EYEWEAR - THE PRODUCT OF FUNCTION AND FASHION

Deirdre Mongey

April 1987

EYEWEAR - THE PRODUCT OF FUNCTION AND FASHION

Deirdre Mongey

April 1987

The National College of Art and Design

EYEWEAR - THE PRODUCT OF FUNCTION AND FASHION

by

Deirdre Mongey

REFERENCE
ONLY
National College of Art and Design
LIBRARY

A thesis submitted to
The Faculty of History of Art and Complementary Studies

in Candidacy for the Degree

Faculty of Design

Department of Industrial Design

April 1987

CONTENTS

		Page
INTRODUCTION		1
CHAPTER 1	From the Middle Ages to the 20th Century	4
CHAPTER 2	The 20th Century	35
CHAPTER 3	Progress in the Eyes of the Industry	50
CHAPTER 4	Spectacle Frames - The Product Itself	65
CHAPTER 5	Eyewear and its Role in Fashion	72
CHAPTER 6	The Product Message	84
CHAPTER 7	Where Are We Now Where Are We Going - The Present and the Future	91
BIBLIOGRAPHY		
ILLUSTRATION DETAILS		
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS		

INTRODUCTION

Spectacle frame design has had a 'snowball' history in its journey from the unpopular strictly utilitarian appliance to the functional fashion accessory today. Although the initial years of its development were somewhat 'chequered', by the end of the nineteenth century their functional value was no longer so open or vulnerable to contradiction. Once there was an initial acceptance that spectacles were 'here to stay', the aesthetics of the appliance in all its forms were explored, resulting in a tremendous array of designs all developed within sixty years. All aspects of the product as a fashion object were explored and spectacles assumed many roles.

The overall form of spectacles and the colours were dictated by fashion trends and varied from country to country (even within the same year). Spectacles were developed for every aspect of life, indoors, outdoors, the snow, the sun, motoring - to mention but a few. Sunglasses were a derivation, or an extension of spectacles, but because of the fact that their lenses were not necessarily of a corrective nature, their value as protection against extreme sunlight led them to a top seat in the market, and there they have continued to sit.

Spectacle frames, on the other hand, were constantly fluctuating; people very often neglected the aesthetic value of their spectacles, being prepared to pay highly for several pairs of shoes, but still wearing the same old spectacle frames, day in, day out. The nineteen sixties then saw a turning point in this process and today spectacles are an important item through which we observe the world and its inhabitants, while other people notice

our face, our eyes but certainly our style. They are now seen as an appliance to enhance the wearer's perception, and should be wearable with a minimum of convenience. They fulfil an aesthetic function and ideally should suit the wearer's personality, blending with their features, and physical structure, while also acting as an ornament.

This attitude towards spectacles provides their designers with more of a challenge than their previous strictly utilitarian brief. Eyewear has, in fact, become the protagonist of a new attitude towards life personified in the clothes we wear and our material possessions.

FROM THE MIDDLE AGES TO THE TWENTIETH CENTURY


THE
ART
OF
MAKING
FRAMES
L
I
S
A
PILKINGTON
Ophthalmic Products

The development of spectacles was initially the development in form of an appliance to hold lenses in front of the wearer's eyes. Thus the starting point of its evolution was a growth in understanding of lenses and the principles of magnification. Through the application of these principles, the possibility of correcting sight deficiencies was realised and, thus, the need to be able to hold lenses in front of a person's eye or eyes arose.

Various means of holding the lenses were developed over the centuries until the form of 'spectacle frame', with which are are so familiar, evolved in the nineteenth century - a form which, since then, has been universally accepted and refined.

There is evidence of much discrepancy with regard to the exact date of the invention of spectacles, but research pinpoints it to between 1268 and 1289. Their inventor is still unknown, although several unproven claims have been made in Europe. However, it appears that, at the same time, or possibly even earlier, spectacles were also invented in China. The difference in structure indicates that they were invented independently.

At this time, before the rebirth of learning, there was no general rejoicing over the invention of something which seemed to be designed for a very small and elite minority, and were far too expensive for the general public to buy. Also, the Church at the time, in many instances, encouraged the idea that afflications sent by God were meant to be endured in silence for the good of one's soul and any mechanical device which counteracted them must necessarily be the work of the devil.

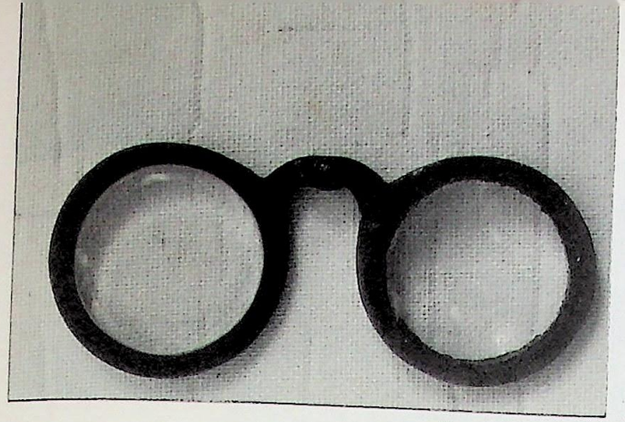
National College of Art and Design
LIBRARY

It seems likely that the first eyeglass would have been a single lens in a frame with a handle and that later the two handles would have been joined.

Even after the invention of spectacles, the single lens continued to be used. (In England, a single lens eyeglass was called a spectacle.) Although primarily utilitarian, these single reading glasses were not necessarily lacking in decoration. But plain or fancy, single or double, these aids to vision were slow to capture the interest of the medical profession.

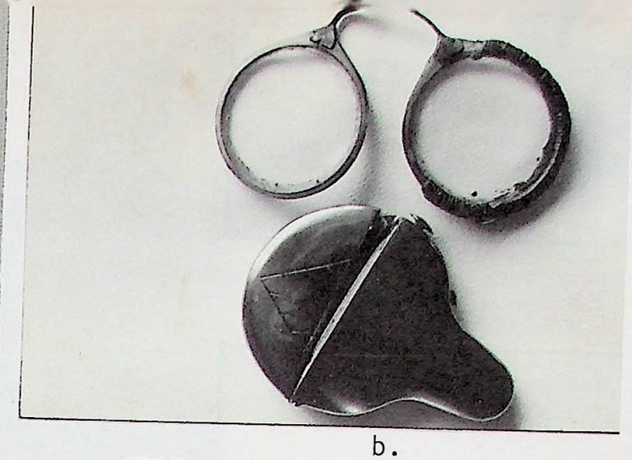
The most early riveted spectacles were completely rigid and had to be held on by hand or carefully balanced on the nose, so they were not worn continuously. They were designed for close work or reading (longsight) so the need for continuous wearing did not arise. (Aids for short sighted people were not developed until centuries later.) Variations of these frames were developed, but it was a long time before they were flexible enough to cling to the nose without being balanced or held . Various other means of securing them were explored and at the end of the fifteenth century, it was acceptable to hold spectacles with the aid of a vertical extension over the forehead.

Early spectacles were made of brass, or iron and later of horn, bone, gold, nickel, silver, and late in the fifteenth century, even of leather. By the middle of the fifteenth century, frames of bone or horn were often split to allow insertion of the lenses, and then tied firmly together with thread.



a.

Rare horn rivet spectacles.
1650 - 1700.



b.

Rivet spectacles repaired on one eye, with silk and brass. Brass engraved case. 1650 -1700

Finger piece mounts, rimless at the top, centre, xylo brown mottled and crystal xylo. Made in different sizes.

c.

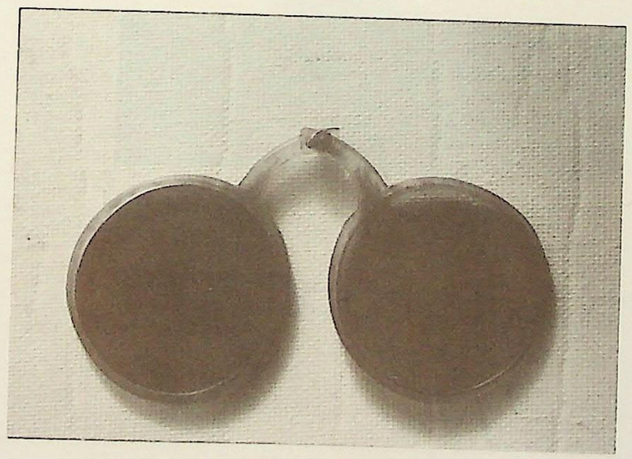
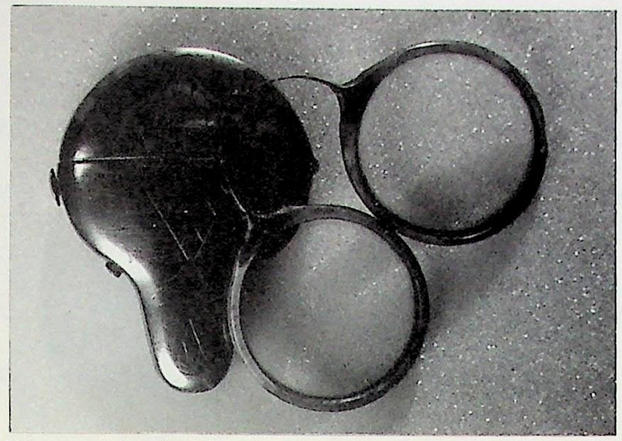
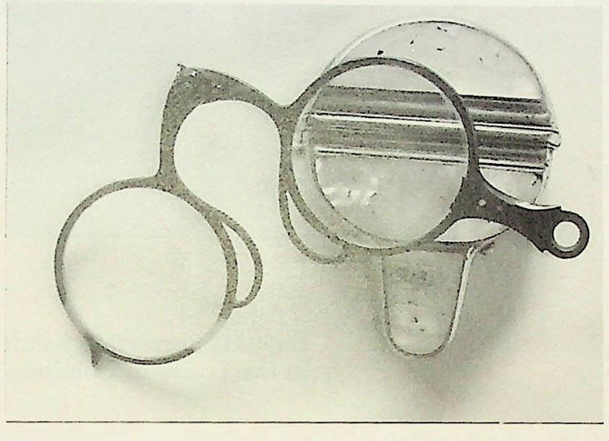


Fig. 1. Rivet spectacles.



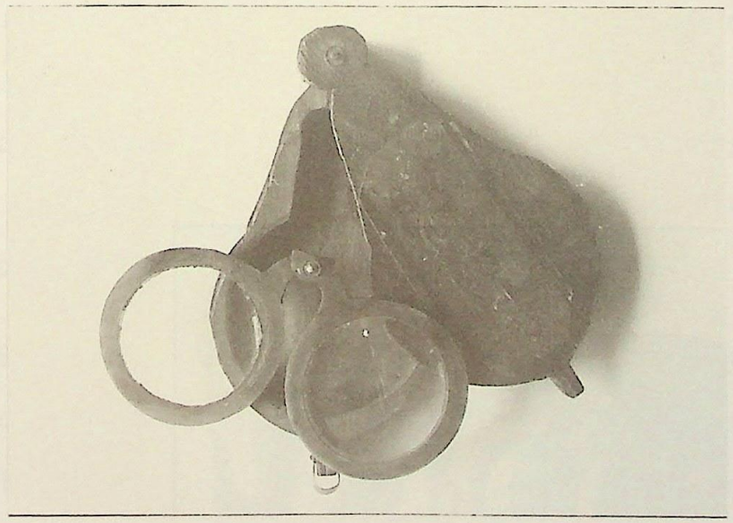
e.

