THE MYTH OF SUPERHEROES

From ANTIQUITY to CONTEMPORARY ART

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PROGETTI

THE MYTH OF SUPERHEROES

From ANTIQUITY to CONTEMPORARY ART

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EXHIBITION STRUCTURE

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- The Heroes of History

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MYTHOLOGICAL METAMORPHOSES

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Proto-Superheroes
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INTERACTIVE SELFIE AREA
LIKE A SUPERHERO!
Atomic Dimensions
Climbing the Empire State Building
Up, Up and Away!

0 - INTRODUCTION: WHY DO WE NEED HEROES?

What are the distinguishing features of a hero?

Strength, bravery, dedication, courage?

Historical imagery portrays the hero or the heroine as individuals in perfect physical condition, head held high, able to challenge entire armies, and to lift inconceivable weights. Today, instead, within our contemporary culture, the value of a hero cannot be measured in relation to the size of his muscles. What rather distinguishes a hero from a common man is a committed desire for justice and equity, a push towards glory judged on sacrifice and on his tenacious temperament.

A hero is not a hero if he is not moved by moral conviction and, most of all, by a total dedication to the greater good of mankind. Aware of his role as a model to follow, the hero builds his existence firmly rooted in his integrity.

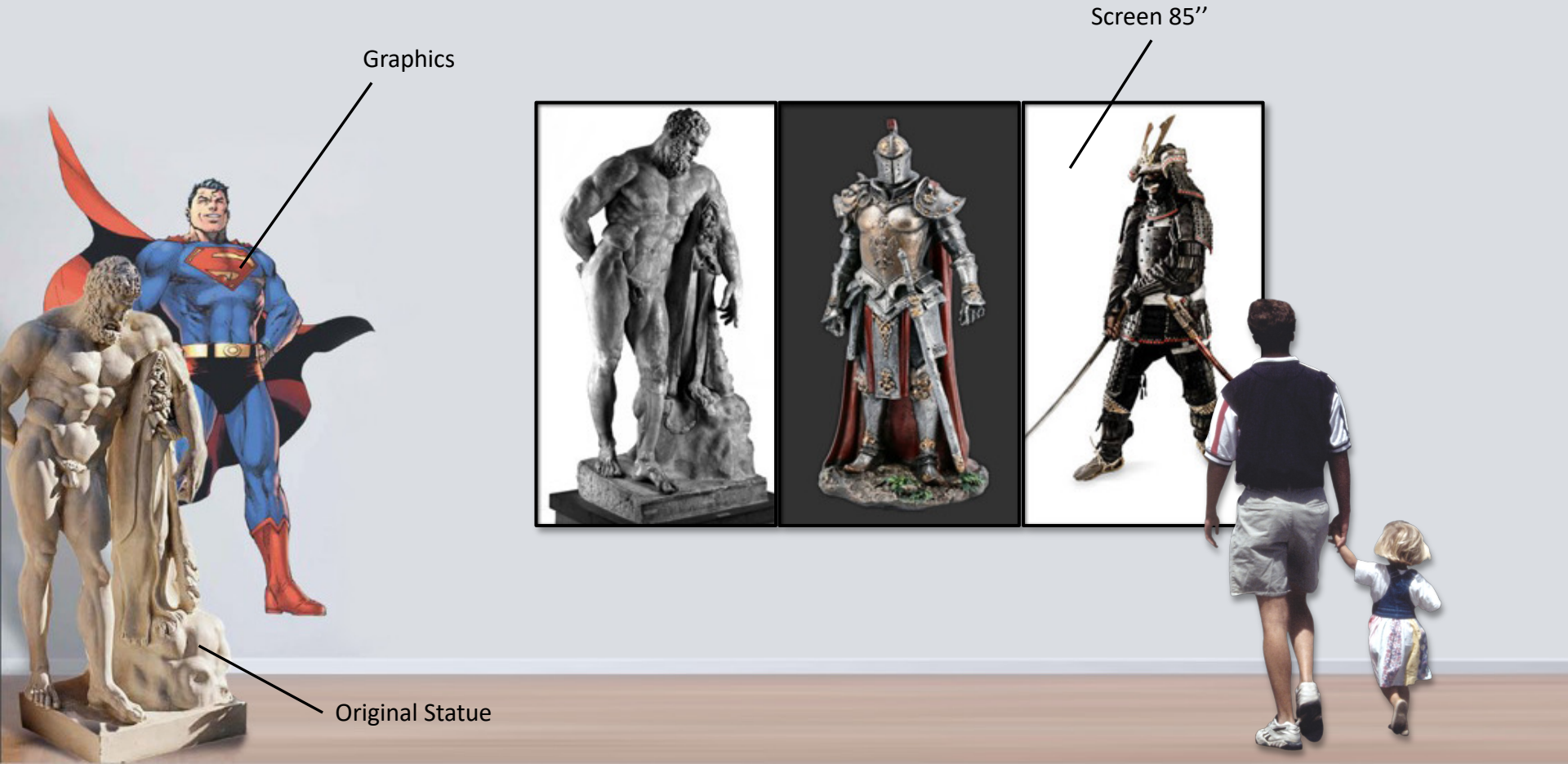
SECTION CONTENTS:

Immersive room

Morphing between ancient and modern heroes to highlight their historical continuity

Wall video-projections

0 – INTRODUCTION: WHY DO WE NEED HEROES?



