

Pau Medrano-Bigas

## The Forgotten Years of Bibendum

## MICHELIN'S AMERICAN PERIOD IN MILLTOWN:

Design, Illustration and Advertising by Pioneer Tire Companies (1900-1930)



### **VOLUME I**

Doctoral dissertation submitted by Pau Medrano-Bigas Supervisor: Dr. Anna Calvera Sagué

> Department of Image and Design Sant Jordi Faculty of Fine Arts University of Barcelona

> Barcelona, 2015 [Translated English Edition, 2018]

« Ce brave Bibendum a été depuis reproduit dans bien des postures et des circonstances diverses. On lui a prêté bien des paroles. Bref, il a une personnalité bien nette, bien accusée. Tel une création littéraire, il vit dans l'esprit des masses... Et j'avoue que son succès qui a beaucoup contribué à celui de notre maison, me remplit d'une paternelle fierté! »

"This brave Bibendum has since been reproduced in many different postures and circumstances. We have granted him the gift of speech. In short, he has a very clear personality, well defined. Like a literary creation, he lives in the spirit of the masses ... And I admit that his success, which has contributed much to that of our company, fills me with paternal pride!"



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Doctoral dissertation submitted by Pau Medrano-Bigas Supervisor: Dr. Anna Calvera Sagué Tutor: Dr. Carles Ameller Ferretjans

Doctoral Programme: Advanced Studies in Artistic Production Line of Research: Research into Image and Design

Biennium 1990-1992

Departament of Image and Design Sant Jordi Faculty of Fine Arts University of Barcelona

Barcelona, 2015

English translation by Joy Ngo, 2018

To my wife, Victoria; to our daughters, Paula and Irene; to my parents, Jesús and Paulina.

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Barcelona, November 2018.

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## **AUTHOR'S PREFACE (2018)**

The present edition of this Thesis dissertation in the translated English version (2018) has been made possible thanks to the unconditional support of the prominent philanthropist Bruce T. Halle, successful businessman and founder and owner of Discount Tire Co., the largest independent tire dealer in North America. Mr. Halle also stands out as an art collector, highlighting The Collection of Discount Tire which comprises the most important collection of Art Nouveau lithographic posters dedicated to tire advertising. Most of these impressive posters hang on the walls of the Discount Tire headquarters in Scottsdale, Arizona. Unfortunately, Mr. Halle passed away earlier this year. I truly regret not having been able to present this project to him in person which was made possible by his generosity.

The translation process has been directly established and coordinated from Scottsdale by Susan Driver, Art Historian and curator of the Collection of Discount Tire and author of the book *Posters from the Collection of Discount Tire* (2007). It has been a pleasure to work with her, and her vast knowledge on the subject, her professionalism and enthusiasm have allowed the entire project to flow smoothly from its inception to its realization. Thank you, Susan!

Of course, I must highlight the professional work and enthusiasm invested in the project by the translator Joy Ngo, who resides between Barcelona and the United States, academic researcher and teacher of nutrition and dietetics and author of various scientific publications in the field of public health nutrition. Her comments and contributions during the translation and adaptation process has helped to enhance the comprehension of the original text. *Moltes gràcies Joy!* 

## **FOREWORD**

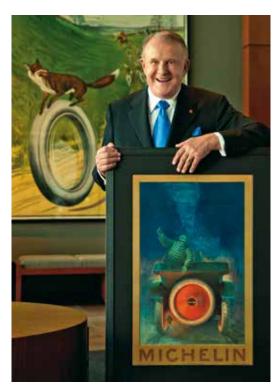
By Susan Driver. Curator, The Collection of Discount Tire.

I first had the pleasure of meeting Pau in 2007 when he contacted me while researching his thesis on American tire companies. What became was not only a friendship, but also a wealth of knowledge from a wonderful colleague. Pau's interest in Michelin advertising became a passion for discovery. His thesis quickly ensued the forgotten stories of American Tire companies, including the story of a big company and its employees living in the little town of Milltown, New Jersey. What also developed was a need to share these important stories with the American people. Pau entrusted my help with making his dream

of translating his thesis to English a reality. Our hope is that in translating Pau's work, the American people can rediscover part of their story.

The translation of Pau's thesis also comes at a relevant time as Bibendum (aka the Michelin Man), the company's famous mascot, turns 120 years of age this year! Talk about brand recognition! One, if not the most successful trademarks of all time, Bibendum is the quintessential representation of effective advertising. With a doctorate in graphic design, Pau understands the importance of a recognizable character to the consumer masses, as did the Michelin brothers. You can see Pau's attention to detail in the design of his thesis.

When Pau asked me to write his foreword, I was flattered and honored. He said, "you're my angel," but in actuality the angel is Mr. Bruce T. Halle, founder of Discount Tire. It is because of his generosity that we are able to read Pau's translated thesis in English. A leading retailer in the tire industry, Halle's involvement in the business encouraged his passion for collecting vintage lithographs advertising tires, amassing one of the larg-



The late Bruce T. Halle (1930-2018) pictured in the Discount Tire Headquarters surrounded by his beloved poster collection. Photo by Paul Markow.

est collections in the world. His passion for art expanded even further when he and his wife, Diane, began collecting contemporary artwork from Latin America. An avid supporter of giving back to the community in which he lived, Halle was also a strong proponent of education. When I proposed Pau's work to Mr. Halle he was amazed at the level of research Pau had completed. As we flipped through all four volumes we spoke about the history of not only the United States tire industry, but the Collection of Discount Tire and earmarked the posters we would like to acquire. Mr. Halle then stopped, looked at me, and asked, "Susan, why is this important to you?"