Horn and steel rivet spectacles in a brass engraved snap case. 1650 - 1700.



f.

Folding one-hand frame in tortoiseshell. Brass snap-case set in mother of pearl. 1700.



g.

Horn rivet spectacles in carved wood case, marked colombia, Jan. 1830 on the bottom of the box.

Glasses were largely unnecessary so long as there were few books and little education, but with the invention of printing, making books available in large numbers, came an increase in the demand for spectacles. Prices fell drastically and by the end of the fifteenth century, cheap spectacles were being distributed by peddlers - after two centuries, spectacles could be bought by anyone who needed them.

The Sixteenth Century

The most significant development of the sixteenth century was the introduction of concave lenses for shortsightedness (distance vision). However, slight correction at this time was done on a trial and error basis, the customer choosing the lenses which seemed to him/her to provide the best improvement.

The increase in the use of spectacles made it imperative to find a practical means of keeping them on. The earliest spectacles suitable for continuous wearing were probably the lenses set into sturdy sole leather or horn, with attached leather straps which could be fastened around the head . No further developments of this seems to have taken place until late in the century when glasses were sometimes held on by means of a string tied around the ears (Spanish/Italian style).

After 1557, in Nurnberg, locally-made spectacles were only permitted to be sold in the shops, and imported Venetian spectacles were to be sold only in the streets. (Venetian lenses were of very high quality, whereas German frames were superior to Italian.)

In 1586 there was evidence of an acknowledgement of the usefulness of tinted lenses - in 1591 lenses of amber saturated in linseed oil were developed for protection against the sun.

The Seventeenth Century

The seventeenth century did not bring dramatic developments in the outward appearance of spectacles, but it did bring notable refinements in workmanship in both frames and lenses. As well as high-quality spectacles, cheap spectacles were also available to accommodate the masses, and thus a type of class distinction among the styles arose.

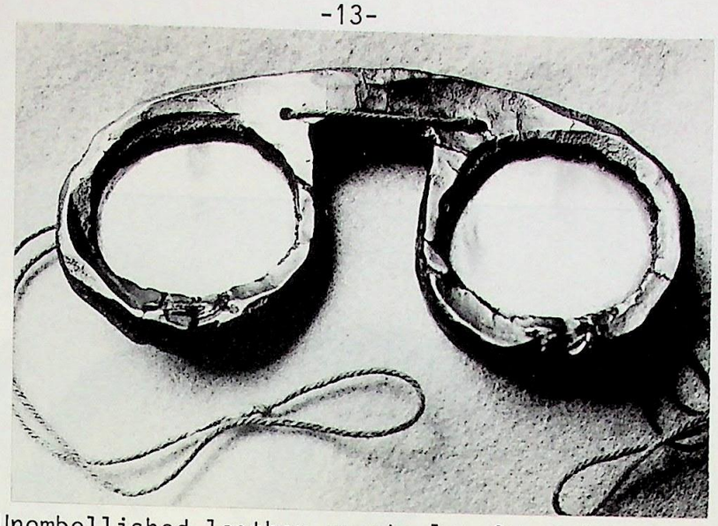
Before mass production, which brought down the cost, spectacle frames were very expensive and so were a type of status symbol. However, once the cheap spectacles became available, the rich and the fashionable were unwilling to give them up, having nothing to replace them, and so demanded more expensive materials and finer workmanship.

The idea of tying spectacles around the ears was still not very popular, except in Spain and, to a slight extent, in Italy, so a new style had to be explored. Surprisingly enough, the solution was to return to the single glass - smaller than the early reading glass, usually with a lens for distance vision rather than for reading, designed to be suspended from a cord or ribbon around the neck. This was known in England as the perspective glass . Once this became popular, spectacles went out of fashion, though not out of use, for three hundred years!

Quite often, lenses designed for distance viewing were referred to as 'young' glasses, whereas reading glasses, more often mounted in a double spectacle frame, were known as 'old' glasses. For these 'old' spectacles, light steel frames with round lenses were used early in the century, silver, gold, brass, horn and leather also being available. It was around this time, 1762, that the first attempts to establish rules relating to the numbering and selection of lenses were made; before this each maker simply scratched a number on the lens relating to the age for which he considered it most suitable. It is also believed that women had weaker vision than men and so required stronger lenses.

One ugly and possibly uncomfortable solution was the forehead frame - a metal band worn around the head. To this were riveted two round metal (usually steel) rings for lenses. These rings were later made of horn instead of metal. In 1675, horn frames with the bridge slit for flexibility were in use . These were first made in England by J. Marshalls and were considered to be the most serviceable of spectacles developed at that time. Towards the end of the century, leather replaced horn in England. Although a great deal of money could be spent on elegant spectacles, ordinary ones were within the reach of most people.

Protective glasses were made in several colours, including numerous shades as red, yellow, blue and green. Mid-sixteenth century saw the formation of guilds of spectacle makers and thus the expectancy of a standard of excellence among makers and their apprentices. This also led to the laying down of stipulations regarding sale of



Unembellished leather spectacles for tying on a cap or headband,eyes cut at the bottom to insert the lenses. 1690.

Fig. 2.

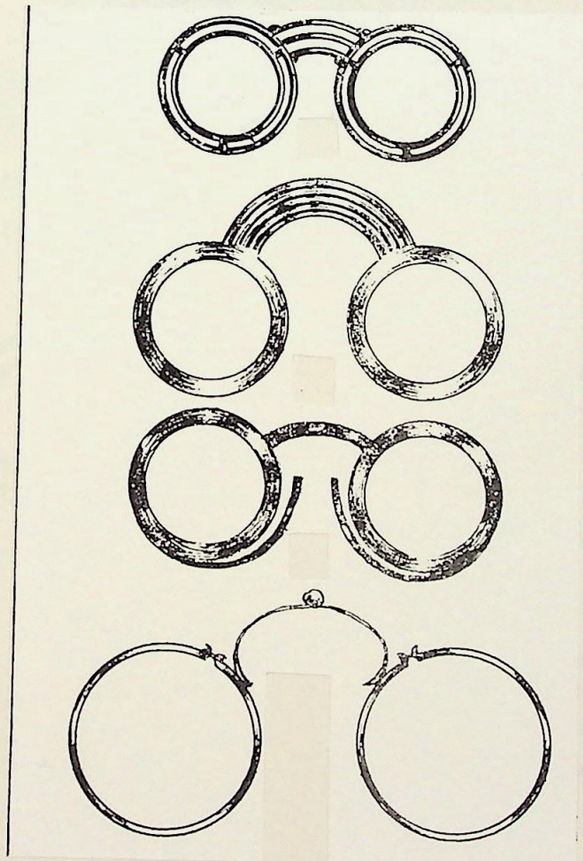
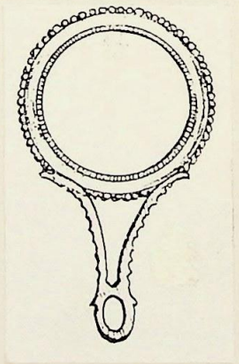
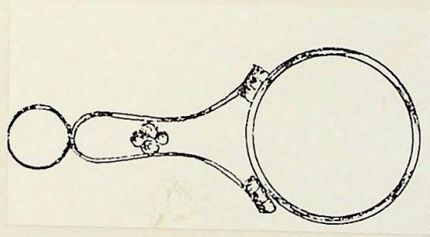


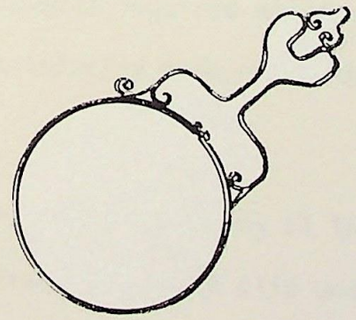
Fig.4.

Fig. 3.

Gentleman with perspective glass.
Early seventeenth-century engraving by piazetta.







Perspective glass samples.

spectacles, and spectacles found in haberdashers shops, if not made by members of the guild, were destroyed.

The most significant development in forms of fashion at this time was the Prospect Glass, later known as the Spyglass, (Lorgnette in France) . These were, in fact, miniature telescopes, and came about as a development of Gallileo's invention. They were used in England from 1617 until well into the eighteenth century. They had practical uses but were also found to be irrestible as playthings.

The Eighteenth Century

The primary development of the eighteenth century was that of a retention system, but these spectacles seem to have been too utilitarian in appearance to have been considered fashionable. The most decorative of these were mercilessly ridiculed by the satirists as affectations. However, those at whom the satire was directed continued to wear them.

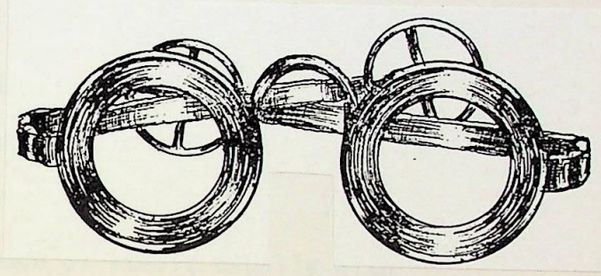
All leather frames were abandoned in England in the eighteenth century, but the use of leather in rims with steel springs attached continued (these looked very like horn; in fact so much so that a study of some of these frames still in existence required microscopic examination to determine if they were actually made of leather instead of horn).

There was an attempt to revive the use (for women) of the sixteenth century style of glasses with a front bow which slid under the cap, but this style interfered with the coiffure and so was soon abandoned.

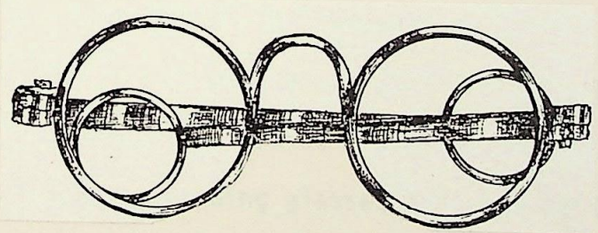
Fig. 5.
The prospect glass.

Fig. 6.

Iron frames with inner rims of horn. The wheel like ends of the temples pressed against the head to hold the frames in place. a.



Steel frames with short temples and C-shaped nose piece. Temple spectacles probably date from 1728. b.



Spectacles were, at this point in time, still considered highly unfashionable, but were worn in private even by the rich and fashionable.

In London, in 1773, the cheapest English Nose glasses sold for a shilling but imported German ones were available for four pence. In an attempt to capitalise on their skill in mass-production, the south German manufacturers, once noted for their fine workmanship, turned out shoddy spectacles as fast and as cheaply as possible.