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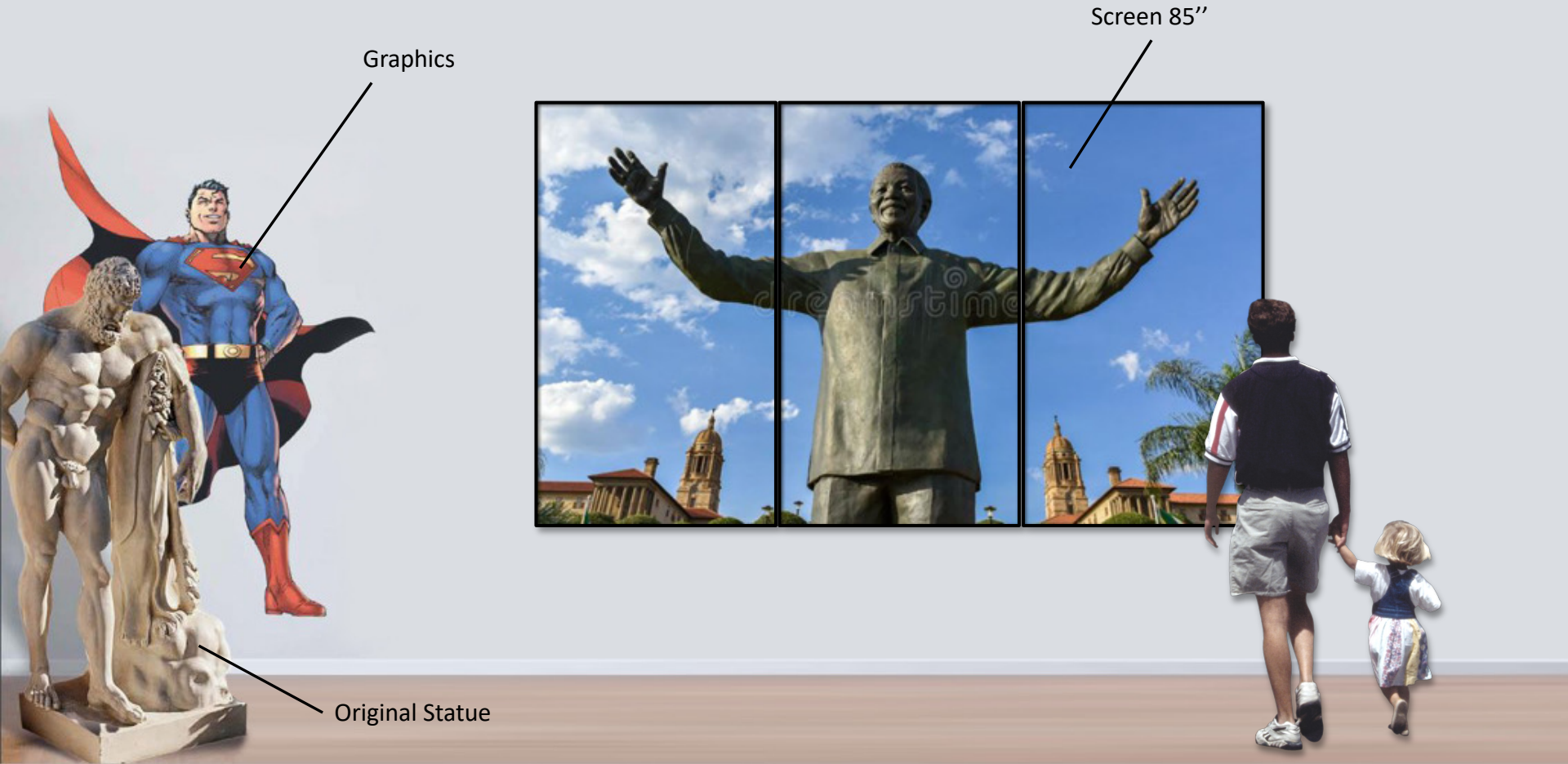


1 – HEROES OF MYTH AND HEROES OF HISTORY

THE HEROES OF MYTH:
BETWEEN LEGEND AND LITERATURE

Initially transmitted in the form of oral narration and afterwards translated into literary works, the figure of the hero represents one of the pillars of the universal structure of myth.

