



# The clothes show

**'M**aterial world' could have easily been adopted as the theme tune to this year's Silmo show, as the new eyewear collections from both major brands and boutique designers drew heavily on the world of textiles. Lace, tartan, quilting and Far Eastern silks all made an appearance – designers either directly incorporated fabrics into clear acetate frames or mimicked them through patterns and etchings. And if it wasn't clothing that was providing the inspiration, it was designer handbags – big-name brands were integrating buckles from their most popular models into both their optical and sunglass collections.

Safilo, Luxottica, De Rigo, Marcolin and Marchon once again dominated the main hall, giving pride of place to premier luxury brands such as Dior, Chanel, Givenchy, Tom Ford and Fendi.

At the Safilo stand oversized sunglasses were the cornerstone of several high-end collections, including Boucheron, Bottega Veneta and Valentino. Dior in particular unveiled a range of dramatically large women's sunglasses – its Dior Escrime and Diorito styles among the most striking. Both of these models, along with the limited edition Dior Western, feature a one-piece shield front. And Gucci marked 85 years in the fashion business with the release of the new women's eyewear collection. The Britt sunglass frames – with

**Shannon McKenzie and Rob Moss report on the latest frame collections and trends on display at the Silmo exhibition in Paris**



Dior Escrime by Safilo

the crystal-studded Gucci signature on the sides – are unmistakably 1970s, while the acetate frames, though conservative in shape, are shot through with flashes of colours.

This year Luxottica presented its first Burberry collection. There are 23 models in the new frame range which mirrors the clothing. The colours – trench (beige), oxblood and black – are those of the famous Burberry check, while the metallic D-ring buckles at the temples are also found on the popular Burberry trenchcoat. Several models have etchings to give their chunky sides a quilted effect – again inspired by the coat – while the insides of others have different shades of the check.

At Marchon, metal buckles could again be found, this time in the Fendi B sunglass line. Inspired by the

much-covered Fendi B buckle belt and handbag, the FS411 aviator model was a highlight, with a detailed buckle loop at the temple. Also on display was a limited edition of the FS411, its buckle embellished with antique gold and rhinestones. Across from Fendi, Calvin Klein presented its new range. For women, the eyewear was distinctly feminine, with soft hues and crystal studded sides giving a 1940s Hollywood feel. For men, designers combined rich natural shades – tortoise, olive and dark caramel – with polished metals to achieve a sleek, understated look.

A Ferrari and a swimming pool were two of the most impressive props in the main hall and both were found at the Marcolin stand. However, all eyes were again on the Tom Ford collection. Launched at Silmo last year, Marcolin has invested a great deal



of time and effort into expanding this particular range, signalling it has great hopes for the future of this brand. The collection focuses on classically inspired angular shapes as well as exaggerated aviator styles with slightly unusual lines (See page 24 for more on Tom Ford).

Branding moved up a step within the Givenchy collection by De Rigo where the women's sunglass collection revolved around the 4G logo. The logo appeared in patterned acetate sides, or was fashioned from studded rhinestones set in gold – adding a touch of glamour to the series.

Behind bamboo screens, Kenzo was promoting its new frames. This year, the L'AmY Group brand unveiled a new men's line which was strong yet conservative, leaving the detailing for the extended women's range. Flowers featured heavily on patterned sides and temples of acetate frames. Interestingly, the brand has chosen to scale down its sunglass collection.

New technologies were being showcased by Viva with the launch of the Pure range. The New Jersey-based firm has developed a collection of totally rimless frames that do not require drilling or notching. The patented I System uses Silvermist Cable, an almost invisible wire, to attach the lenses to the bridge and temple. The cable is made from stainless steel and plated with white platinum so it 'disappears' on the wearer's face. The collection consists of four women's, three men's and five unisex models and come in a wide range of colours.