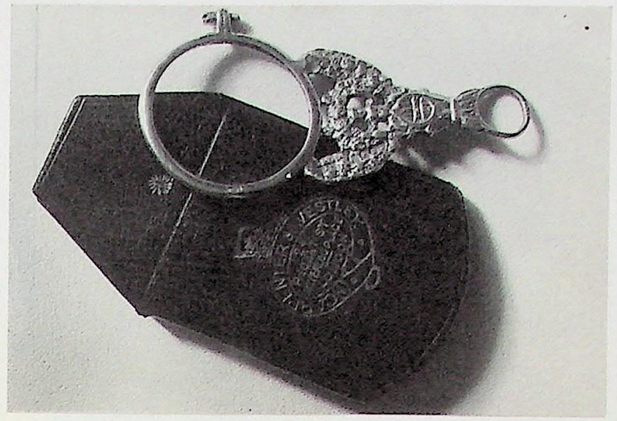
Finally, three hundred and fifty years after the invention of spectacles, a suitable means of keeping them on was found. Between 1727 and 1730 Temple Spectacles were developed and promoted. These were spectacles held in place by rigid side pieces . Early temple spectacles were probably made of steel, usually with round lenses and hinged side pieces terminating in large rings which pressed against the head to hold the spectacles on. Gold, silver and brass were also used.

Perhaps one of the more interesting derivations of the conventional eyeglass at that time was a metal strap welded to the nose piece . This could be curved to the shape of the head and be worn under a hat, thus suspending glasses in front of the eyes and avoiding pressure on the nose. Some people also preferred their spectacles attached to a handle.

A single eyeglass in a circle of horn or previous material, with a small handle with which it was held, was also popular throughout this century. The most popular (English) term for this was a quizzing glass .

Fig. 8.

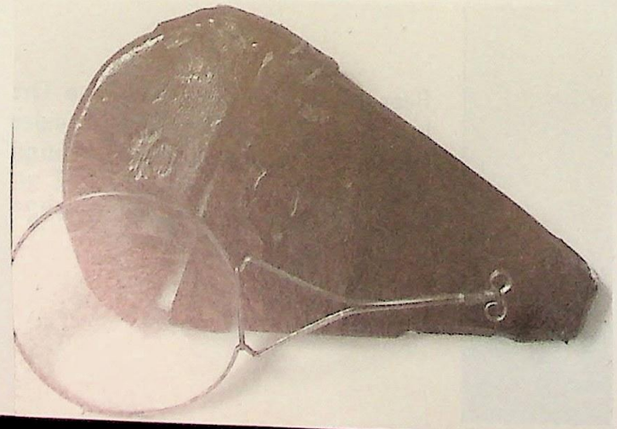
Silver gilt quizzing glass
with leather case.
French 1850. a.

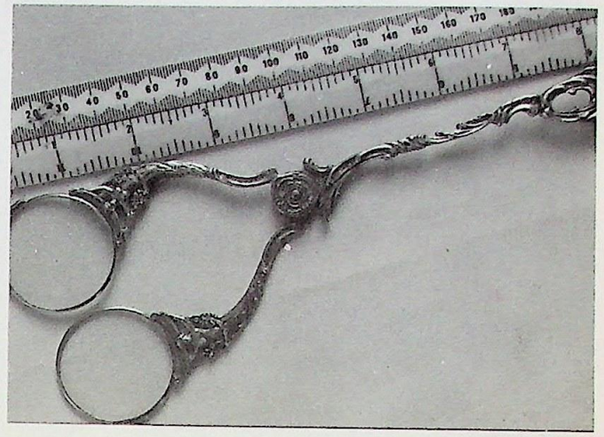


Silver oblong
quizzing glass
with marcasite inset.
1870. b.

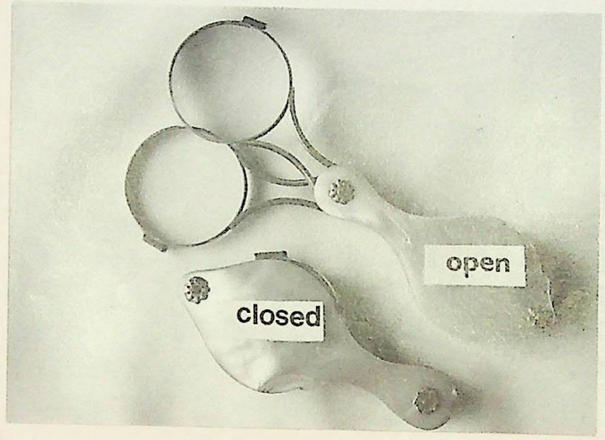
German magnifier glass, made with nickel steel leonischer wire tied with brass wire. In its original leather case.
1650 - 1700.

Fig. 9.





Silver scissors glasses with a long adjustable handle. French, 1850. a.



Silver and mother of pearl scissors spectacles. 1850. b.

Scissors glasses- 1860. c.

Fig. 10.

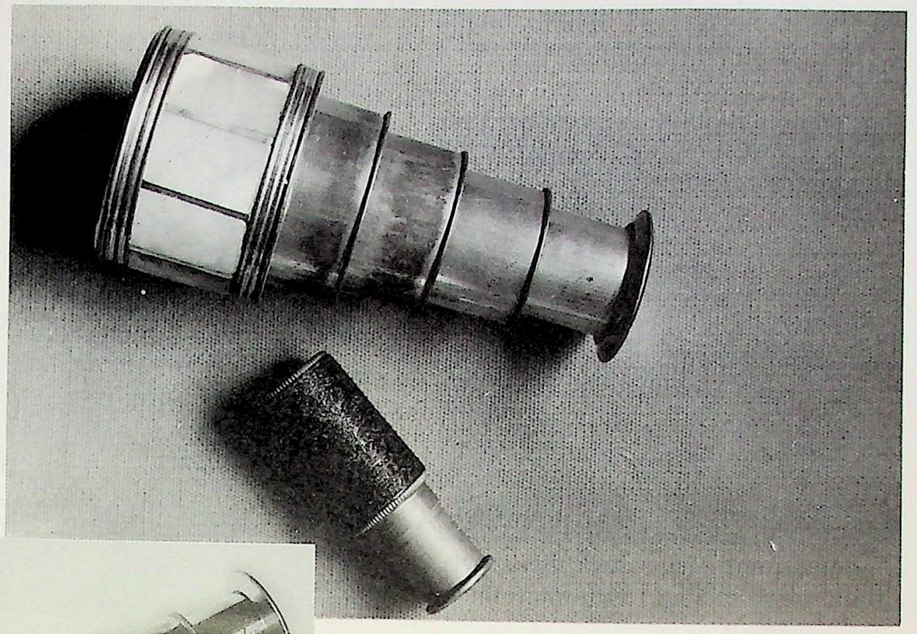


Fig. 11.

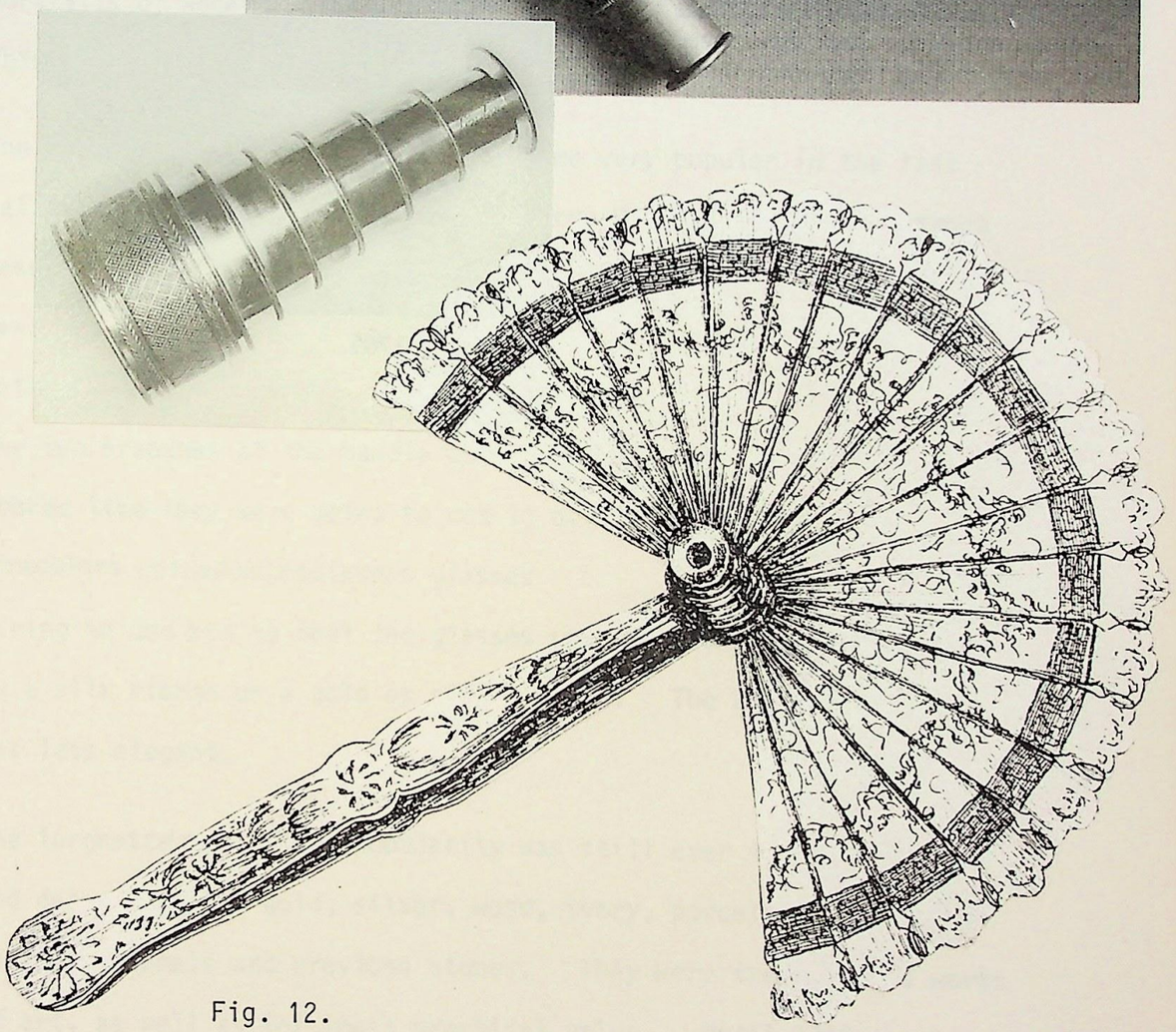


Fig. 12.

Magnifying glasses, popular with the longsighted, became much more elegant in the eighteenth century and during the reign of Louis XV were frequently oval in shape. Oval or round, they were often encased in tortoise shell or mother of pearl laced with gold or silver, so that when the glass was not in use, it would look like a medallion .

Another curious form of single eyeglass occasionally seen in portraits of women, was suspended in front of the eye by a strap. This, like all single eyeglasses, was denounced by the optician.

The double eyeglass with a handle became very popular in the last half of the century. One used by George Washington shows a strong resemblance to the Nürnberg drawing of 1600 and may conceivably have been inspired by them. In the directive period in France, they were extremely popular with the dandies known as the incroyables. Since the two branches of the handle came together under the nose, and looked like they were going to cut it off, they were known as binoculars - ciseaux or scissors glasses . There was usually a ring in the end so that the glasses could be hung around the neck by a silk ribbon or a gold or silver chain. The English version was less elegant.

The lorgnette's popularity was still ever increasing, made and decorated with gold, silver, wood, ivory, porcelain, wedgewood leather, enamels and previous stones. They were treasured as works of art, as well as for their practical value. Until 1760 the lorgnette was usually in the form of a single tube, then the lorgnette became larger at one end and smaller at the other (lorgnette poire). The next step was the division of the inner

sliding tube into a number of collapsible sections, that that the glass could be closed into a more compact form for carrying. In France, a curious offshoot of the lorgnette was another kind of opera glass called lunette de jalousie. The difference consisted of a plated mirror set at an angle in the tube, pierced with an oval opening in the side. It was sufficient to turn this opening to whatever the user wished to observe and their curiosity could be immediately and discretely satisfied.

