It all began in the 1960s, when plastics established themselves as a defining material of the age – evoking modernity and lightness, becoming an essential feature of everyday life and a new frontier in furniture and design.

Two materials drove this transformation above all: polyethylene and polypropylene, the latter discovered by Giulio Natta in 1954 – a breakthrough that earned him the Nobel Prize in 1963. Produced industrially from 1957 under the Moplen brand, polypropylene transformed households across the world and became one of the defining symbols of the 1960s.

In 1969, five years after Plast was founded, the fair acquired a visual identity created by a legend of Italian advertising: Armando Testa (Turin, 1917–1992). The same master who, in 1960, had designed the iconic logo for the Punt e Mes aperitif – an elegant perspectival interplay of two red spheres, built on pure geometry and immediate visual impact. These were precisely the principles – simplicity, geometric rigour, communicative directness – that Testa brought to the design of the Plast logo. Two seemingly distant worlds – the beverage industry and the plastics industry – united by the same creative vision. After a series of studies and sketches exploring different visual directions, the result was an identity capable of representing an entire industrial supply chain, and of speaking of innovation, precision, and the future. In 1972, Armando Testa's iconic Plast poster entered the Architecture and Design collection of MoMA in New York.

Those same years saw a growing emphasis on communication, which in the B2B sector was becoming an essential marketing tool. In 1976, MacPlas was founded – the reference trade publication for the plastics and rubber industry in Italy. From its very first issues, Plast chose the pages of MacPlas to promote its brand, reaching operators and companies throughout the supply chain.

The 1970s were also a decade of considerable technological growth and the progressive emergence of increasingly sophisticated applications. Production plants became more automated, and plastic components began to appear widely in the automotive sector – a material that helped make vehicles lighter and, consequently, more fuel-efficient. The use of plastics in automotive manufacturing was destined to grow steadily, becoming one of the most strategically important application sectors in the years ahead. Italian manufacturers of plastics and rubber processing machinery established themselves as leading players in international export markets.

During the same decade, injection moulding presses assumed a dominant role, finding application in the production of automotive components such as dashboards.

In the field of extrusion, the number of machinery manufacturers had tripled compared with the preceding fifteen years. Approximately half of all plastics used across applications were processed using this technology.

In Italy, the early 1970s also saw the rise of manufacturers of blow-moulding machinery for hollow bodies, particularly for containers of one thousand litres and above. It was also during this period that the use of non-toxic PVC – UV-stabilised and impact-resistant – was cleared for the blow-moulding of mineral water bottles.

In the 1980s, Plast grew significantly in terms of exhibition space, number of exhibitors, and visitors, including international ones. The fair expanded to include dedicated sections for rubber and composites, and launched a conference programme that began addressing environmental issues: the first levies applied to plastic bag manufacturers brought the industry under increasing public scrutiny.

On the industrial front, the use of PVC in window and door frames became widespread, and a specific regulatory framework on machinery safety began to take shape, culminating in the European Machinery Directive of 1989 – a first step towards a uniform legislative framework at European level, destined to extend across all segments of the supply chain.

The story continues...

With grateful acknowledgement to: Historical Archive of Fondazione Fiera Milano Gemma De Angelis Testa and the Centro Studi e Archivio della Comunicazione, Università degli Studi di Parma Historical Archive of MacPlas magazine

Plast Plast 2026 is the leading European trade fair of the year dedicated to the plastics and rubber industry, running from 9 to 12 June at Fiera Milano. Organised by Promaplast, the event serves as the reference platform for the presentation of processing machinery for plastics and rubber, as well as next-generation raw materials for the production of semi-finished and finished goods, and offers a unique opportunity for the development of new business relationships.

Event Details

- Dates: 9–12 June 2026
- Venue: Fiera Milano, Rho Pero (Milan)
- Opening hours: 9.30–18.00
- Website: www.plastonline.org

Press contacts

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