Amid the high profile luxury brands in the main hall, another company was working hard to reclaim some of its former glory. Polaroid has launched a vast range

of sunglasses with its trademark polarised lens, marking the beginning of a major new campaign. According to UK manager Jacques Basson, after 'imploding', the brand is seeking to 'start again' and reach a new generation of consumers. 'We are well known among the older generations, and the perception sometimes is that Polaroid is an old-fashion brand. It is not – and that is the message that we are trying to get across to the younger generation,' Basson said. 'We want to let them know that if they want a pair of functional sunglasses, Polaroid is the best choice. And we are not saying they should replace their Dior or Gucci frames, we are saying they should buy a second pair of glasses which can be used, for example, while driving. We are promoting our sunglasses as functional fashion.'

## CLOTHING

The expansion of clothing lines into eyewear is a well established tradition, but this year several companies reversed that trend. Kirk Originals used the show to launch its first menswear line. Titled Animal, this includes suits, shirts and ties and draws heavily on the styles of Victorian dandys. 'There is an element in our design that pays homage to the fop, to the gloved dandy that did not really take himself too seriously,' said Jason



From left: Gucci GG1557 and GG2922 by Safilo; Puma Mystify by Charmant, the interchangeable For ProDesign range; Lindberg F1011; Calvin Klein 460 and 461 by Marchon

Kirk. The move into clothing was simply 'a natural progression'.

Another brand making the move into clothing is Parasite. The French company – renowned for its sci-fi style frames – is set to launch a new clothing collection under the Peril Jaune (Yellow Peril) label, followed by a second collection under its own brand name. Parasite also unveiled new eyewear designs, including a second frame size in its range. The new designs complement its unique 'active holding system' and introduce even more flexibility into the frames. The new designs include brushed steel frames, two-tone metallics, and engraved temples. Also on display was Parasite's vintage-inspired Gaspard Yurkievich collection. This includes acetates and brushed metallics, and in an unconventional move, lenses decorated with patterns and studded with jewels.

## GOthic

Gothic styling appeared in numerous collections. The Robert La Roche Gothic line comprised sunglasses and striking acetate frames in dark colours, decorated with detailed crosses and chunky gothic fleur-de-lys in embossed sterling silver. The Austrian company described the edgy styles as 'combining mysticism and modernism'.

The Optical Shop of Aspen presented an impressive line from luxury rock'n'roll jewellery brand Chrome Hearts. Robert Price, who handles sales in the UK, Ireland and Scandinavia, described it as rock'n'roll Cartier. Founded by Richard Stark in 1988, the US silver jewellery brand has become a celebrity favourite – Price recently sold 14 sunglasses to George Michael. The pieces

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Above: Bruuns Bazaar from WeNever Sleep; Police S8 1035 X57Y by De Rigo



ooze quality: one has leather temples with fine stitching, another features pony skin.

There was a 1980s revival at De Rigo, where Police was celebrating 20 years in the business by returning to the decade it all started. Mirrored lenses, hallmarks of the period, were given a modern gothic twist with the restyled logo – a gothic script P – prominently adorning the temples of the new models. The metallic gothic P was either worked into the acetate sides or cleverly incorporated into the hinges.

**BEST OF THE BRITS**

The number of British exhibitors was slightly down on last year, from 32 to 28, but their presence did not go unnoticed. Blue Gem Eyewear launched a men's frame collection under its house brand Benson + Ashley. Twelve styles have been released and the classic shapes have been developed to appeal specifically to men between 35 and 50 years old. According to Blue Gem sales executive Steve Evans the new lines have been very well received. 'We have been working on the range for 18 months, and we launched a small selection of frames earlier this year at Mido. To date, people have been very complimentary about the styles,' he said.

Continental Eyewear was again pushing its X-eyes range, unveiling another 25 models. The new lines put the total number of models within the range at close to 100. According to UK area sales manager Steve McGowan, the most recent stage in the evolution of the brand has produced some striking styles. 'The colours are becoming bolder, the shapes are much stronger and we are also experimenting more with open sides,' he said.

Peter Booth of Booth & Bruce said the best way to keep abreast of eye-fashion goings on is to watch the students. 'Some of them are wearing secondhand Deirdre Barlow glasses,' he said, noting that the varifocal market was driving the trend for larger frames. Temples of one B&B piece include fabric encapsulated in the acetate to provide texture and detail to the sides.