When the boldness of ordinary lorgnettes began to lose popularity, tiny lorgnettes were embedded in fans, heads of canes and other useful and ornamental objects. The popularity of these continued unto the nineteenth century .

Despite movements in the construction and appearance of spectacle frames, they still did not receive the sanction of fashion, at least outside Spain, and a gentleman often made an apologetic remark when putting them on.

The Nineteenth Century

This century brought the fad for expensive and ornate eyewear to an end and a grudging acceptance of more practical eyewear, particularly for men. No fashionable women would be seen in public and no man could afford to be seen in public or anywhere else using a lorgnette - eventually the pince nez became a compromise for both sexes.

At the beginning of this century, lognettes were still popular. However, the lunette de jalousie faded out of sight.

Fig. 13.

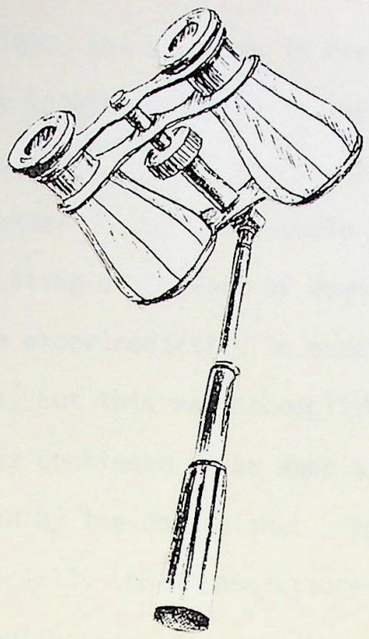
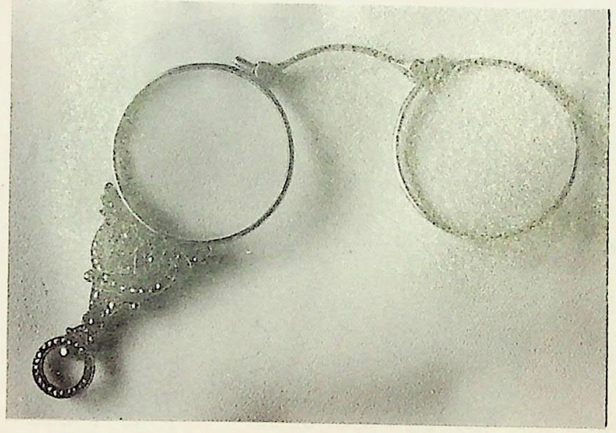
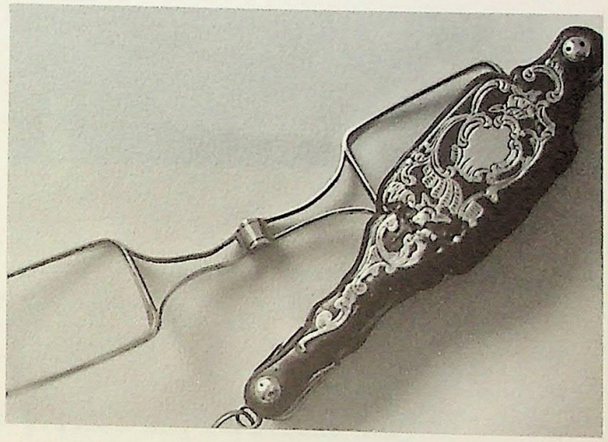


Fig. 14.

a.



Silver spring folding lorgnette. Marcasite stones set in handle. 1900. b.



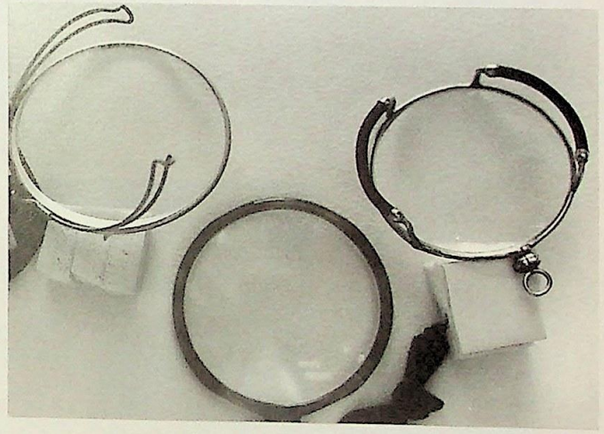
Rare silver double hinged folding lorgnette,silver decoration on the tortoiseshell. 1800. c.

In 1820, the spyglass in French fans were sometimes replaced by tiny kaleidoscopes which were very popular. In the early part of this century, it finally occurred to someone to put spy glasses together so that they could use both eyes at the same time. The resulting binoculars or double opera glasses required some experimentation in order to co-ordinate the operation of both eyes, but this was accomplished by about 1823. Although the single glass continued to be made after this date, it was gradually superceded by the double one. By the end of the century, opera glasses, especially those manufactured in Paris, had reached such a high degree of perfection that gadgets had to be added on to make one seem more desirable than another.

The Lorgnette

Double eyeglasses became temporarily fashionable. In March 1812, Napoleon was said to purchase a "binocle of mother of pearl, the handle of gold, decorated with quartz crystals, at the price of 230 francs". When the fad for scissors glasses had subsided, they grew smaller in size, and changed their form and became lorgnettes - in the English sense. These were basically a pair of spectacles, with a handle attached to one side, for use by ladies. The handle was usually of mother of pearl, tortoise shell or metal. In 1825, R. Brettell Bate patented handled spectacles - these were a form of lorgnette, which could be folded to look like a single glass. These remained popular with ladies of fashion, who would not wear spectacles yet often needed an aid in order to see something with extra clarity - because these were worn by fashionable people, they became fashionable (fig. 18).

A drawing of Austen Chamberlain.
1863 -1937. a.



In the foreground, plain tortoise-shell monocle with milled edge.
On the right, a gold gallery monacle with xylo covered gallery.
On the left, a spring gallery monocle anchored at the screw joint for vertical adjustment.
1900 -1930.

Fig. 15. The monocle.

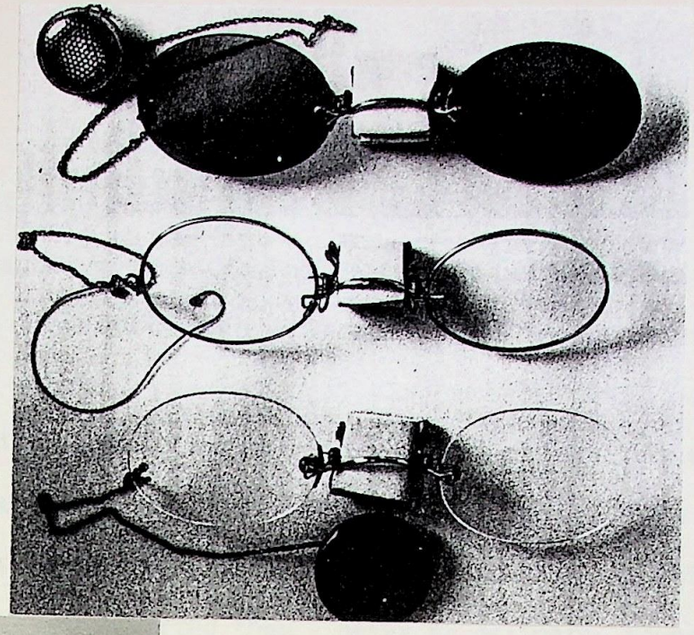
(b)

The Monocle

The exact date of introduction of the monocle, as differentiated from the quizzing glass, is not known but is thought to be roughly 1806. This single lens is thought to have originated on stage, but it attracted the attention of the British aristocracy and this became fashionable. Sometimes a wearer would carry two - one for reading and one for distance vision. The early monocles were often of solid gold, studded with precious jewels. However, as their popularity increased, less expensive materials like silver and gold plate for mass-production were used. They were initially worn by older men to correct sight, but became fashionable with young men with no need of sight correction. The fad for these momentarily subsided only to be revived again in 1820, their form being explored completely, and monocles of every imaginable shape and size became available. The fashion for these eventually again declined; however, they were worn throughout the century by German and upper-class British. It was introduced in the United States in about 1880 and was worn by the fashionable 'city sets'.
Although throughout this century its form had been fully explored. Once the fads died out, the form of monocle which was retained was that of a raised lens mounted in either gold or silver, attached to a cord or ribbon, worn around the neck.

Pince-nez

The pince-nez consisted of a bow-spring double eyeglass (fig. 20) which pinched the nose in order to secure it and was at one time referred to as "Orator's Spectacles" because they were thought to



Finger piece fittings. a.
Top: rimless with smoke lenses and automatic chain.
Centre: finger piece frame, white rims and ear chain.
Bottom: rimless finger piece glossy black automatic chain.

Tortoise shell one hand frame with ornamental handle,and steel bow spring.
1880 -1910. b.

9ct gold 'city' clip made by Butterworth of Birmingham. 1930
c.

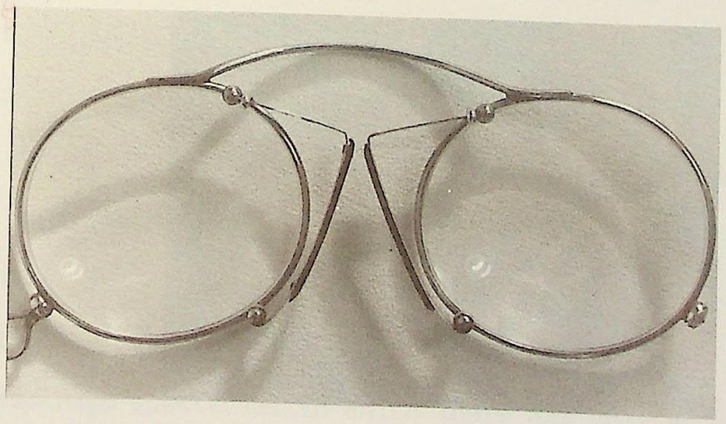


Fig. 16.

aid the natural resonance of his voice. They were introduced in 1840, and in the latter part of that century, enjoyed much popularity. and universally acclaimed in the Western world, although never very popular with ladies. They were tolerated on formal occasions by fashionable ladies. They usually wore the oval rimless style on a fine, gold chain which could be reeled automatically into a button-size eyeglass holder pinned to the dress. Men, on the other hand, wore any style which suited them - heavy or delicate, round or oval, straight or drooped, these usually held on a ribbon, cord or chain worn about the neck or attached to the lapel. Whatever the discomfort caused, the pinze-nez was convenient and at that time considered preferable to spectacles.

Spectacles

At the turn of the nineteenth century, the cost of spectacles was still very high, and frequently the choice of the necessary lenses was still being left to the customer. They were also still available from travelling salesmen.

Early in the century, spectacles were large and round, then small and round and later octagonal, rectangular and oval, silver being most commonly used for the frames. However, like many innovations, the oval lenses were not accepted with universal enthusiasm, particularly by the Germans. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, it was not uncommon to use a wide inner ring of horn or tortoiseshell in spectacle frames. This was carried even further in a pair known as diaphragm spectacles in which there was only a tiny hole left to see through. These were intended to correct

squint; however, it was claimed that they were just another invention of the spectacle makers to increase their business and their reputation and were not highly regarded.

