

Allison UK's Pierluigi Marinelli marks the launch of Iceberg



Mido, the giant optical extravaganza, was coming down with colour and frame detailing, from stars and stripes to Swarovski crystal. *Optician* is dazzled in Part 1 of its exhibition coverage

# Stars and strass

While Milanese taxi drivers may have been thin on the ground in the vicinity of the Milan fairgrounds, the stands of Mido were awash with new eyewear of all colours, no combination seemingly too much in this day and age.

Violets and pinks, greens, from acid to moss, and blues of all hues were in ample evidence, so that even the die-hard rimless stockist must have been given cause to reconsider. Combination metal and acetates were plentiful, titanium was multi-faceted, there was the occasional supra, mostly in acetate, and the rimless frame was on the wane.

A particular stand out frame on the Robert La Roche stand was a small, wrapped acetate aviator in a striking option of black with green, yellow and cream behind. Designer Alexandra Giselbrecht described base-6 and base-8 and crystal acetate in strong colours as big news among the 30 new styles.

Engraved stars infilled with white epoxy resin were a feature in the large sunglasses, as well as animal patterns of snake and crocodile engraved in metal. The films of

Federico Fellini were an influence, with oversized visors and dark lenses.

'Red is quite strong, as well as black, which comes in patterns to make it more sophisticated and not too simple,' said Giselbrecht.

There was a focus on larger frame styles, especially with the base-6 models that could also take progressive lenses. These were easier to glaze than base-8 and gave a dynamic, but not too sporty look, following the anatomical curve of the head.

Faceting on acetate and titanium frames was popular, the latter milled by CNC machines, with each facet a single step in production. This extra thickness gave the added benefit of disguising the thickness of the lens.

Talking of animals in eyewear, some of the acetates in the Buamvision Original Penguin line had small penguin motifs. Penguin sunglasses had a 'Cazal-type thing' going on, according to Baumvision Europe's Anthony Reid, especially one large shape in white with gold. Other developments were wood on an aluminium base, mixed materials and strong colours including Bordeaux.

Kata, meanwhile, gained inspiration from architecture and a hotel in Barcelona

in particular. The windows angled from the wall were translated into a titanium frame with acetate inserts in flash colours of orange, pink and black for women.

The Kawai models, however, combined plastic and wood, for the younger trendy market. As well as inlaid wood, there was wood-effect acetate and patterns from bubbles to small arrows, whether inside or outside. 'We don't go completely crazy with Kawai, you can't freak out, but the Judith Leiber line is totally different with big shiny styles for people who want to be noticed,' said Kata Europe's Rahel Schena.

The Judith Leiber collection was influenced by modern American and Native American art in styles that teamed polished and unpolished Swarovski crystal, targeting the 40-50 year-old market. Designs included moccasin-style detailing and a play of colours.

For the consumer who tires of one temple design, or wants a set of temples to go alongside their outfits, a new concept from Pro Design could be the solution. The line, designed with American-born Danish jeweller Gail Spence, features a unique hinge that allows for interchangeable temples and is described by the company as 'maybe the most simplified hinge ever



Strass effect from Beausoleil



The many colours of Robert la Roche (above, left and below)



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Judith Leiber, influenced by American art

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Clockwise from top right: The Iceberg look; Raised wooden detailing from Gold & Wood; Drilled holes from Beausoleil on bridge and end tips; Luxottica's Dolce & Gabbana in optical



developed for an optical frame'.

Marie-Louise Hallen Christiansen, Pro Design's marketing and PR coordinator, explained that it had taken six years to perfect the concept, with the joint tested 3,000 times. Buyers have a choice of six front styles, receive one pair of extra temples and can buy additional styles from the practice, all featured on a leaflet. Practitioners on ordering 10 pieces receive a display stand of the 28 frames.

'We're hoping that women will want to have one for each outfit, for example a different style for the evening.'

The company worked with Gail Spence more than 20 years ago on the colourful classic 'No One' reading glass frame. 'We like to work with technical solutions. The temple material TR90 is easier to work with than acetate and there is no need for the wire cord all the way along.'

The sides were inspired by elements like water, oxygen, fire and smoke, with ultra-light transparent shades to deep dark solid colours. Some have sandblasted patterns, others have dots like pearls or jewels. The titanium fronts come in black, brown, gold, grey, purple and red, giving a classic contrast to the temples.

The theme of Mido for Face à Face was bigger and heavier acetates, with one model, Eden, featuring a metal bar 'preciously inlaid in the acetate front to illuminate the eyes'. Colour options range from a black frame with a shiny ruthenium metal bar to a tatami blue frame and Bordeaux metal bar.