Retro with a modern twist could be seen to full effect in Inspects' new Vision by Conran collection. As ever, Inspects provides the full package – Conran frames come in a hardback book-like case. More details will appear in a future edition of *Optician* when the line is officially launched.

William Morris Eyewear's stand was bustling with interest throughout the show. 'We've done some terrific business,' said Robert Morris. 'Our branding is working well and customers have been receptive to our new styles – particularly the London range.'

Shanghai Tang – the first Chinese luxury brand – chose Silmo to announce its arrival in fashion eyewear. If its first collection is anything to judge by, its partnership with British distributor Mondottica is likely to be very successful. Established



Below left: Police S8099 K56B by De Rigo; left: the award-nominated Koali Trumpet Creeper range from Caseco; below: new rimless technology was unveiled by Viva International Group with its Pure Eyewear range



in 1994, the Shanghai Tang clothing line has a reputation for opulence – silks and velvets are a staple – and the new eyewear range adopts and reinforces this image. The eyewear, from Mondottica, features the same colours and Chinese motifs as the clothing, and many of the pieces actually incorporate strips of the designer fabric.

Caseco had a very successful Silmo, with three award nominations – Gold & Wood for the new Orion sunglass model, and Koali for its new Trumpet Creeper series and its striking point of sale displays. The Orion

sunglasses were one of many new styles introduced by Gold & Wood. Handcrafted from aluminium and wood, they feature interesting use of detailing such as new marquetry temples and circles of contrasting woods. Henry Jullien introduced a new rimless model for men – Code – with tapered stainless steel temples.

In the main hall Brulimar managing director Howard Librae predicted that Bench would be the group's biggest brand by far. As with the line's clothes, the eyewear features strong branding where possible in a predominantly metal range.

British sunglass giant Fabris Lane once again appeared on a large stand in the main hall. The company launches sunglasses and opticals for Jigsaw next spring.

Back in the village, the UK's Misiyu enjoyed attention at both its Urband and Markus T stands. Made in Japan, Urband frames feature an S-Clip screwless and flexible hinge made of surgical stainless



**fusion**

A fusion of colour and innovative frame design defines this distinctive and elegant collection. With visible influences from cultural sources such as modern architecture and fine arts, the range offers an individual style with a contemporary twist.

inspired

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steel. A multifunctional case doubles up as a mobile phone holder. Since launching just one year ago, Misiyu managing director Sid Firoozkoowi has assembled a group of strong brands including the US west coast's Sama Eyewear, which is itself a hotbed of eyewear design.

Sama chief executive Sheila Vance has established herself as the first port of call for many Hollywood film costume departments. This year alone has seen Sama featured in *The Da Vinci Code*, *Miami Vice* and *Mission Impossible III*.

Details abound in Sama's Loree Rodkin and Badgley Mischka collections whether pearl inserts in the temples, feathers encapsulated in the acetate or lace-patterned titanium with stones.

Not British but featuring some British talent, WeNeverSleep ('because it's bursting with ideas') is the design division of Flo, an optical distributor in Bergen, Norway. Helge Flo and English partner Michelle Rowley have teamed up with Scottish frame designer Andy Sweet (*Optician*, August 20, 2004). Two Norwegian brand licences are on board so far – Bruuns Bazaar and Kari Traa. Rowley said the frames take inspiration from retro but using new manufacturing techniques. 'It's a Scandinavian look but away from the severe angular shapes. Eye sizes are big because that's what people want.'

## SWAP SHOP

Denmark firm Bellinger is going from strength to strength. Founded and owned by husband and wife team, Malene and Claus Bellinger, it has developed an exciting range of eyewear which includes the Kamaeleon collection, which comes with interchangeable temples. The variety of temples available for the range show just how powerful this concept can be.

Alyson Magee's Swap temples continue to create a lot of interest – the current range is limited edition with a new collection due in the spring.

Another Allison, this time the Italian firm, has also seen the potential of interchangeable sides. Canadian company Toulch launched its One concept at Vision Expo West in September, the same weekend that Allison bought it for €7m. Most other interchangeable systems are positioned at the higher end of the market, but Allison's product is attractively inexpensive. It claims that in four months in France, it sold 60,000 pieces across 800 outlets. A plastic screw fixes the hinge mounts and bridge to the lenses. Customers can choose as many colours as they wish from a range of 36. The temples and bridge cover comes on an attractive 'wishbone', which is pulled apart, clicked into position to create the spectacles.