Stories of legendary deeds, elevating brave men and women a step closer to the gods, can be found in almost every culture. Literature constructs poems and sagas around one main character: the hero or the heroine, a tireless character who, fighting against a thousand dangers, always reaches his/her goal: leading the reader to a deeper maturity.

SECTION CONTENTS:

Grand interactive video wall projections, geographically illustrating all the heroes divided per countries. The audience can touch and discover each hero located on the different countries of the map.

Heroes from Different Geographical Areas

- **Middle East**: GILGAMESH - NIMROD
- **Greece and Rome:** ACHILLE – ENEA – AIACE – BELLEROFONTE – ERCOLE – GIASONE – PERSEO – TESEO – ULISSE - ICARO
- **North Europe:** KING ARHTUR – LANCELOT – TRISTAN – GALAHAD – BEOWULF – FIONN – ROBIN HOOD – THOR – BRUNILDE – SIEGFRIED – TIJL – IVANHOE
- **Italy:** ORLANDO – RINALDO - SANDOKAN
- **France:** D'ARTAGNAN – IL CONTE DI MONTE CRISTO
- **Spain:** DON CHISCIOTTE
- **Israel:** NOE' – DAVIDE – SANSONE – MOSE'
- **China:** HUANGDI – SUN WUKONG
- **Japan:** KINTARO – MIYAMOTO MUSASHI – BENKEI – YAMATO TAKERU
- **India:** ARJUNA – BHIMA
- **Africa:** ANANSI
- **South America:** CE ACATL TOPILTZIN
- **Australia:** WURRUNNA

1.

1 – HEROES OF MYTH AND HEROES OF HISTORY

Interactive Videoprojection

1 – HEROES OF MYTH AND HEROES OF HISTORY

HEROES OF HISTORY

The heroes of our past are the men and women who, through their brave choices, have changed the course of history and the destiny of peoples and nations. They are exceptional characters who fought against mediocrity for the good of the community - individuals who have led armies, driven out invaders, protested for freedom and for the recognition of human rights.

Through their acts, they have shaped geography and ideology, paving the way to some of the most important pillars of our society.

SECTION CONTENTS:

Statues, reproductions of paintings, 3D reproductions and suggestive videoprojections with some of the most important heroes and heroines of our history talking to each other in «impossible dialogues».

What would Gandhi have said to Martin Luther King if he had the chance to talk to him?

Characters Analyzed

- ALESSANDRO IL GRANDE
- GIULIO CESARE
- WILHELM TELL
- VIRIATO
- JAIME EL CONQUERIDOR
- EL CID
- ROLANDO
- CARLO MAGNO
- GIOVANNA D'ARCO
- WU ZETIAN
- GEORGE WASHINGTON
- NAPOLEONE BONAPARTE
- GIUSEPPE GARIBALDI
- MAHATMA GHANDI
- ROSA PARKS
- NELSON MANDELA
- MARTIN LUTHER KING

2 – SUPERHEROES - MYTHOLOGICAL METAMORPHOSES

Without any doubt, modern mythology is rooted in the epic stories of the ancient Greek-Roman gods and heroes. The Olympians rule the sky, the earth and the sea as men and women with extraordinary powers used for the sake of humanity. Religion turns into mythology, the Gods blend with men, and each story develops over time changing the appearance but keeping the spirit righteous. These are the roots of the Superheroes, half-heavenly sons of a secular tradition which started as an oral tale and turned into a comic, conveying, in a popular form, values still relevant today.

This section aims at visualizing the common thread that links the past with the present of these myths. Relevant Greek-Roman sculptures from the National Archaeological Museum of Naples, Italy, representing some of the most famous ancient mythological characters, are exhibited in this section, anticipating some of the most iconic Superheroes of today through the projection of their silhouettes in the background. Through this means, the visible bond between different characters and their iconographic mutation is highlighted: the mutual relationship between ancient and modern mythology is clearly illustrated. Works of ancient art usually exhibited in museums of exclusive historical connotation, are here presented to a wider audience with the ultimate goal of stimulating their critical thought, curiosity and interest.

TOPICS

- The Greek-Roman Myth
- Greek Heroes and Modern Heroes

2 – SUPERHEROES – MYTHOLOGICAL METAMORPHOSES

HERCULES, THE STRONGEST OF ALL MEN **/ SUPERMAN**

Son of Jupiter, Lord of the Gods, and of his human mother, Alacmena, Hercules is the strongest of all men and nobody can compare to him also in terms of stubbornness and determination. After having completed the twelve labors received from Eurystheus, Hercules was redeemed for his sins, and, leaving his mortal condition, was welcomed into Olympus pursuant to his divine heritage. His sturdiness and prowess have become the primary elements of the concept of the superhero and, indeed, Superman, the greatest of the modern heroes, is the major heir to the progeny of Herucles, absorbing completely his attributes.