UK sales manager David Bagnall said that white acetate was doing well, especially with the sun coming out. Older customers were starting to wear the frames in louder colours.

Another development for Mido was model Nueva with a patented hinge in metal that rolls around a cylindrical axis. It combines acetate fronts, for example Aquamarine/white strawberry-pink with pearl grey metal sides.

Also new was model Elium, with a pressed metal side in an aerodynamic shape. Lively colours are hidden under the side and there is also a hidden hinge.

Darker colours for men were evident on the Cult stand, with the Alek Paul collection.



Giuliana Grasso of Cult explained that there were also very visible colours, for example marble effect purples in the Mazzuchelli acetate. There were several new designs with metal fronts and acetate sides, which she described as slightly wrapped.

### COLOUR EXCLUSIVE

Beausoleil had 18 exclusive new colours and a concentration on textures. One style O/332 came in prune, purple and cappuccino, another in chocolate with orange inside. The company's marketing and communications executive Jerome Losi highlighted a model with strass, where the stones were hand-set at different angles in the cut-out, making each model unique.

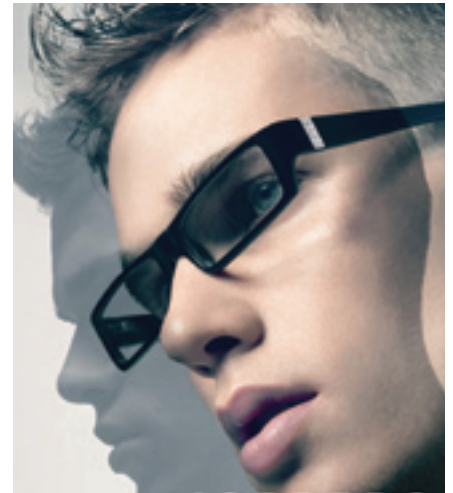
There were honeycomb and striped effects and one women's model had a sculptured front with the raised acetate carried along the side. Other changes in texture were small holes drilled into the end pieces and the bridge in model S216, while S215 was a large, but light acetate with polarised lenses and a wraparound shape. 'Acetate is the first love of Freddie Beausoleil and all his frames have details,' said Losi.

Titanium and acetate were combined and the very latest offering was a small collection of titanium supras in circular, square and rectangular shapes with peaked fronts and vertical temples, which Losi described as 'the cherry on the cake'.

Beausoleil will have a presence at this month's Cannes film festival in a partnership with CanalPlus, with VIPs, actors and producers exposed to the eyewear.

Also highlighting Cannes was De Rigo, a sponsor of the UK Film Centre, with a focus on Givenchy sunglasses. As well as inviting celebrities to discuss the Givenchy brand, two winners of a competition in *Grazia* will attend.

'We have a fashion/celebrity area on a sun terrace where we will have a display



of sunglasses and a celebrity salon,' said Mark Hobson, sales and marketing director of De Rigo UK. He highlighted a recent bout of strong publicity for Givenchy, when Kate Moss was snapped wearing a sunglass style, generating 'huge interest from key accounts'.

The Givenchy sunglass styling was for large, bold plastics, some with cut-out eyepieces and diamanté, also a feature on ophthalmics. 'There's been a big shift in the brand. It was for the mature lady, but it now has a younger focus with contemporary styling.'

The Police line has seen a major change too, with lots of plastics in colours from green to violet. 'Police had gone more traditional but it's now got a fashion edge and is much more contemporary and unisex,' he added.

Dual colours, purples and lilacs along with side cut outs and milled titanium were a focus of Bevel. The aptly named Midwest representative of Incite International, Darrell Sell, highlighted dual-coloured acetate fronts teamed with beta titanium temples. There were 14 new styles in the Street Slang collection, for example models Foggedaboutit and Yadayadayada.

'Milled titanium is by far our market piece, the bulk of our business,' said Sell, highlighting the one-piece titanium front. Going slightly against the trend of the show, the Bevel stand offered lots of smaller frames, designed for the female ▶

face and people with high prescriptions, also suitable for children. 'We combine fun colours – browns with pink and green – in any palette imaginable. A lot of the colours are more for women as they're avant-garde and bright,' said Sell.

New for Mido was the company's first half eye, 2cool4school, also targeted at women in a multitude of colours. Company president Richard Mewha said he had been influenced by the Gail Spence half eye that 'still looked cool'. 'People sell not so interesting readers. There's a market for something different and people are willing to pay.'

There were larger styles on the Gold and Wood stand, particularly in sunglasses, even for men. New styles, Calito for women and Neptune for men teamed wooden overlapping sides and rich acetate fronts. 'Gold & Wood as a brand is now well known and it's very important to have sunglasses, explained Jules Clarke, sales director of Casco. 'It goes with the luxury brand image.'