While my passion originally stemmed from art itself, my appreciation for the industry evolved while documenting the posters of Discount Tire. When I began researching the vibrant posters of iconic characters and beautiful women who provoked motorists to purchase products, I discovered the rapidly changing lifestyle that ensued with the advent of the automobile. Modern technical advances demanded

the dissemination of information to the masses, challenging artists to creatively depict tires as objects of desire rather than necessary accessories. This rapid industrialization along with the innovative printing process of color lithography fueled the marketing of modern commodities. The advertisements illustrate the important relationship between art and commerce, simultaneously charting the evolution of the rubber and advertising industries from their inception. I quickly discovered not only an art form, but also the importance of its impact on culture, commerce, and technology.

Pau's thesis solidifies all of these imperative characteristics in an astonishing compilation. Additionally, his specific focus on Michelin examines the corporate history of a company that we work closely with. Discount Tire is also the exclusive distributor of the Fisk brand, which Pau dedicates an entire chapter. Furthermore, Pau's investigation of advertising produced by less well-known American companies introduces their cultural impact on the industry. It is truly amazing that so many advertisements exist for the rudimentary rubber circle known as a tire.

I want to personally thank Pau for his research, academic professionalism, and passion for graphic design. Congratulations on your success and for expanding the knowledge of all those interested in the field. Last, but not least, this project would not have been possible without Joy Ngo's excellent translation skills. She acquired a monumental task and completed it seamlessly. Thank you for joining in our campaign to elevate the poster to fine art and re-discover a part of history for the American public.

Susan Driver

Scottsdale, Arizona, November 2018.

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Susan Driver is Curator of the Collection of Discount Tire. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Art History from the University of Arizona and is author of *Posters from the Collection of Discount Tire* (2007). Her areas of interest include early twentieth century design and museum studies. With more than a decade of experience in collection management, Susan also serves as Registrar of the Diane and Bruce Halle Collection of Contemporary Latin American Art.

#### **HOW SHOULD THIS THESIS BE READ?**

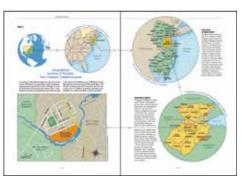
The investigative work of this Thesis is divided into four volumes that comprise a total of 31 chapters. All the chapters follow the same structure, they present a specific theme that is developed throughout four sections:

- **1. GENERAL TEXT,** where the facts resulting from the investigation are collected.
- **2. NOTES TO THE TEXT,** with references and comments and additional information.
- **3. BIBLIOGRAPHY,** where the sources consulted in that specific chapter are listed.
- **4. ICONOGRAPHIC DISCOURSE,** where a selection of graphic elements is shown addressing information (tables, graphs, diagrams, illustrations and photographs) that complements and expands the contents expressed in the general text. The images are accompanied by comments and are duly identified.

### The importance of double-page conceptual units.

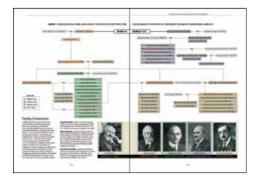
This doctoral thesis is a graphic design project in and of itself and I have employed my own resources for the editorial layout. The textual and visual contents are exposed in double-page conceptual units. As such—especially if it is to be printed and bound—the order must be kept so that even (left) and odd (right) page numbering provides the correct flow of reading. Examples of illustrated double pages which are conceived as thematic units are presented below.













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I am extremely grateful to Éric Panthou, historian and librarian—who was responsible for the Michelin collections of the Bibliothèque du Patrimoine de Clermont Communauté in Clermont-Ferrand, France between 2003 and 2013—, for sharing his knowledge about the social history of Michelin and enriching research by providing essential documentary sources. I am also indebted to my friend Steve Antin from Irwin, Pennsylvania for his invaluable availability for consultations and continued assistance throughout the entire project, and to Craig Harmon director of the Lincoln Highway National Museum and Archives, colleague and research expert who is well-versed in how the Library of Congress functions, for his extreme kindness and contribution in obtaining elusive documents.

Susan Driver deserves a special mention, who is the curator in charge of The Collection of Discount Tire, the world-renowned thematic collection of tire advertising posters assembled by the magnate Bruce T. Halle, based in Scottsdale, Arizona. She has generously shared her knowledge and facilitated the reproduction of several posters that have enriched my research.

I am grateful to family descendants of the designers, illustrators, graphic artists; and admen/adwomen that worked or were connected in one way or another with Michelin and other companies in the tire sector, as well as their founders, managers and workers. They have contributed valuable testimonies and shared their family files: Catherine Leroy-Jay Fredet/family of Jules Hauvette-Michelin • Marie-Hélène Kerneur/family of Henri Bordier (Michelin employee in Milltown) • Courtney Fisk/family of the founders of Fisk Rubber • Penny Braender O'Hara/founding family of Braender Tires • Elizabeth Hood Weekes Pigford/family of Frederic Hood, co-founder of Hood Rubber Company • Marc Faye/family of illustrator Marius Rossillon "O'Galop" • Michel Cousyn/family of illustrator Édouard Louis Cousyn • Georgie Morris Garbisch/family of designer and illustrator Arthur Norman Edrop • Joyce and Edward Williams/family of illustrator Gluyas Williams • Timothy Helck/family of illustrator Peter Helck • Nancy Fink Giacci/family of illustrator Denman Fink • Daniel Aument/family of illustrator Raymond Perry.

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