These negative attitudes toward spectacles did not discourage the spectacle merchants who continued to explore all possibilities. In 1824, a new type of Double spectacles were developed . These consisted of a pair of spectacles for use for distance vision with another pair attached to them by hinges. When the second pair were dropped down, the powers of the lenses combined and the pairs could be used for reading or wear vision.

At about the same time, the first rimless spectacles were produced. There is still a discrepancy as to their inventor.

It is no surprise that as a development of double spectacles, incorporating the two types of lenses into the one frame was developed and so bifocals were introduced. An extension of these were trifocals to cater for people with a sight defect known as astigmatism. The correction of this involved the use of a different type of lens from those used for either distant or near vision. Astigmatism was not understood until the beginning of the nineteenth century and in 1827 the first set of lenses to correct it were made. Trifocals consisted of three different types of lenses all mounted within the one frame. However, it was not until the end of the nineteenth century that significant advances were made in bifocals. By the 1890s, there was a considerable increase in the use of bifocals in both England and the United States and the two sections of lenses were fused instead of cemented.

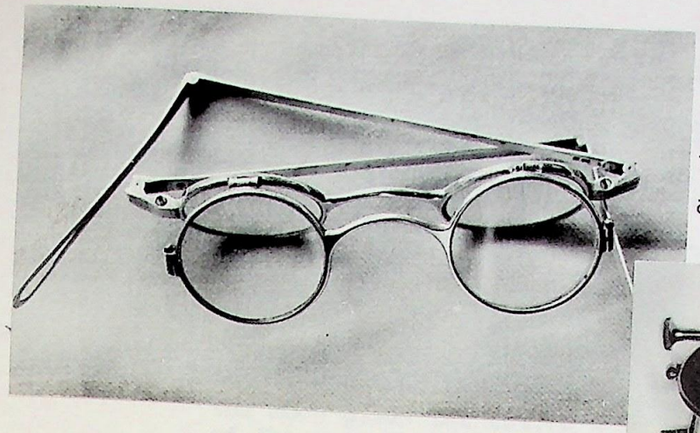
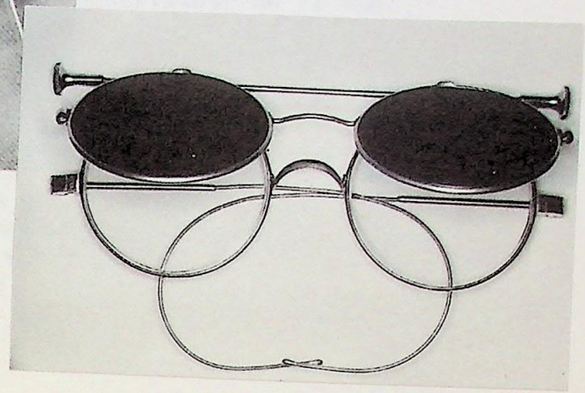


Fig. 17
Hand-made double (silver) frame with folding sides.
a.

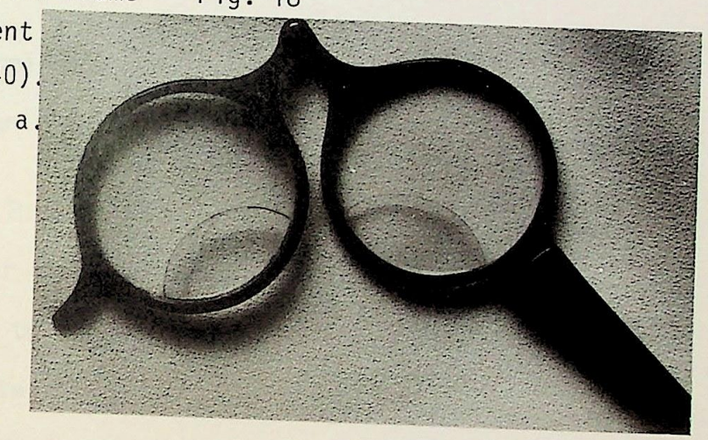


Nickel-steel stump end curl sides frame.

b.

Tortoise folding one-hand frame glazed cement frame. bifocals. (1880 - 1840).

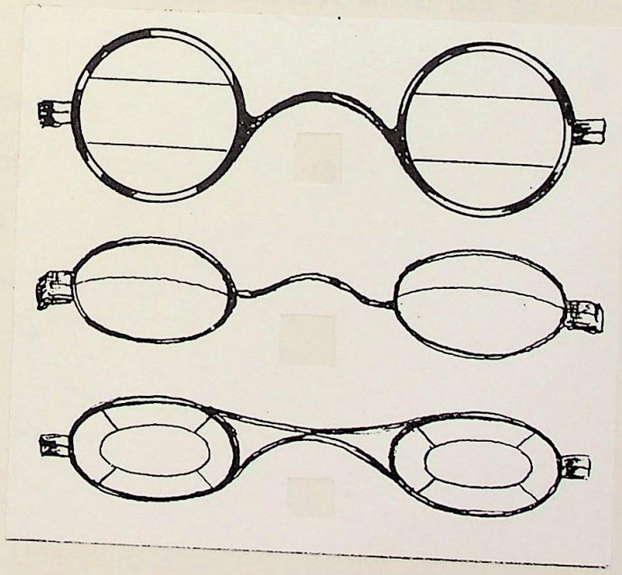
Fig. 18



a.

Early bifocals and Trifocals.
1827 - 1840.

b.



Tinted glasses are thought to have originated in 1820, with no evidence that they had been worn before this date. Blue and Green were the main colours initially used; however, with conflicting views on their popularity. In 1824 "le Conservateur de la Vue published,

> Pale blue is a favourable colour. It is that reflected by the beautiful sky, the silent night the moon gives the entire horizon in the absence of the sun . . . But it is above all green by which its nature seems the most friendly to vision, it is the colour in which nature is bathed on beautiful days and on which the eye rests with pleasure.

However, contrary to this was,

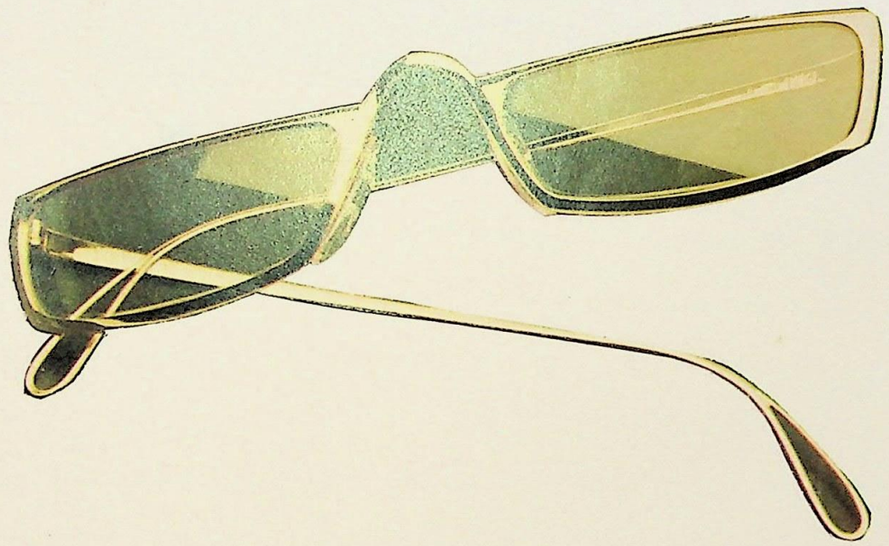
> All coloured glasses increase the labour of the eyes, and soon bring them into such an irritable state as unfits them for all the ordinary purposes of life.

In 1858, blue was the favour colour of lenses, with smoked glass, next to be recommended. Green was considered "detestable".

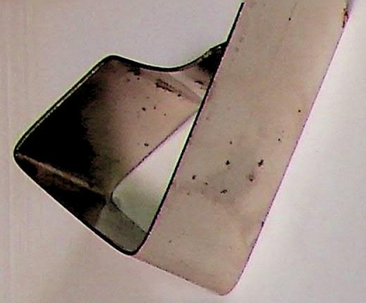
In 1850 Mr. Bausch of the now International Bausch and Lomb Optical Company, made his first pair or rubber eyeglass frames using a piece of hard rubber he picked up on the street. In 1866 the company started making vulcanite frames. Cheaper and lighter in weight than horn, it was purchased in large sheets, which had to be heated in a cookstove and then punched out on a hand press. Then Mr. William Beebher founded what was later to become the American Optical Company, importing English frames at £25 ($75). But he managed to reduce the wholesale price of frames to about a dollar and, by 1868, the U.S. was the centre on production on all glass spectacles.

There were no eyestyles as we know them today. Spectacles were of thin blue steel wire, or with heavy solid rims of steel or silver. Eye shapes were elliptical and in small sizes only. The saddle and ribbon bridge was the style of the day. Later rolled gold, and alloys of platinum and gold made further improvements in workmanship and lower cost possible.

From 1892 the change was evident. Improvements were made in styles, sizes and materials, and shortly afterwards gold filled frames (rolled gold) came on the market.



THE TWENTIETH CENTURY 1900 - 1970



The Twentieth Century

This period saw more development in spectacles than there has been in their entire six century history. At last spectacle frames were accepted, mainly due to attempts by designers to reduce their strictly functional image by placing more emphasis on the aesthetics of the frame. The developments which were made in new materials, particularly in plastics, played a very important part in this. So spectacles entered the fashion world, and were no longer the cause of embarrassment when worn in public.

At the turn of the century, the Optical Journal published an article which said,

> Wearing spectacles or eyeglasses out of doors is always a disfigurement, often an injury, seldom a necessity . . . Glasses are very disfiguring to women and to girls.

This is a reflection of general opinion at the time. However, despite this, there was still a wide range of accessories available. In 1913 the monocle became very popular in New York and other large cities in the United States; however, this proved to be no more than a fad, and died, only to be seen in American caricatures, where it was used for Englishmen, Germans or affected Americans. In Germany at this time, the fad was for monocles; this fad was welcomed for it was believed that the eye glass provided not only optical correction, but also a good discipline for the wearer, who was obliged to master his facial expression to retain the glass in place. Even the lorgnette which was widely used by women did not escape criticism. It was, however, considered preferential to the wearing of 'unaesthetic spectacles'. In 1910, the Oxford eye-glass was first made in New York. (A folding style with a high,

sweeping bridge.) It was originally intended to be worn on a heavy ribbon by men only; however, the fact that the sales could be doubled saw its promotion, with great success, for both men and women. Attempts were made at this time to keep spectacle frames as inconspicuous as possible, the rimless spectacles being a product of this.

Finally, the time had arrived when some thought was given to 'beautifying' spectacles. The year 1927 saw an escalation in spectacle frame sales, the increased emphasis on the appearance of the frame being a major influence, with white gold most popular. Once it became fashionable, people tended to own three or four pairs, all worn at different times, dictated to by the environment, the company and the task, if any.

At this time, while designers were undoubtedly responsible for the boom, technicians were working on making them more practical. They had not yet managed to incorporate any aesthetic appeal; however a change had been affected and the attitude of 'trying to make the best of a bad thing' was accepted.

