



**Simon Jones** takes a final look at the highlights of the Silmo World Optical Fair and finds many producers still riveted by retro

**Y**ou have to visit the Silmo World Optical Fair in Paris to fully appreciate its enormity. *Optician* could devote a whole week's edition to the contents of the halls and it still wouldn't be enough.

The dominant trend at this year's Silmo exhibition was once again retro. The style has been popular for a number of years now, and although there have been some bemoaning the lack of innovation (*Optician* 21.10.11), manufacturers are still being creative, but in different ways.

Swiss manufacturer Gotti is just one example of a firm working at the cutting edge of metal frame design. Its metal fronted Fons sunglasses was nominated for a Silmo d'Or Award, thanks in part no doubt to the innovative 'Spin & Stow' epoxy temples. The temples feature a 360-degree hinge which allows them to virtually fold flat. The shape of the Fons is decidedly masculine, as are the colour schemes of black, white and gold, each with a choice of tinted or half mirror lenses. The men's Lolek titanium frame has a flat, sporty looking minimalist shape, and also features the 'Spin & Stow' temples.

Not wanting to put all its eggs in one basket, Gotti has also released a number of acetate additions. Like its metal efforts, the acetate frames shun the retro to a certain extent, and focus on modern shapes. The rectangular Mica frame is constructed from hand-finished acetate. The new deep blue and green colour schemes have a translucent look and on some parts of the frames have an almost horn feel in the way the colour fades to clear on the layered acetate. The men's Marvin frame has a similar colour scheme, but a much wider silhouette. The layered acetate colouring extends into the women's range with the Anna frame. Swaying slightly more towards the retro look, the rounded shape has a gentle feminine appeal.

### Starch contrast

Theo Eyewear also launched metal frames, but they were a little more left-field in nature. There aren't many ▶



- 1 Fons by Gotti
- 2 Mica by Gotti
- 3 Spin & Stow temples by Gotti
- 4 Marvin by Gotti
- 5 Chips by Theo Eyewear
- 6 Samosa by Theo Eyewear
- 7 Gnocchi by Theo Eyewear
- 8 James 4 by Theo Eyewear
- 9 Tortilla by Theo Eyewear
- 10 Anna by Gotti



eyewear collections which can lay claim to being named after potato meals from around the world, but Theo's new 'Potato Dishes' range is exactly that.

The line comprises five styles – Gnocchi, Rosti, Tortilla, Chips and Samosa. All frames in the collection sport an unusual half-rim design with a single-piece wire which runs across the top of the frames. Chips and Rosti are flat, rectangular shapes, while Tortilla sports a cat's eye design. Gnocchi and Samosa are possibly the most distinctive frames in the collection. Gnocchi's rounded lenses and frame are juxtaposed with the straight wire front, while Samosa's shape gives it a distinct reading glass feel.

Theo Eyewear also launched a series of collaboration collections. Designer James Van Vossel set himself a challenge to see what he could create with a single piece of metal wire. Van Vossel is a designer who has created outlandish interpretations of everyday items such as beds and briefcases and his designs for Theo Eyewear follow a similar script. James 3 and 4 feature a round titanium wire which runs along the top of the frames and crosses over at the bridge. James 3 has small rounded lenses and James 4 has square lenses, with each frame available in six colours.

Also eschewing the trend for retro acetate frames is JF Rey. 'JF Rey is a pioneer of what is possible and isn't about trends,' says Jules Clarke, sales director for JF Rey's UK distributor, Caseco. Standout frames among its new collections are the women's JF 2431 and JF 2429 men's ophthalmic frames. The metal frames have modern-looking shapes, but their standout feature is undoubtedly the laser etched pixel finish. The finish compounds the modern feel of the frame and for extra visual impact the finish is graduated on the grey men's model. The women's JF 2431 has a bright blue colour scheme which

can be seen as green in some light conditions.

### Best of both worlds

In difficult financial times you can appreciate that manufacturers might want to rein in creativity and invention. Sticking with what you know and riding out the tough times seems to be the way a lot of manufacturers and designers are

going at the moment. However, manufacturers are still pushing the envelope, but with tried and tested shapes.

It's hard to accuse Alain Mikli of ever playing it safe, but if you only viewed its new collection from Jean Paul Gaultier from the front, you'd be somewhat underwhelmed. Closer inspection, however, reveals a unique fanned temple design. The shapes in the 20-stong collection are on-trend, as you would expect from the first Mikli and Gaultier collaboration.

Retro acetate shapes meet minimalist metal designs, with double and triple fanned temples on offer. The brightly coloured styling is definitely one to show off and not keep under wraps with long hair.

### The future of retro

While there are those looking to move away from the popular retro trend in an attempt to stand out, there are plenty of other manufacturers and designers who are embracing it. Jai Kudo launched its Podium ophthalmic collection in the UK just before Silmo, but the buzz around the show was for the addition of sunglasses to the Podium range.

'We have had retro collections for a long time, but we wanted to see if retro was a long-term trend,' says Jamie Holoran, executive managing director of Jai Kudo. Holoran says Podium is a dedicated heritage range. Frames such as the Prudence and Jasper sit well



- 11 JF 2431 and JF2429 by JF Rey
- 12 Artsy Fartsy by Lunettes
- 13 Bella Figura by Lunettes
- 14 Zeitgeist by Lunettes
- 15 Mikli and Paul Gaultier collection
- 16 Frauleinwunder by Lunettes
- 17 Prudence and Jasper by Jai Kudo
- 18 GL1109 0101 from the Mikli and Paul Gaultier collection
- 19 GL112 M03E Mikli and Paul Gaultier collection



with the current trend for Art Deco fashion, so should ride the crest of that wave of popularity.

Lunettes' new Kollektion range is unashamedly retro. The company was founded five years ago by Uta Geyer and, in its infancy, specialised in the sourcing and sale of vintage eyewear from the likes of Dior, Cazal and Neostyle, with some models dating back to the early 1900s. This year Geyer has turned designer, using her expertise in the vintage sector to produce eyewear collections where the retro credentials are beyond reproach.

The company describes its latest designs as 'tradition meets avant-garde' and it easy to see why. Each frame in the collection is handcrafted at a small, traditional plant in Italy, while the handmade cases and accessories are

made locally in Berlin.

The Lunettes Kollektion comprises 20 models. Lunettes says if one frame typified its customer base, it would be the new Artsy Fartsy model. This has a rich, oversized bold shape, with subtle metal stud detailing on the fronts. Temples are distinctive in appearance, with a flat shape which curves inwards at the end tips.

Three new models have been added to its sunglass collection. The Frauleinwunder women's frame sports a vintage cat's eye shape, with lightly tinted lenses and subtle star stud detailing. Bella Figura is inspired by the designer's trips to Italy and has a semi-translucent colour scheme with green-tinted lenses. The trend for light colours with frosted finishes is highlighted with the Zeitgeist sunglass.

With a look inspired by the 1920s, the thickness of the frame is offset by the light colour and finish. Green-tinted lenses add to the frame's left of centre appeal.

Silmo has shown that the trend for bold retro frames is set to continue, but there are plenty of alternatives out there for those looking to buck trends. Gotti and Theo Eyewear are just two examples of manufacturers producing cutting-edge metal frames, but there are plenty of others out there too – all waiting for a metal frame trend to gain traction. While it can be argued that the continued trend for retro is playing it safe while times are hard, manufacturers are undoubtedly being creative with their vintage styles with a slew of new colours and finishes. It's a win-win scenario for everyone. ●



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