



Made in Milan

Helen Kendall Tobias of Strategy With Vision (SWV) reports for *Optician* from the recent Mido show in Milan

Mido is the most important European exhibition for ophthalmic frames and sunglasses and so high visitor numbers were anticipated in March. Early reports from the organisers suggested around 42,000 visitors attended the show and although Italian visitor numbers were up by 3 per cent, international visitors fell by 18 per cent.

The earlier date meant that for the first time all the fashion and accessory shows took place at the same time, under one roof at the Fiera Milan in Rho Italy. All Halls at the Fiera were completely occupied on the Friday and Saturday.

While the facilities on site at the Fiera seemed to cope well, the infrastructure of the city crumpled under the huge volume of people trying to get from the centre of Milan to the Fiera – which meant long journeys at both ends of the day. Hotel prices doubled and many exhibitors and visitors looked for alternative accommodation, staying out of the city in an attempt to keep costs within budget.

Here follows a snapshot of the latest trends and new products at the show.

Ophthalmic frames

Mido reflected the continuing and growing trend for lightweight frames and frames made of flexible materials. Titanium, nylon and fiberglass and carbon and magnesium materials are increasingly being used in nylon and rimmed frames too. Children's frames are getting more sophisticated with thermoplastic materials and mixed, bonded temples.

Acetates exhibited at the show had two or more layers, or were mixed; shiny, translucent colours are a big trend, not only in clear or bright colours (light blue, red, orange, green, yellow), but also in dark colours (brown, honey, violet, dark blue and grey).

Well-known companies continued to show their liking for natural materials such as wood, bamboo, leather or buffalo horn and high-end rubber, although there were no new specialist companies at the show using these products.

There is still a vogue for using precious materials to highlight frames, and gold and silver is a strong trend

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- 1 Bellinger Celtic
- 2 Mente shiny black by Serengeti
- 3 Nuvino shiny black by Serengeti
- 4 LinkSkin LKG
- 5 Franz by Mykita
- 6 LinkSkin TKG
- 7 Mauve by Mykita

for limited editions. There is also a movement towards frames made of recyclable or natural materials. LinkSkin showed off the first frame made with recycled titanium.

Natural colours were still prominent at Mido, but with added translucent versions. The number of colour combinations from manufacturers are growing, and because of photo print technology, individually styled temples with pictures or stories are possible.

Interchangeable systems, especially for temples and bridges, which completely change the look of a frame were in evidence. Also the 'matt look' with soft texture still prevails.

Shapes for women remained soft at the show, with butterfly and rectangular shapes. For men the trend was for rectangular or square frames, with styling from the 1960s through to the 1980s strong. The choice for progressive wearers is also growing as sizing is certainly on the increase.

Hinges are still evolving; exhibitors such as 3concept, Pro Design and Undustrial were playing with screwless hinges or other special solutions.

There were more 3D temple designs

and double temples, as well as brushed metal styles, either real or imitation. Swarovski stones, jewels, crystals or other precious inlays like wood or special metals are still being used. Laser cuts and laser engravings, also in nylon materials like NXT, allow for unlimited designs.

Foldable frames, once an 1980s trend, are back at Salomon and De Rigo. 'Bubble Concept' was the highlight of the Salomon collection. The front of the frame and the temples can be folded. If the temples are opened, they lengthen automatically, and a second contrasting colour becomes visible on the temple.

Porsche Design also introduced new folding ophthalmic frames, and there were folding ready-readers which are becoming more colourful and are now being made of better quality materials.



Sunglasses

As with ophthalmic frames, lightweight and flexible materials were prominent in the latest sunglasses exhibited, with designers opting for translucent acetates or shiny nylon.

Although natural tones and earth colours are still popular, there is a trend for a wider range of colours. Red, white, silver/chrome and blue were dominant at the show. However, for the very fashion conscious, shades of purple are right on trend.

Contrasting colour inside and outside the frame was another theme. More wearable, perhaps conservative colours outside, bright, shiny colours or patterns inside. Also a contrast between the frame fronts and the temples (for instance red front, white temples).

Lux is the newest sunglass in the Zerorh+ collection from Allison. Made of aluminium, it is designed to hold the Energy NXT ophthalmic lens or the Energy NXT Rx Sun Varia photochromatic lens.