With the increased emphasis on style in spectacle frames, fads inevitably developed. In 1923 Bausch and Lomb made what they called Crookes glass lenses. These were sunglasses of a special kind, available in three shades - light, medium and dark. These were worn during the summer time, but manufacturers hoped to be able to persuade their customers to wear them in the winter, and not just for winter sports, but "to relieve the eyes from the glare of indoor lighting during the dull afternoons and long winter evenings of the winter season".

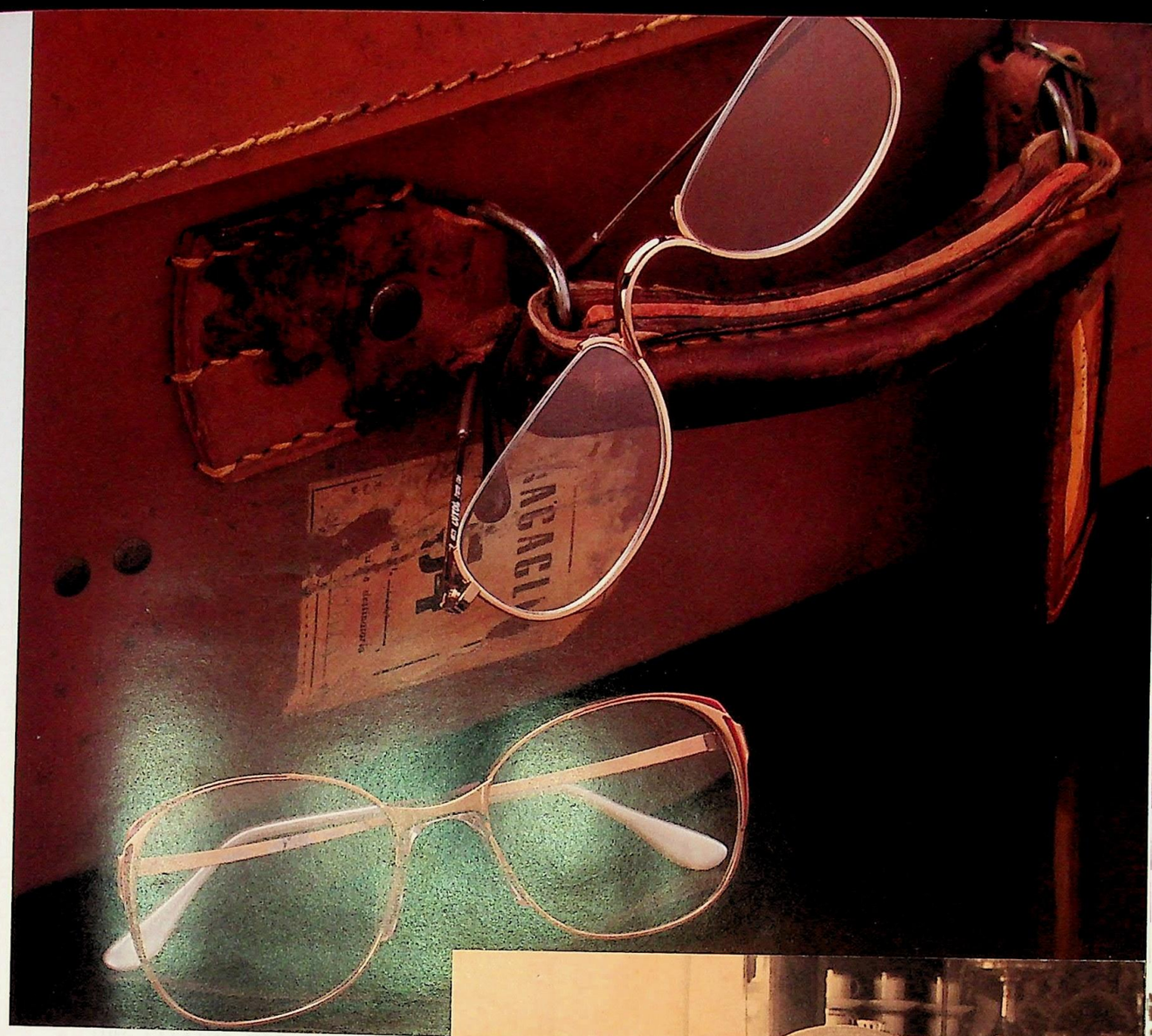


Fig. 19

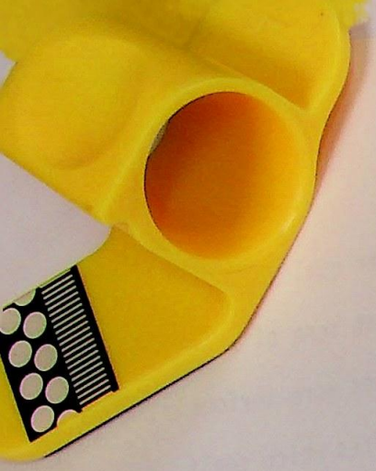
Now the demand in spectacle frames was for higher quality, more beautiful materials and finer workmanship. Even some of the top French costume designers studied spectacle frames more seriously, and articles were to be found in fashion magazines which dealt entirely with the artistic and cosmetic effect of glasses as an accessory of dress which had been long neglected.

The sunglasses fad continued into the forties, varying in shape and in the range of lens tints. The change in lens shapes was a result of "teenage rebellion against hornrims". The most popular innovation was the harlequin shape - a long lens with the outer and upper and slightly lifted.

It was not until the forties that designers of spectacles frames began to take note of fashion trends and to relate their designs to current fashions. (fig.19)

The fifties was the era of the concept of 'glasses for fun'. Clothes were designed to be worn with spectacles; however, to own only one frame was considered a serious fashion limitation. It appears that once the concept of spectacles as fashion accessories was perceived, their popularity snowballed. This led to a huge change in variety of clothes and patterns, and the use of plastics and metals. New ways were developed to work them into unusual textures and finishes. Emphasis on good design led to the fading out of over-ornamentation and the idea that "if they are jokey enough, you wouldn't mind having to wear glasses". There was a vivid gaiety, but more restrained and subtle.

The recommendation from the fashion world was - treat your spectacles as you would a diamond hat pin; they go with practically anything if



worn with dash.

In the fifties, a survey in New York found that style was more important than comfort. The demand there was for dark, heavy, sturdy frames. It was found that France had initiated the fad for heavy frames after the Second World War. Frames were being imported from France, but also from Italy, Germany, Mexico and Japan. In 1961 more than twenty million dollars worth of prescription spectacles were sold in the United States.

The 1960s in Britain was a very significant time in the history of spectacle frames. The change of attitude towards music, fashion and art also saw a different attitude towards the wearing of spectacles. No longer looked upon as medical necessities, but as fashion accessories, designers were faced with supplying an endless stream of new designs at as rapid a rate as possible. The British manufacturers, whose designers had simply been 'back-room boys' working to strictly functional briefs, did not know how to respond and several simply became importers - until that time, although uninspired, the industry was strong and well-organised. However, the attractive imported lines began to dominate the fashion sector of the market and few British manufacturing companies made any progress.

A revival of old styles in contemporary materials was initiated to cope with the demand. A fad arose which revived the wearing of aggressively old-fashioned spectacles in imitation of nineteenth-century styles. The wearing of half eye spectacles was revived and optical shops took to displaying old, even antique spectacles. By 1966 'granny glasses' were flooding the market. High fashion

Fig. 20

Fig. 21

eyewear by Oliver Goldsmith of London included both narrow steel rimmed sunglasses and enormous plastic ones, and wooden frames in rosewood, teak and charcoal were advertised in the Optician. Woodgrain frames were being advertised for men, whereas ladies could buy frames handcovered in lizard skin to match handbags. By the spring of 1966, spectacles were thought to have gone to their limit as regards fads - not only were there large squares, rectangles, octagons and ovals in stripes, checks and plain colours, but even one-way mirror lenses were sometimes patterned with checks or stripes, not to mention some glasses covered with awnings and huge fake eyelashes. Despite the increasing popularity of contact lenses, the majority of people with visual problems were still relying on conventional lenses in often unconventional frames. (figs 20 & 21)

There were still those who remained impervious to woodgrain, lizard skin and other novel ideas, preferring to wear pink translucent frames prescribed by the National Health.

It was in catering for these staid and sedate tastes that, in the seventies, the British manufacturing industry became stuck in a rut, believing that the majority of people with poor eyesight were middle-aged and conservative. This stance provided no resistance to the flamboyant imports from Europe, sometimes supplemented by frames from the Far East.

However, from the customer's point of view, style had now become as important as comfort. This philosophy brought a new imagination to the industry, an imagination which designers have continued to explore into the eighties, leading to the freedom of expression visible in today's eyewear.

Emphasis now became placed on choosing eyeglasses to go with the face and to correct facial as well as visual effects - to give angles to round face, to shorten the long nose and lengthen the short nose, to soften the angles of a square face and to narrow too wide a forehead.

Over the non-subsidised racks at the opticians, frames from Italy, France, West Germany and Austria have been displaying all the attention to design that one would expect from countries where eyewear was "face fashion" and "big business". Today, British manufacturers like U.K. Optical, Anglo-American Optical and Oliver Goldsmith are responsible for less than 50 percent of the private (now N.H.S.) line of frames on the British market, the gap being filled by Switzerland, Alain Mikli of France, Filos and Trevi Occhiali of Italy, to mention but a few. This is an indication of the British optical industry's failure, until now, to respond to customers who want more than just a comfortable fit. Many British frame makers have been content to produce standard low-cost models for the N.H.S. market where frame design has been tied to N.H.S. specified lens sizes and shapes and thus, many would argue, restricted in scope.

A major change occurred in December 1984 in the British optical industry: the opticians lost the monopoly on the making up of prescriptions. From March 1985 they were free to advertise their services. However, on April 1st, N.H.S. subsidies for eye-wear were withdrawn from all but a third of previously eligible glasses wearers, and most adults would now have to pay the full

price. The "patient" in effect became the "customer".

With the change in British laws regarding National Health frames, the French were now greedily rubbing their hands. They have already seen that the demand from the U.K. is on the increase, particularly in the middle to upper price bracket. They are also aware that the U.K. did not have its own homegrown opthalmic manufacturing industry to supply the new demand for fashion frames.

Progress at Last?

However, the U.K. market is slowly changing. The British are not as aware in the fashion eyewear stakes, but the increased opening of high-fashion outlets like "Four Eyes", "Special Eyes" and their counterparts, along with the increased 'hippiness' of optics endorsed by fashion retailers is all helping. One of the "Four Eyes" major frame suppliers is, in fact, the British-based manufacturing company, Anglo-American Optical.

Anglo-American is a small company which employs forty people at its factory headquarters in London. The company initially imported frames; however Laurence Jenkin, son of the company's founder, now a designer with Anglo-American, trained as a retail (dispensing) optician. He worked in the Manhattan optical boutique "Vision Unlimited" during the sixties, where customers were in the habit of buying dozens of pairs at a time. His American experience taught him a lot about fashion taste, and upon returning to England, he commenced designing his own frames. His early attempts were too fussy but, gradually, a simple but distinctive style emerged.

The company has a strong fashion design policy which has paid dividends both in Britain and in exports to the lucrative U.S. market.

The Anglo-American look is a cross between the good, old-fashioned British National Health functionalism and the owlish American Ivy League college appeal of the forties and fifties. Diane Keaton in "Annie Hall" and Christopher Reeve as Clark Kent in "Superman" have helped to set this mid-Atlantic trend. Jenkin has also designed more extrovert, outlandish, novelty items - frames shaped like butterflies, hearts, lips and swans - worn by many celebrities with obvious enthusiasm. (Fig 22).