Another Danish company concentrating on interchangeable temples was ProDesign, which launched its new For ProDesign

range. This boasts 'the most simplified hinge ever developed for an optical frame' which allows the sides to be easily 'clicked' on and off. The six titanium fronts can be paired with 28 colourful sides. It also unveiled a new line designed with women in mind. According to ProDesign marketing manager Birgitte Dyreholt, the Iris collection was inspired by 'what women want – flowers, lingerie and champagne'. As such, the temples and sides of the vibrantly-coloured metallic frames feature floral, lace and 'bubble' patterns.

Mykita has taken clever but cool specs to another level with the launch of its Collection No 2. Collection No 1 created enough of a stir with its unique spiralled hinge, but the second instalment has once again demonstrated the company's propensity to innovate. Eighteen months



Top left: Tom Ford, Whitney by Marcolin;  
left: Calvin Klein 827S by Marchon;  
above: Cazal 969

in development, No 2 is an acetate line, the upshot of the sheet metal specialists' desire to make eyewear using more 'voluminous material'. The designers said they never liked the gap that opens up between the temple and front when the temples are folded in. Their solution is the 'snap' hinge, pictures of which are currently unavailable but suffice to say it solves this problem in a baffling but brilliant way. The styles – six opticals and one sunglass in plain opaque colours – are as impressive as the company's technical solutions. Jonathan van Blerk from The AgenC, the UK distributor, said: 'Every one of my 50 customers will love it – it has such a strong look.'

The AgenC also carries Gotti, the Swiss brand formerly named Gotti + Niederer. Designer Sven Gotti showed *Optician* three new ranges including the Z line, which uses temples made of a Japanese epoxy which is strong, flexible and biocompatible, and more commonly used in medicine. One of the titanium frames includes an innovative joint between the top and bottom front sections, negating the need for a closing block.

Robert Marc has long made frames where detail always hides around the

corner. One limited edition frame features snake skin in the hinge area. 'A snake sheds its skin and that's what fashion is all about,' said Marc.

## BIG, BIGGER, BIGGEST

Asked to sum up in four words current eyewear trends, Anthony Reid of Baum Vision Europe, makers of the Paul Frank, Original Penguin and Modern Amusement collections, said: 'Oversized Rx, that's it.' Amazingly, Baum has been producing big eyeshapes for years. Baum now has a UK office in Birmingham, which is carrying all Baum Vision brands as well as Dita Eyewear.

Also advocating larger shapes is Denmark's Lindberg which says it has made its biggest frame ever with the latest Acetanium collection. Model 1011 is one example of how modern renditions of retro styles such as the panto look like they belong on today's face. For a company that has its foundations in minimalist eyewear, it's current collection shows the company hasn't lost its pioneering edge.

AM Eyewear has been going three years in its native Australia but exhibited at Silmo for the first time. Featured in Australian



Fashion Week, AM is designed by Simon Ponnusamy who combines his penchant for vintage frames, youthful style and unabashed ambition to create a directional collection of around 60 sunglasses.

French designers Eye'DC never fail to provide some design treats and this Silmo saw it exhibiting some of the most visionary, wearable styles to date. The latest collection includes acetates created especially for a particular frame shape, such that one colour borders the lens and another colours borders that. The XIT range, which uses tinted NXT for the frame, now features some models

Clockwise from top left: Givenchy SGV2 135 300 by De Rigo; Robert Marc RM571-96; Burberry BE2007 3011, Burberry BE2005 3027 by Luxottica; Givenchy, SGV2 19 300 from De Rigo; right: Shanghai Tang 996W186 by Mondottica

with acetate temple to provide another interesting combination of materials.

At Face à Face, the Nueva design shows that this Parisian company is full of ideas. Eyeshapes are definitely growing with optical models Elvis, Eden and Muses all tending towards the large end of the scale. ▶



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The urban collection unites masculine definition and complimentary colour. The inspired use of sculptured metal and bold use of block colour provide a contemporary style to fit within today's urban lifestyle.