The frames were much trendier, he said, with a strip of wood inserted into a channel in the buffalo horn, another with a raised strip of wood along the middle of a wooden side which comes in green with a darker green stripe.

'The taste of the luxury buyer is changing,' he said, with a wider target group, not just the jewellery market.

The trend for brighter colours in luxury accessories was reflected in the women's eyewear of Baya. 'While the luxury market moves, consumers don't necessarily want gold and silver, they want a contemporary look to make a statement.'

Although there is a decline in rimless frames, Gold & Wood has a three-piece rimless in base-8 with a new lens notching system for frames and sunglasses. 'It doesn't



Above: The Bevel half-eye 2cool4school;  
left: Patented hinge in Face à Face's Nueva

feel like a rimless. It's really comfortable and much sturdier,' said Clarke.

The luxury market may be changing, but there is room for a £10,000 frame in solid platinum, with buffalo horn temples and 0.4 carat diamonds, a first for Gold & Wood.

With luxury in mind, Ic! Berlin celebrated one year of its onono horn line and at the same time introduced the 'dortbrillen' collection. This has metal fronts with horn-like acetate sides in colours from pearl to black. Coco Hermson of the Ic! press department explained that the line was named after villages in the North of Germany and was a credit to onono.

Other developments on the World Cup-themed stand with real turf and goalposts were new, more solid end tips and improved nose pads.

From Germany to World Cup rival England, sunglasses were an important addition to William Morris London, on a stand featuring a complete rebrand with a focus on London landmarks and bright coloured patterns.

## Bollé comes unhinged with Beta

Bollé presented its new optical collection, a small line of five Phase 1 frames, which was described as a natural progression from its sunglasses. As managing director of Bushnell Performance Optics UK Andrew Gross said: 'You can't rely on the weather for sunglasses in the UK and opticians recognise Bollé's quality. We only makes eyewear and the frames have been well received by opticians who have seen them. The main thing for practitioners is that they can make a lot of money from them, especially if they deal with corporate clients.'

The frames are made in Japan and Italy and while they have flex hinges and silicone nose pads they aren't over-the-top sporty. 'We didn't want anything too aggressive or too sporty. We wanted proper ophthalmics,' added Gross.

Sunglass model Tease for the women's market, while suited to sports was a larger fashion

shape. Perhaps the most high-tech sunglass, however, was Beta (below), a flexible model that unites beta titanium, 'Megol' rubber and grilamid in a one-piece design that is hingeless and screwless. Joe Messener, CEO of Bushnell, explained that the ultra-flexible sports model was created from nine different moulds and was suited to medium-sized men and women for fit. Beta comes with polarised lenses and thanks to the rubber on the inner side gives comfort benefits. 'We've bent the titanium to shape to give a spring feel,' said Messener, adding that the design had taken 18 months to develop.



'It's a completely new image inspired by us exhibiting at European fairs and exporting the brand. We're trading on being English and proud of it,' said Robert Morris. 'We've never done sunglasses before and it's a natural extension. We've had a really good reaction to them and it's a definite change for us.'

As well as chunky semi-wrapped acetate sunglasses, there were 12 new acetate frames and six in metal. 'We're not going down the safe avenue, they're really wearable and we've stepped it up in terms of quality, with Mazzuchelli acetate and German hinges.'

There was a purely sunglass launch on the Allison stand with the Frankie Morello line, a niche brand in Italy. However, it was Allison's first Iceberg collection that attracted more attention.

'It's beautiful with great shapes and superb quality, and is perfect for the UK market,' said Pierluigi Marinelli, managing director of Allison UK. 'People go mad for Iceberg. It's a nice collection of plastics' he said, describing one supra model as 'the best on the market'.

Iceberg frames are for the 18-35 year-old sector, with discreet logos and colours combining light and dark green, purple with blue on the inside and an RRP from £84 to £152, the latter for a model with Swarovski crystal.

Highlighting attention to the temples, Lindberg introduced titanium plate sides with cut detailing and a wide range of colours in polished and matt surfaces. The Lindberg 3000 X is a line with endless options of titanium wire and plate combined with acetate for 'an endless number of expressions, from the pure and simple to the colourful and challenging'. Birgitte Stentoft described the line as a combination of Rim and Spirit, allowing consumers to mix and match in a system that offered comfort and flexibility with 39 colour options.

Lindberg also unveiled several new frame display systems, including an eye-catching rusted iron stand with an elm and perspex cover, one way to give contrast with a luxury style. Another larger stand allowed for the temple designs to be showed to best effect.

On the Prestige Optique International ►



stand, John Tomic of Sigma was with Karavan. The French line is teeming with bright colours of reds, pink, pearlised blue and even yellow, the latter described as a showpiece. 'This is one of the most extensive collections colour wise in the UK. Anybody with an ounce of style would wear them,' he said.