The new Tiffany Collection from Luxottica featured diamond and silver motifs in a wide selection of acetate frames. These are available in many



Mido exhibition

colours including deep red, violet or translucent yellow and pink. The metal frames come in silver, gold and gunmetal. Some lenses are polarised, with colours ranging from grey, smoke, and brown to gradient grey and brown, violet and grey mirror.

The shapes on show ranged from retro styling from the 1950s to the 1980s; key shapes were aviator, pilot, round and square. But butterfly, cat's eyes and angular shapes are becoming popular.

Shields, masks, and wraparound styles, not only for sport, are increasing, although these may not easily take a prescription lens.

Unbreakable lenses (NXT or similar) are a must for high-end sunglasses. Depending on the target group for the frame it makes sense to add photochromic and/or polarising features as well as blue-light blockers (Zerorh+, Pro Design).

Serengeti launched a new range of sports sunglasses using Polar PhD lenses. Built on the latest technology from Intercast using the company's unique 'Advanced Polarized Surface Technology'. These are the newest evolution of polarised photochromic lenses which deliver up to 98 per cent polarising efficiency without using a film that can deteriorate or delaminate. The lenses, in two exclusive lens hues – Drivers (brown) and CPG (grey) – will be available exclusively from Serengeti in April/May 2009.

The main trend in lenses was graduated tints in both traditional colours (grey, brown and green) but also fashion colours (lilac, green, pink, berry and light blue).

High-end-sunglass lenses featured quality AR coatings on either both sides or just the inside of the lens (Revo), or had mirror treatments (Kiton, Bollé, Spy).

To accompany his ski outfits, Bernhard Willhelm joined forces with Mykita, the couturiers of ultra-light glasses frames, to present three mirrored sunglasses models. The result is a trio of aviator-style sheet-metal frames: Franz, Sepp and Luke in blue, white and gold, matching his clothing collection.

In sports sunglasses, red-brown and orange lenses for better contrast, and green or violet for special sports activities were featured. Polarised lenses, now available in lilac or rose, added high fashion to performance.

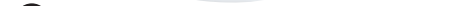
Electronic features, such as frames with MP3 players, are already on the market. Neo Victory's 'Bonsayon'



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frame was a highlight of the show.

The CK Sunglass containing a 4GB USB drive in the temple was a highlight on the Marchon stand, specially designed in two styles, for those wishing to carry around documents, pictures and music. More innovations will undoubtedly follow.

Solutions to change lenses easily were seen both in rimmed or in semi-rimmed sunglasses.

The new 'Bivouak' sunglass from Julbo's collection had magnetic side shield technology. The wearer can easily add sidepieces, made of plastic, to wear as sunglasses or remove them for regular use. The frame is available in a choice of colours and lenses.

Helmet-compatible goggles, with an Rx possibility or adaptable to fit over normal ophthalmic frames, are also on the way (Adidas, Bollé and Carrera).

Mido did not buck the 'recessionary trend' but despite some exhibitors being unhappy with visitor numbers and enquiries there were new products launched and exciting



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8 CK by Marchon

9 Porsche Design

10 Porsche Design

11 Presa shiny black by Serengeti

12 Lux by Zerorh+

innovations on show.

The exhibition celebrates its 40th birthday in 2010 and for the first time the show will be over three days instead of four. For exhibitors this will be a welcome development, but visitors may struggle to get round such a large exhibition in only three days. ●

● This article was written by Strategy with Vision (SWV). The company has been reporting on International Trade Shows since 20001. The reports on Opti-Munich, Mido and Vision Expo East 2009 are now available. They provide comprehensive information on the trends, the latest product launches, and the key news from the shows. The company also has functional capabilities in strategy development, marketing and sales (national and international), operational consultancy, market research, vision care market models, supply chains, project planning and implementation, distribution, retail development and trade fair reports and trends.

● Further information may be obtained from: SWV Strategy with Vision. KG Am Burgacker 23, 69488 Birkenau, Germany
Tel: +49 6201 872 00 65
Email: info@swv4u.com
www.swv4u.com

SWV STRATEGY WITH VISION
Consultants to Eyecare & Eyewear