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# Marcolin sings the praises of Tom Ford launch

It is one year since the Tom Ford Eyewear range was unveiled by Marcolin.

Launched in the wake of the company reluctantly parting ways with its premier brand Dolce & Gabbana, much was riding on the performance of the newcomer (*Optician*, News, November 10).

One year on and the brand has managed to establish itself as a favourite among the style-conscious. According to Marcolin managing director Maurizio Marcolin, the launch has been one of the most successful he has ever seen.

'We are very happy with the performance of the Tom Ford range – it is already one of our top brands,' he says.

This was despite a very speedy launch – Tom Ford announced the creation of the brand in April 2005, and the first sunglass models debuted at Silmo only seven months later. The range is now notably bigger with 27 styles included.

'This year we have completed the range. We looked at what was missing and developed a much more comprehensive collection – so there are now more shapes and more colours – but we are still staying within the philosophy of the brand. The



Maurizio Marcolin: on the lookout for brands

designs we are launching are still very iconic and we are not moving away from the original Tom Ford style,' Marcolin says.

Tom Ford Eyewear is not the only brand set to enjoy a major profile boost. Following their popularity in the US, the Kenneth Cole New York and Kenneth Cole Reaction ranges will be launched internationally next year, beginning with Spain, France and the UK. Meanwhile,

the C  b   archives have been raided to give the sporting brand a 70s-inspired makeover.

'Dolce & Gabbana moving did affect us a lot, it was a large portion of our business,' admits Marcolin. 'But as soon as it happened we implemented, immediately, a come-back strategy. That started with the signing of Tom Ford, and then Ferrari. We expanded the Robert Cavalli and the Just Cavalli ranges and we agreed to launch Kenneth Cole internationally, which was one of the strong lines we had. We dedicated a lot of time focusing on and growing every other brand that we have and we are well on track to recoup the loss.'

Marcolin is clearly on the lookout for more brands to add to the company stable, but he gives no clues as to which names are on his wish list. However, he does give some idea as to the credentials he is looking for.

'What we are looking for is a brand with worldwide recognition, a brand that demonstrates excellence in what it has already done and what it is doing,' he says. 'We would be looking for high end and luxury brands to take on. It also has to have potential for expansion, and it must not be an old or obsolete brand.'

The highlight of Alain Mikli's maze of an exhibition stand was the Seduction collection of acetate sunglasses in a myriad of colours. So much Mikli seems to have been dominated by red and black that these candy-coloured shades with terrific shapes served as an important reminder of what Mikli is capable of.

Flair introduced its Couture collection at the show, which features Signity crystals from Swarovski to create a focal point in these otherwise minimalist frames (models 126-128). A pendant is also available to complement the frames.



## SPORTS

More colours were also on the agenda at Maui Jim with its new range of three-piece glazable sunglasses featuring flexible grilamid temples. Using the Evolutions lens, MJ575-MJ578 provide virtual glass quality in a lightweight product.

After winning the licence to manufacture and distribute Puma, Charmant gave the new sportswear collection pride of place. The range comprises of 15 sunglasses, including aviators, shield fronts and wraps. The iconic Puma cat appears on the temples. 'This sports brand is very much targeted at those in their 20s and 30s who have – or aspire to have – a sports life style,' said Louise Brunton, general manager of Charmant UK.

Bushnell has extended the Boll   optical range, adding 20 new models. According to Dawn Warren, Bushnell communications

director the rimless and acetate range has been designed for 'some one who has quite a sporty dress style'. Also on display were new sunglasses and ski goggles with photochromic lenses.

Much fuss was being made of the new shapes and shades being added to the Serengetti drivewear range.

'These sunglasses lift and improve vision, making it a pleasure to drive,' Warren said. 'Our customers appreciate quality and realise the importance of protecting their eyes. The designs themselves are very classic, so they will never become outdated.'



Main picture: Calvin Klein 834 by Marchon; From top: Fendi B Buckle limited edition from Marchon; Try Change by Allison; Zahir by Gotti