Details included a glittery effect in the acetate or a raised line of acetate along the side or the front. Striped acetate was also a feature, with one model striped on one outer side and the inner of another, giving an optical illusion effect when not worn. There were also cut metal designs with precise soldering at the front joint.

'The designs are not just for people who want to make a statement. You can spot that there is design in the frames from a distance.'

Tomic suggested that with an extensive children's line, featuring a quirky eyeball end-tip detail, opticians could get extra business by stocking both lines and appealing to all ages.



Above and bottom right: Flower detailing from Prada and an Original Persol; Above right: Robert Morris on the rebranded William Morris London stand

## ORIGINAL ICONS

New on the Luxottica stand was the official launch of Dolce & Gabbana and D&G optical collections. While the sunglass trend was for larger and larger sunglasses, this wasn't so with frames, which played with thickness, explained Luxottica's Greta Bertuzzo.

'It's nice to see more and more fashion



## A taste of AVD Augusto Valentini Design

Augusto Valentini unveiled his latest frame designs in his collection of the same name, created by Look – the concept factory and available in the UK through Capitol Optical.

'My philosophy is to create a collection for people fed up with popular product, people who have their own critical capability to choose product on the basis of the quality and originality of design,' he said. 'Price isn't important, what's important is originality, possibly something they haven't seen before, a special product and something unusual and technically advanced.'

Many of his styles, in a 35-strong ADV Augusto Valentini Design collection in 4-5 colour options, mix stainless steel and injected grilamid, for light and flexible frames. 'I don't follow trends especially, or you would end up with mass product. I work around square and shallow shapes, more or less, not oval or round which I did 10 years ago at the request of the market.'

Because he wears frames he sees himself as the first customer of his collection. 'I would never wear a brand and I don't propose that my customers do. I like the colours and styles my customers like,' said Valentini, who started designing 25 years ago, concentrating on frames. 'The inspiration and ideas come from contact with the world, culture, people and shops,' he added, having recently attended a furniture design fair in Milan for inspiration.

One of the most striking things about Augusto Valentini frames is their use of texture – ridges on colourful grilamid on the inner sides and the temples, sometimes up to

three different textures on one frame. Some are seen when the frames are back lit, for example small stripes through the side. Another lightweight design looks as if he has taken a sunglass front and made two holes for the optical lenses, others are open at the temples to give an effect of lightness.

Colours are strong, from violet to acid lemon and green to red bordeaux. 'I research colours that give you emotion and sensation, without following trends of the moment. If everyone likes red, we will put red in, but we are not restricted by trends.'

Another interesting design is a pearlised white frame with tortoiseshell front, 'for a businessman who wants to be original without wearing something that would be seen on holiday'.

Valentini added that small details on frames attracted the attention of consumers and went deeper into their emotions than the 'noisy' or excessive. An example was a classical looking acetate style where the temple and the front are joined by small screws on either side of the lens. 'It allows me to make a combination of colours to attract attention. It is a new idea and the customer notices this and is attracted by the small particulars.'



in the ophthalmics, for example Prada has Swarovski crystal flower motifs and pearl and mother of pearl effects,' she added.

Coloured crystal was also to the fore with Bvlgari. Other trends were for vibrant shades – blue, yellow and pink – even for men, particularly in Italy.

'In my opinion there are an increasing number of unisex styles, which can be worn by men in black and women in purple, for example.'

The Prada Ligna Rossa sunglasses would be worn by the Prada America's Cup crew and the sports styles with rubber inserts would feature heavily in point of sale materials.

With so many new frame and sunglass designs on display, it was heartening to hear of styles that are still selling 40 years after their creation. The classic Italian sunglass brand Persol has introduced an Originals collection of style icons including the folding model PO 2621 S, the four-lens model PO 2656 S and PO 649 S, as worn by actor Marcello Mastroianni in the 1961 film *Divorce Italian Style*.

A celebration of Persol at the Triennale di Milano, with an exhibition named Incognito, celebrated the legend and design of a brand that has celebrity associations from Greta Garbo to Steve McQueen (coincidentally, a pair of his blue-tinted foldaway Persols will be auctioned in November at Bonhams and Butterfields in Los Angeles as part of a sale of his personal effects). The Incognito exhibition is also planned for the UK next year.

Bertuzzo said of Originals, 'The fashion trend in general is going toward vintage and the styles from 40 years ago fit very well.'

She added that Persol was a brand that people showed great loyalty to and that there were also new designs taking in more feminine, rounder styles and softer colours. 'There are so many sizes in Persol it allows you to find one that fits you.'