THE AMAZONS, WOMEN WARRIORS **/ WONDER WOMAN**

The Amazons were a population of women committed to the art of war. Aeschylus quoted them in his tragedy "Prometheus Bound" and situated their city Themyscira in the lands of Anatolia. According to the tradition, the Amazons were ruled by two queens who separately managed the peace of the kingdom and the conflicts with the neighboring peoples.

The legend says that to become excellent markswomen, and to best hold the bow, they mutilated their right breast. Diana, Hyppolita's daughter, is the Amazon who came to our time to dispense justice and truth in the stubborn and "stellar" character of Wonder Woman.

3 – MODERN HEROES

DC and Marvel Comics are the two American publishing houses that, from the 1930s, invented and developed the concept of modern Superhero, with the launch of Superman - the contemporary Hercules – in 1938.
As the visitor leaves the first sections of the exhibition on the cultural and mythological connections between ancient and modern, the exhibition path focuses on the story of the modern Superheroes; the most known and familiar belonging to the American tradition, the Superheroes born from the DC and Marvel productions.

Following a chronological and thematic path related to a graphic timeline, visitors explore the birth of modern Superheroes in relation to actual historical facts, learning the origins of their powers, the different categories they belong to, the first sketches and comics that immortalized them, and the evolution of their massive production. If in the 1970s, the Superheroes were reproduced as dressed dolls, in the 1980s, they turned into plastic action figures, and they were finally brought to life in extraordinary sculpture in the last decades.

An outstanding variety of original objects is at heart of this section, where engaging graphics and suggestive environments accompany the visitor through the discovery of the first comics and of other superb objects.

SECTION CONTENTS:

Original archaeological statues, original comic books, action figures, ancient dolls, movie posters, drawings, animations

TOPICS

- Proto-Superheroes and Modern Superheroes
- The Origins of Powers
- Different Typology
- Comics
- Development of a Phenomenon
- From the First Toys to the Action Figures

3 – MODERN HEROES – PROTO-SUPERHEROES

PROTO - SUPERHEROES

Before the invention of Superman in 1938, comics were populated by brave and bold men preserving peace through technology and magic; benevolent specters wearing masks and exceptional devices to fight against criminals and mad scientists who wanted to conquer the world.

A series of original comics present the “The Mystery Men”, those heroes who anticipated the Superheroes.

FLASH GORDON 1934

Born from the mind of Alex Raymond, the valiant Flash Gordon defends the Earth from cruel Emperor Ming of the Mongo planet, helped by scientist Doctor Zarkov and by the beloved Dale Arden. His enormous success gave birth to a TV series (whose plot inspired George Lucas for Star Wars), several movies – one with an incredible soundtrack from the Queen (1980) – and cartoons adaptations – the most recent dates to 2007.

MANDRAKE 1934

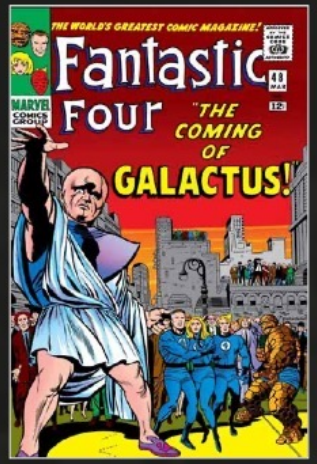
Created by screenwriter Lee Falk and by designer Phil Davis, the elegant Mandrake masters magic and prestidigitation to fight against racketeering and supernatural entities. He lives in a highly technological home on the top of Mount Xanadu, helped by the strong African Lothar. His name is the synonym of a superior skill and is related to anyone willing to transcend the impossible.

3 – MODERN HEROES – COMICS

COMICS

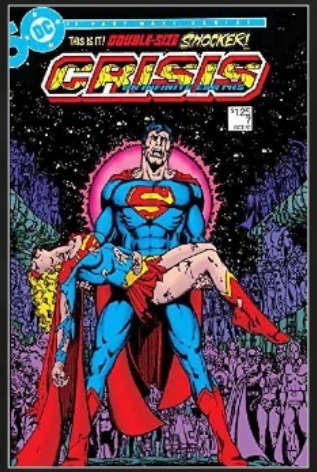
Created as humor strips at the bottom of newspapers, comics found their fortune from the 1930s onward, gradually becoming comic books mainly for children. From mass media to sequential art, comics developed as a narrative media with surprising potential.