Anglo-American stands today where Oliver Goldsmith stood in the sixties, in the vanguard of popular taste. Goodsmith himself praises the company, "The Anglo-American look is in vogue. They've certainly provided me with the stimulus of competition in design".

Unlike Goldsmith, Jenkins just adds to the Anglo-American repertoire on an ad hoc basis, whenever he feels he has something good to offer. Goldsmith, on the other hand, operates like the fashion industry with a new design collection each year. The collection of '86 was called "Red Setters". In a Sunday Times interview, Goldsmith claimed that the Evening Standard rang him up to ask "What's new in glasses?" and without even thinking he replied "Red glasses". It was only upon seeing "The new fashion is red glasses" in print the following day that he realised that now he had better make some! Red became very much the "in-colour" for men in '86. (fig 23)

(1) Carnaby by Pilkington; (2) Demi Tess by Invicta; (3) Sam by Oliver Goldsmith; (4 & 5) Fantasy by Oliver Goldsmith; (6) Leather Quadra by UKO; (7) Dubar by UKO; (8) Zig zag by Oliver Goldsmith; (9) Morag by UKO; (10) by Anglo American; (11) Gin Fizz by Anglo American; (12 & 13) Zebra by Anglo American; (14 & 15) by Cutler & Gross; (16) by Anglo American; (17) Cocktails by Anglo American; (18) Wings by Anglo American; (19) Scissors by Anglo American; (20) by Cutler & Gross

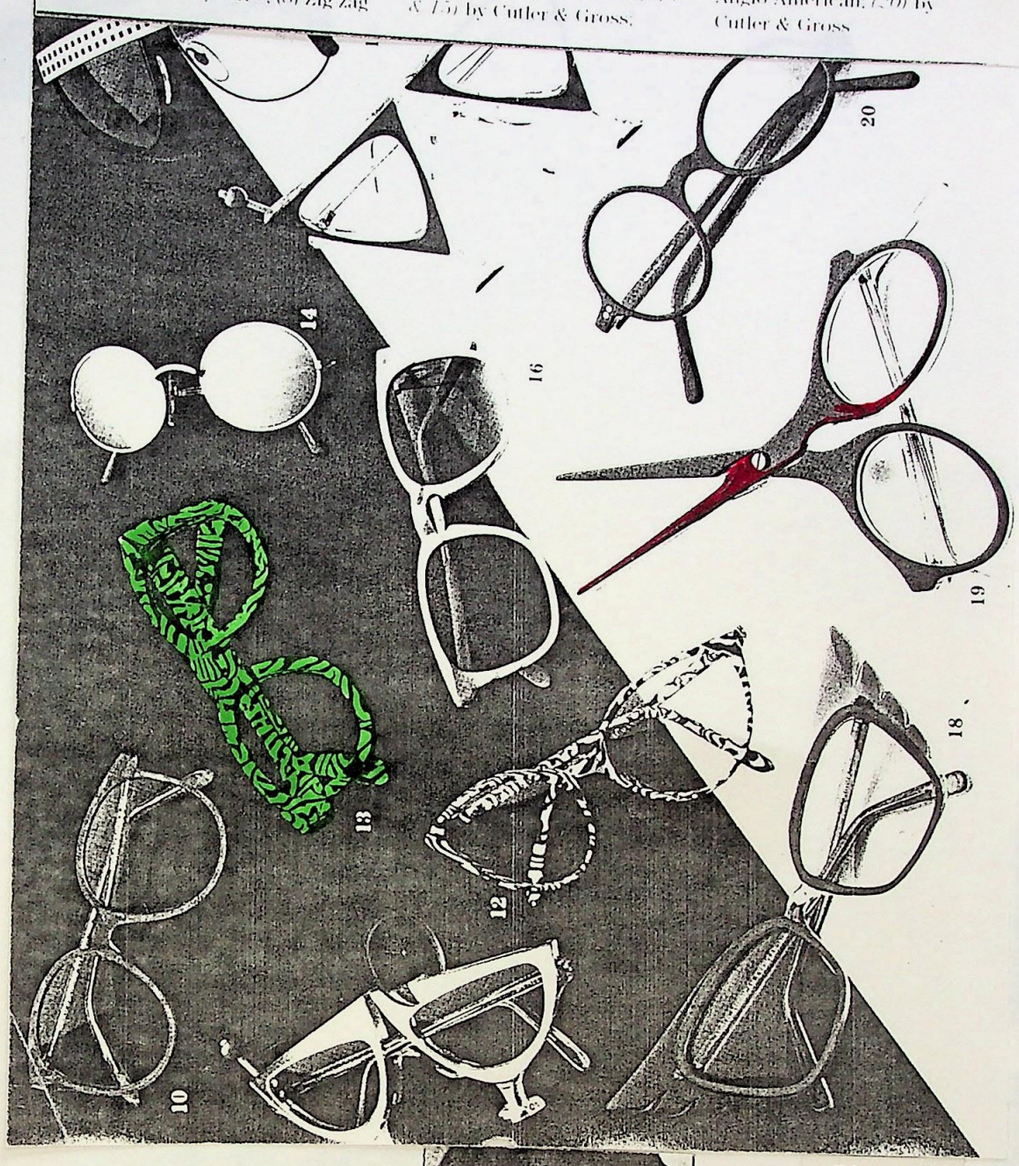
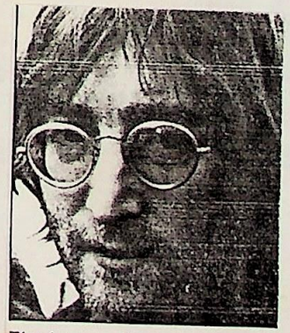


Fig. 22

Manhattan chic: Diane Keaton

All-American boy: Clark Kent



The Lennon look: 'sixties style

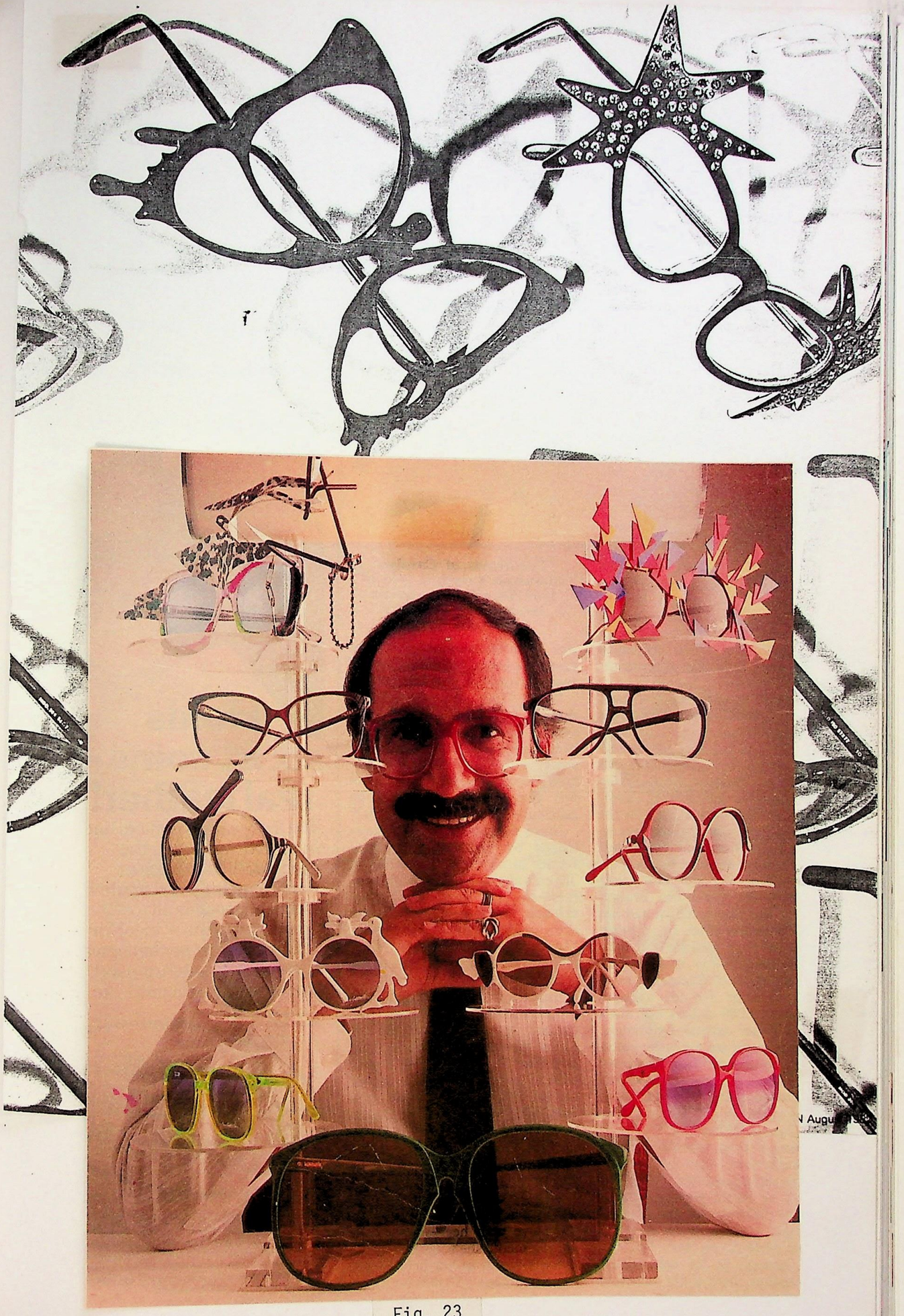


Fig. 23

Goldsmith believes that looking beyond the home market is imperative, and that selling to Europe is "coals to Newcastle". He himself spends quite a lot of time away from his studio on personal promotional visits to the U.S.A., Australia, South Africa and Sweden. He believes that the U.K. has got to hit back at Silhouette, Christian Dior and their counterparts, and show that the U.K. can do it just as well.

This philosophy ties in with the aspirations of U.K. Optical who have enlisted the help of Goldsmith with their design.

U.K. Optical is the largest U.K. manufacturing company with world-wide distribution. However, until now its enormous production capacity has mainly been used to cater for the N.H.S. spectacle frame repairs, supplying 80 percent of all N.H.S. frames. With the changes in this scheme, U.K.O. is hoping to appeal to markets around the world and not just in the U.K. They feel that the U.K. has a reputation for good manufacturing quality, but middle of the road design, so their aim is for well-designed comfortable frames but with an emphasis on fashion and flair, to appeal to all markets.

To date, U.K.O.'s range of frames are mainly designed in-house with the help of retained consultants, acknowledged experts in their field. It is U.K.O.'s policy to maintain frame profit by large stocks of a wide variety of attractive, economically produced models. They aim to cater for "housewifes, clerks, typists, shop-keepers, students, business men and women and professional people" - I quote from their own sales data. The company claims that, in the past, its experience has indicated that it is not necessary to use the name of a world-

Goldsmith believes that looking beyond the home market is imperative, and that selling to Europe is "coals to Newcastle". He himself spends quite a lot of time away from his studio on personal promotional visits to the U.S.A., Australia, South Africa and Sweden. He believes that the U.K. has got to hit back at Silhouette, Christian Dior and their counterparts, and show that the U.K. can do it just as well.