This section presents one of the main highlights of the exhibition: a selection of original comics – in their original editions - drawing from prestigious private and museum collections, which bear witness to the most amazing events of the Superheroes.

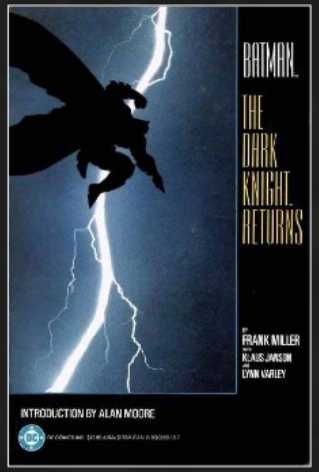


FANTASTIC FOUR
THE COMING OF GALACTUS
Marvel
1966

SECRET WARS
Marvel
1984



CRISIS ON INFINITE EARTHS
DC
1985



BATMAN
THE DARK KNIGHT RETURNS
DC
1986

3 – MODERN HEROES – DOLLS

For a 1970s child there was nothing more exciting than experiencing a thrilling adventure flying with Superman or climbing a skyscraper with Spiderman.

Mego Corporation, a small toy design American company, understood this clamorous success and acquired the rights of the Marvel and DC Superheroes, realizing for the first time a series of plastic dolls, with vinyl heads and fabric suits. The “World’s Greatest Superheroes!” conquered the world – from 1972 to 1983 millions of specimen were sold and today they are among the most sought-after objects by collectors, considered, indeed,
vintage icons of pop culture.

This section brings to light some original specimen from the 1970s, attesting to the first significant production that transformed the characters of comics into threedimensional toys.

«World’s Greatest Superheroes!»
Dolls Mego Corporation, first half of the 1970s, USA

3 – MODERN HEROES – ACTION FIGURES

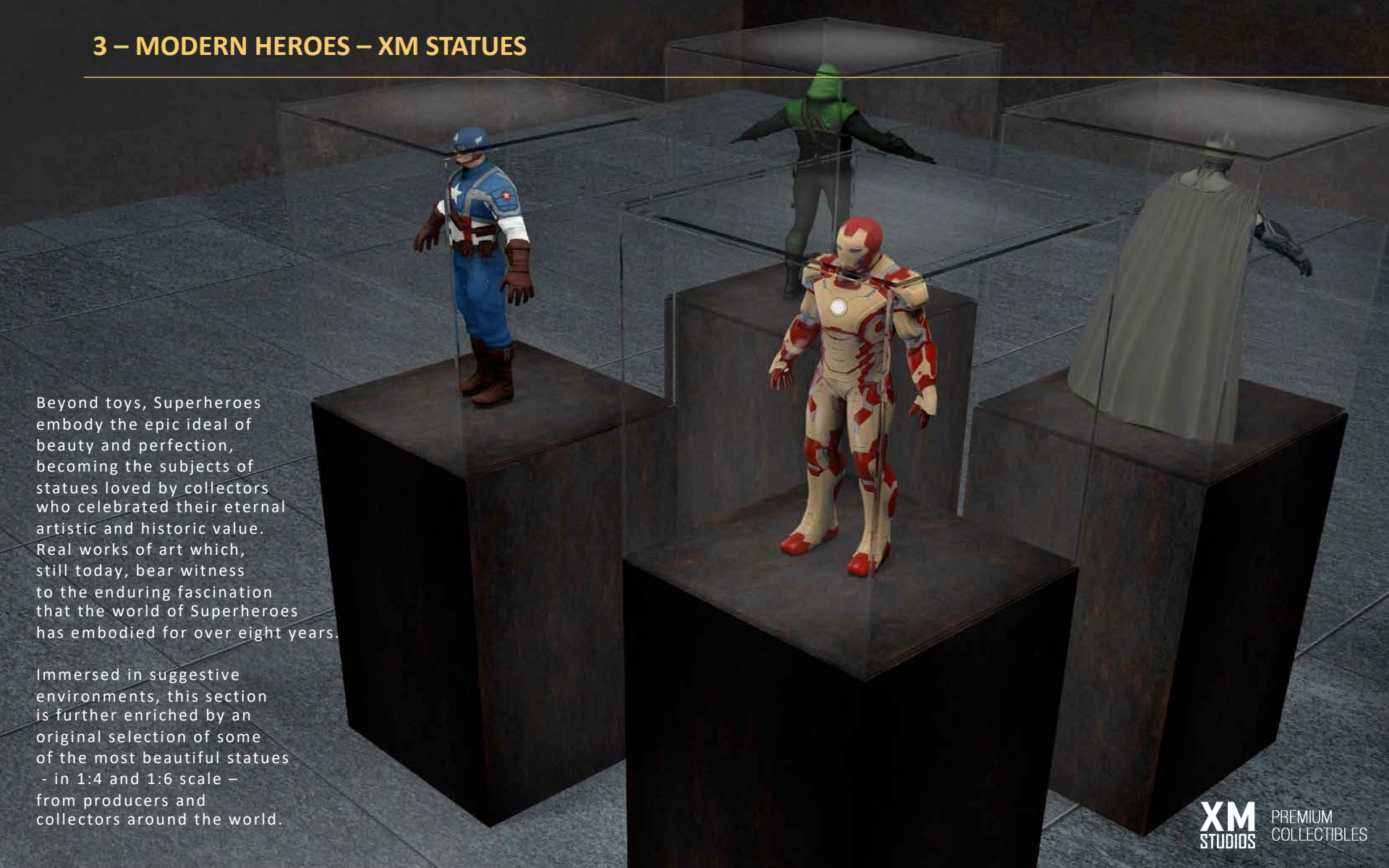
From the 1980s, when the doll success came to an end, Superheroes started circulating again as action figures, initially anatomically simple and then always more articulated, in a developing process that met art, design and the most innovative technologies. The action figures became relevant means of communication of the world of Superheroes, told through changes in costume, different graphics, secret identities, friends, enemies, and all the information necessary to understand an extremely vast universe which continues to evolve over eighty years of existence.

A room entirely dedicated to a precious three-dimensional archive of over a hundred heroes draws from an extensive private Italian collection which counts almost a thousand of action figures. On display the best specimens that made the history of these characters: a truly suggestive setting, of an intense visual impact

WOLVERINE

Tissue regeneration, adamantium skeleton and claws

3 – MODERN HEROES – XM STATUES

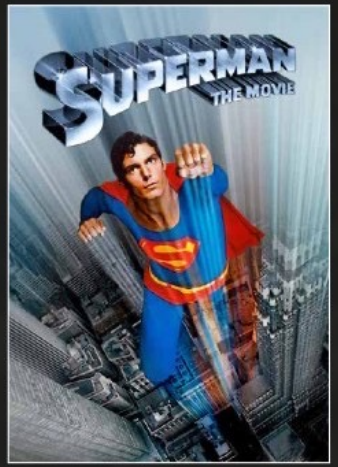


Beyond toys, Superheroes embody the epic ideal of beauty and perfection, becoming the subjects of statues loved by collectors who celebrated their eternal artistic and historic value. Real works of art which, still today, bear witness to the enduring fascination that the world of Superheroes has embodied for over eight years.

Immersed in suggestive environments, this section is further enriched by an original selection of some of the most beautiful statues - in 1:4 and 1:6 scale – from producers and collectors around the world.

XM STUDIOS PREMIUM COLLECTIBLES

3 – MODERN HEROES – CINEMA, TV, MUSIC

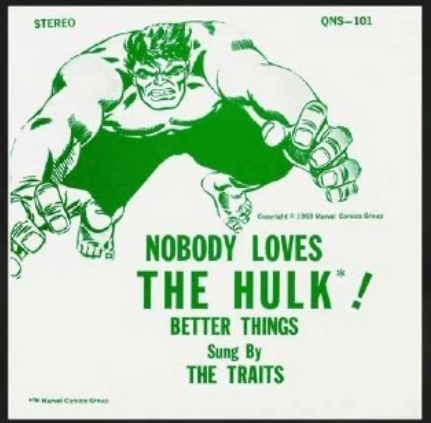


SUPERMAN THE MOVIE
Warner
1978

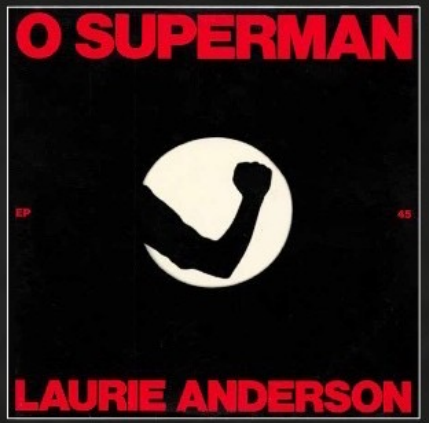
BATMAN
Warner
1989

SPIDER-MAN
Marvel Studios
2002

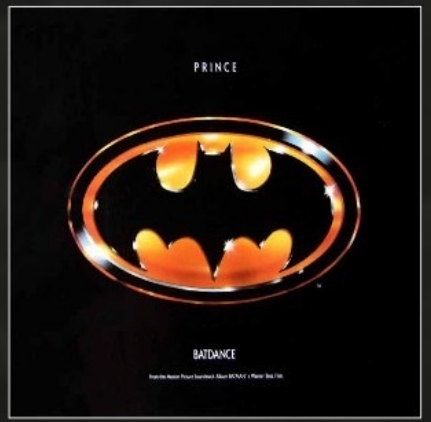
THE INCREDIBLES
Disney Pixar
2004



THE TRAITS
Nobody Loves
The Hulk
1969



LAURIE ANDERSON
O Superman
1982

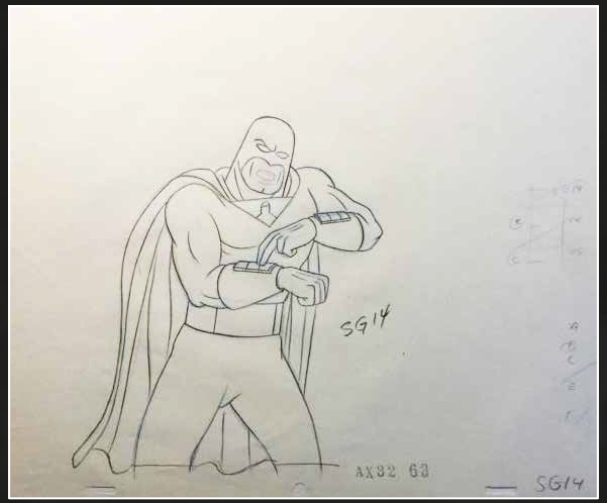


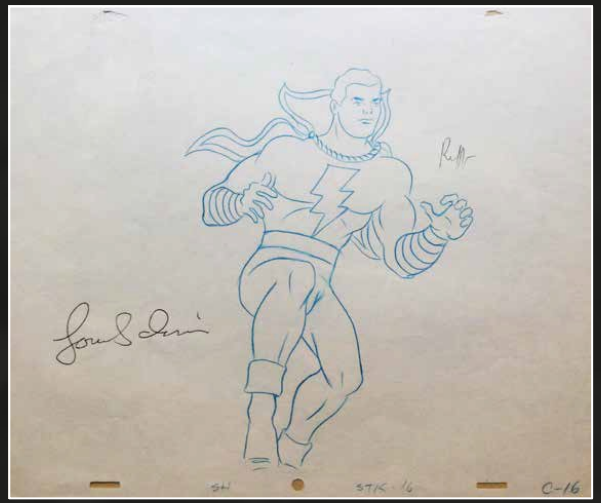
PRINCE
Batdance
1989

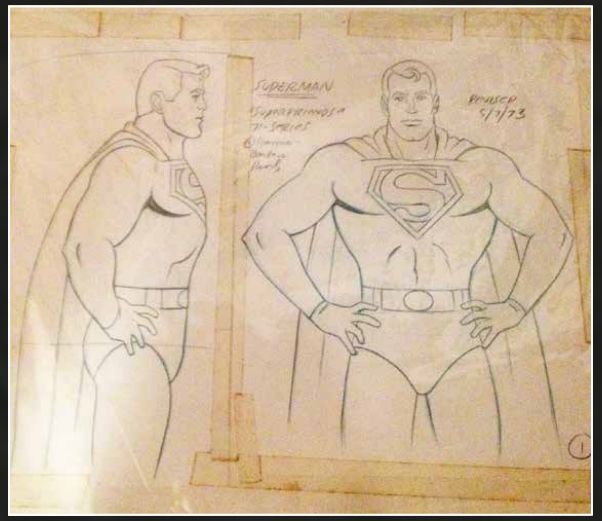
883
Hanno ucciso
l'Uomo Ragno
1992

Animation cel with background and original studies,
Hanna & Barbera Studios, Filmation

3 – MODERN HEROES – CINEMA, TV, MUSIC







Layout and Character Reference,
Hanna & Barbera Studios,
Warner Bros Animation

4 – THE HEROES OF OUR TIME

A suggestive photographic gallery immerses the audience into some of the most touching moments of our modern society, presenting all those «common» men who fought to save lives in dramatic events of the 21st century, such as all the firefighters on September 11th, or the doctors and nurses of the COVID pandemic: heroes of our time

HEROES

5 – HANDS ON ACTIVITIES

Do You Want to Be a Superhero?

Immersive and interactive area where visitors are invited to make the right choices: small acts that can turn you into a hero in everyday life.

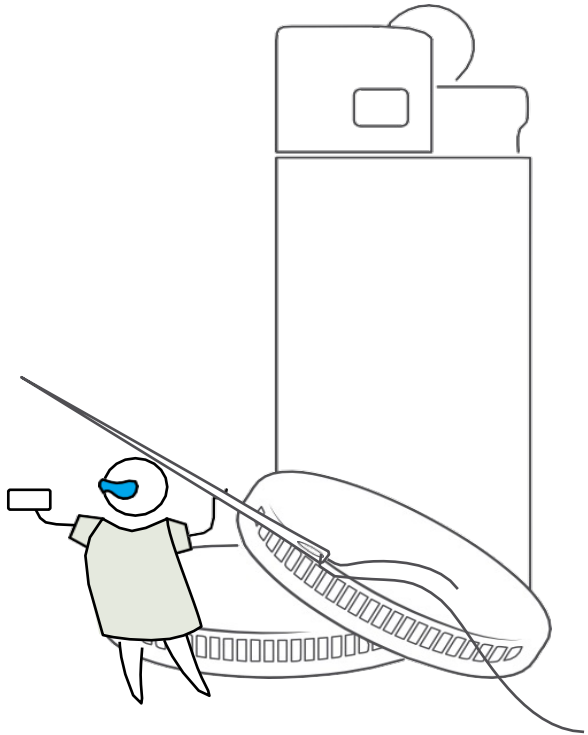
Interactive and touchscreen table

INTERACTIVE SELFIE AREA

Enter the world of Superheroes and become one of them!
The impossible becomes reality using some imagination.
Through some classic cinematic tricks the visitor is invited to experience the thrill of the set getting involved by the most playful side of the comics.
A selfie area to test your superpowers!

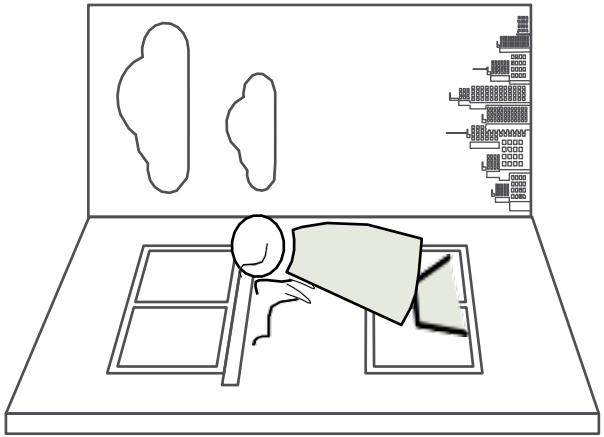
ATOMIC DIMENSIONS

Get smaller until becoming microscopic, exploring the world through the eyes of Ant Man and Atom.



INTERACTIVE SELFIE AREA
CLIMBING THE EMPIRE STATE BUILDING

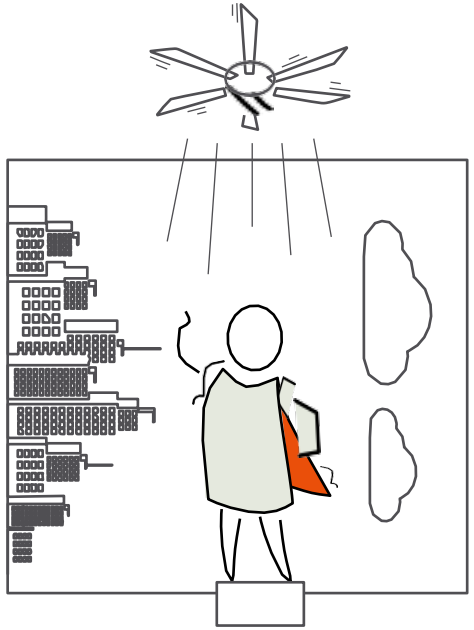
Like Batman and Spiderman, conquer your fears and climb up to the highest buildings of the city using only a rope or your spider web.



INTERACTIVE SELFIE AREA
UP, UP AND AWAY!

Close your eyes and take off!

Fly away with Superman and Iron Man for a spine-tingling adventure up up in the sky where no man has gone before.



OTHER IDEAS

Mask and Cloak

The symbols of the Superheroes: the mask as a safeguard of one's secret identity, the cloak to soar in flight suspended by the wind. These accessories will be given to visitors (mask for adults, cloaks for children) to fully enjoy the experience of the exhibition.

OPTIONAL SECTION TO BE DEFINED - **THE ART OF THE HEROES**

Just as the stories and characters of ancient mythology have been the subject of representations since ancient times, up to the climax in Renaissance and Neo-Classic paintings, modern Superheroes too have been a source of inspiration for a great number of contemporary artists since the 1950s and 1960s of the 20th century.

Icons to celebrate, deconstruct, idealize, demythologize, perfect bodies where contemporary artists provocatively operate, extrapolating their mythological spirits and filtering them with their personal pictorial and plastic view. Minor Art inspiring major Art in an incessant process of mutual influences.

A selection of contemporary artworks guide visitors to the end of this exciting journey into the «Myth of Superheroes» with some of today's latest interpretations - a phenomenon that, linking past, present and future, is an unlimited source of fascination and inspiration for every form of art.

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