This philosophy ties in with the aspirations of U.K. Optical who have enlisted the help of Goldsmith with their design.

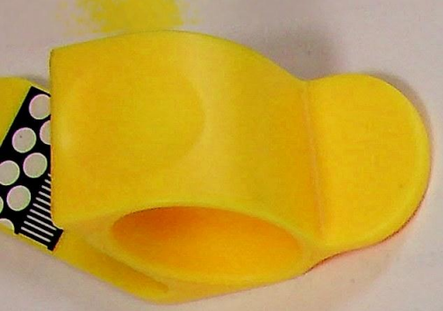
U.K. Optical is the largest U.K. manufacturing company with world-wide distribution. However, until now its enormous production capacity has mainly been used to cater for the N.H.S. spectacle frame repairs, supplying 80 percent of all N.H.S. frames. With the changes in this scheme, U.K.O. is hoping to appeal to markets around the world and not just in the U.K. They feel that the U.K. has a reputation for good manufacturing quality, but middle of the road design, so their aim is for well-designed comfortable frames but with an emphasis on fashion and flair, to appeal to all markets.

To date, U.K.O.'s range of frames are mainly designed in-house with the help of retained consultants, acknowledged experts in their field. It is U.K.O.'s policy to maintain frame profit by large stocks of a wide variety of attractive, economically produced models. They aim to cater for "housewifes, clerks, typists, shop-keepers, students, business men and women and professional people" - I quote from their own sales data. The company claims that, in the past, its experience has indicated that it is not necessary to use the name of a world-

famous fashion designer or liaise with a famous couture house. Ninety five per cent of people will choose a sensible well-designed frame which will fit well and comfortably, of a colour and style that suits them, and at a reasonable price. However, for the new collection, they are enlisting the skills of Goldsmith - to bring a new pzazz and freshness to their collection.

U.K.O. will not be taking the volume budget route. Their classic rolled gold frames were very popular all over the world. But now U.K.O. are refocussing their attention on the U.K. market, with the help of Goldsmith. Goldsmith said that these will be fashion glasses at ready-to-wear prices, fairly conservative compared with his own couture models, but interesting. The colours will not be dull. They may make U.K.O. wince at first, but they will sell. The aim: an English feel, but to European standards in colour and shape.

As the market stands at the moment, Anglo-American seem to be the exception to the British rule. Such awareness from the British consumer is still heavily dominated by the London shops, spreading slightly to the south, and to some major northern city centres. Generally, the British optical industry is light years behind the Europeans, particularly France and Italy, in design awareness, marketing strategy and fashion.



famous fashion designer or liaise with a famous couture house. Ninety five per cent of people will choose a sensible well-designed frame which will fit well and comfortably, of a colour and style that suits them, and at a reasonable price. However, for the new collection, they are enlisting the skills of Goldsmith - to bring a new pzazz and freshness to their collection.

U.K.O. will not be taking the volume budget route. Their classic rolled gold frames were very popular all over the world. But now U.K.O. are refocussing their attention on the U.K. market, with the help of Goldsmith. Goldsmith said that these will be fashion glasses at ready-to-wear prices, fairly conservative compared with his own couture models, but interesting. The colours will not be dull. They may make U.K.O. wince at first, but they will sell. The aim: an English feel, but to European standards in colour and shape.

As the market stands at the moment, Anglo-American seem to be the exception to the British rule. Such awareness from the British consumer is still heavily dominated by the London shops, spreading slightly to the south, and to some major northern city centres. Generally, the British optical industry is light years behind the Europeans, particularly France and Italy, in design awareness, marketing strategy and fashion.

PROGRESS IN THE EYES OF THE INDUSTRY

The development and progression of a new awareness towards eyewear design is personified in the yearly exhibitions held in Italy and France.

"Silmo" and "Mido" are international exhibitions where companies from countries as distant from one another as the U.K., France, Spain, Germany, Japan, Singapore, Israel and the U.S.A. come together to exhibit a fully up-dated collection of frames and sunglasses as well as machinery, raw materials and component lenses, etc. Such international meeting grounds as Mido and Silmo are snyonymous with profitable technological and aesthetic exchanges within a competition which can only be beneficial to the industry. In the past, these events reflected the endeavours of the eyewear industry in its search for its identity, for its own place and scope. At that time the industry was not able to attract a wide, non-professional public. Today the picture has changed: the eyewear industry occupies a leading position as an advanced technology business and as a mass-production and fashion phenomenon. This change was not sudden, but the result of industrial evolution which reached a peak in the 1970s and is now being followed by awareness of the new role of this industry.

Italy

Italy's eyewear industry ranks among the world's leaders. There are several reasons for this, the most evident being the industry's care for the evolution of taste and fashion in every country and their consequent ability to tailor the supply to the specific demand in a very short time. Another reason for their success in

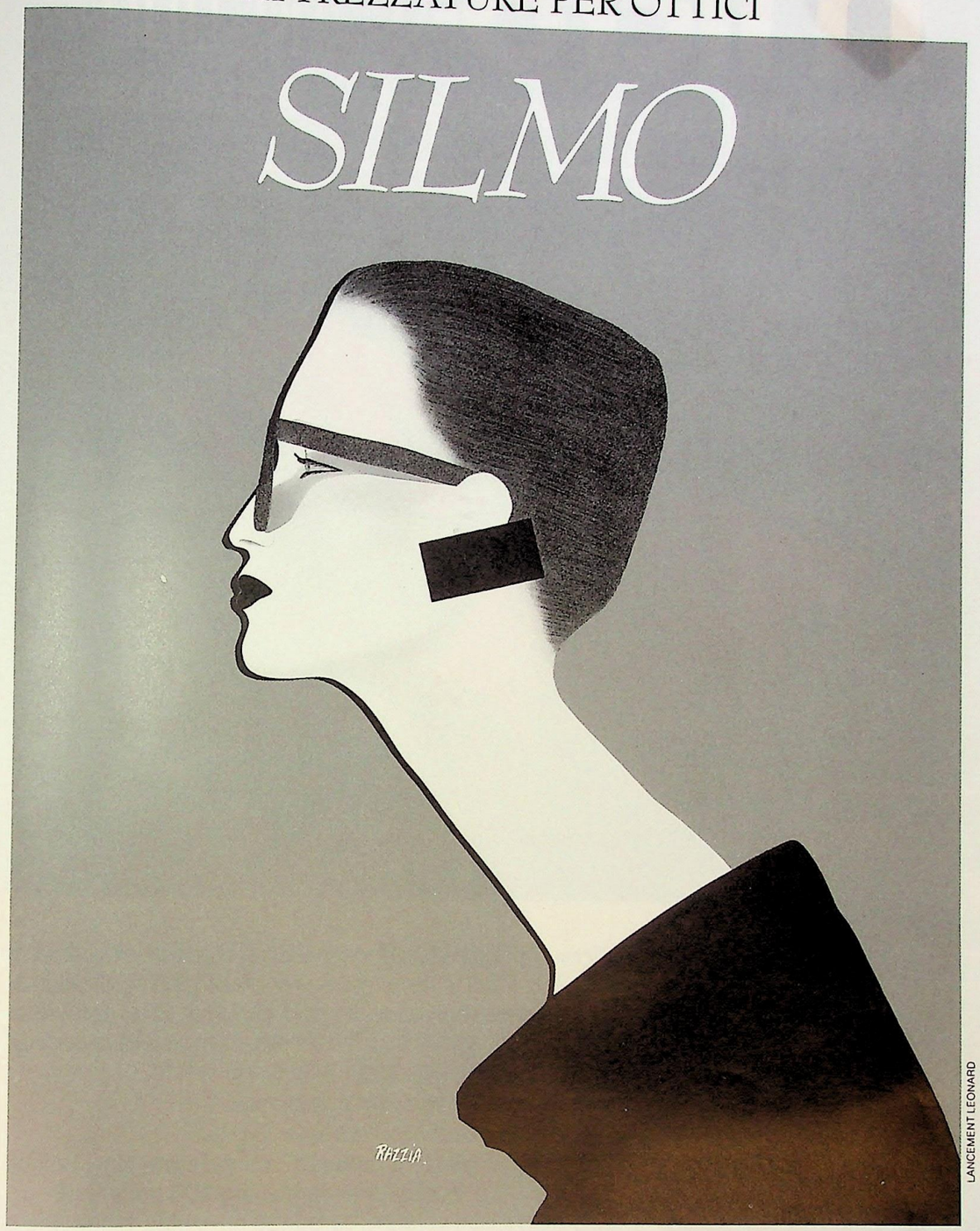
LANCEMENT LEONARD

this area is the industrialisation and rationalisation of this essentially craftsmanlike trade. The use of customised, more sophisticated machinery and highly skilled labour. Also, the close contacts between the industry and the designers and suppliers of raw materials, components and accessories has helped the Italian industry to develop an extremely efficient wide-reaching distributing system. Italian eyewear production is no longer the myriad of cottage-size firms, it has grown into a fully fledged production industry. The industry's attitude has changed. Its international approach has opened new horizons and new prospects. Harsh competition spurs initiative and inventiveness and is yielding very positive results. Their approach to the market has also changed. It is now more self-assured and planned - as is appropriate in an industry now aware of its potential.

The recent 'Silmo' exhibition (1986) for the Opthalmic Optical World in Paris proved that the French take their spectacles as seriously as any other fashion item in their wardrobe. France, in common with Germany, U.S., Japan, Italy and Austria, is a country which still relies heavily on its optical business. Approximately 23 million people in France wear glasses. Over 110 firms making up the industry there with names like Essilor, Corning and L'Amy, all known to the British market. The long-term plan of the French optical industry is to confirm to its consumers that one's glasses should be changed as often as one's outfit. The fashion angle now dominates French frame production so much that the manufacturers regarg themselves as fashion creators and have changed the name of their trade association to "The Association of Spectacle Creators".

LANCEMENT LEONARD

SALONE INTERNAZIONALE DELL' OTTICA E DELLE ATTREZZATURE PER OTTICI



24-27 OTTOBRE 1986

PARIS
PORTE DE VERSAILLES

Fig. 24

They have opened their own design studio which will minitor the trends in the textile industry and will keep their members in close touch with all aspects of fashion trends. As clothes and make-up are co-ordinated with eyewear, the general public are now beginning to recognise the extra dimension which spectacles bring to dressing up and to fashion.

The shift of emphasis in eyewear production was much in evidence in the 1986 Silmo exhibition which concentrated on the aesthetic values of the design, its organisers referring to it as the world's top frame fashion show. Very little attention was directed towards lenses and frame production, in comparison with previous years. Of the three hundred exhibiting manufacturers, 90 percent were showing spectacle frames. Several operators who visited the show expressed reservations with regard to the fashion shows which became the centrepiece of what, in earlier days, was considered a technical exhibition.

A vast array of top-quality fashion frames were in evidence; however, since the French have always excelled at designer labelling with Parisienne designer names dominating this end of the market, it was of little surprise that the "image-associated" merchandise appeared at the show, with names like Lacoste, Benelton, Laroche. A particularly tacky collection of "Harley Davidson" sunglasses were exhibited by "Maudal" for the type of man who would never be caught dead on a bike. The licensing collections which endorse motor cars and motor bikes still rely heavily on the gimmick selling point and certainly did not reflect the abundance of high fashion collections to come out of Silmo.

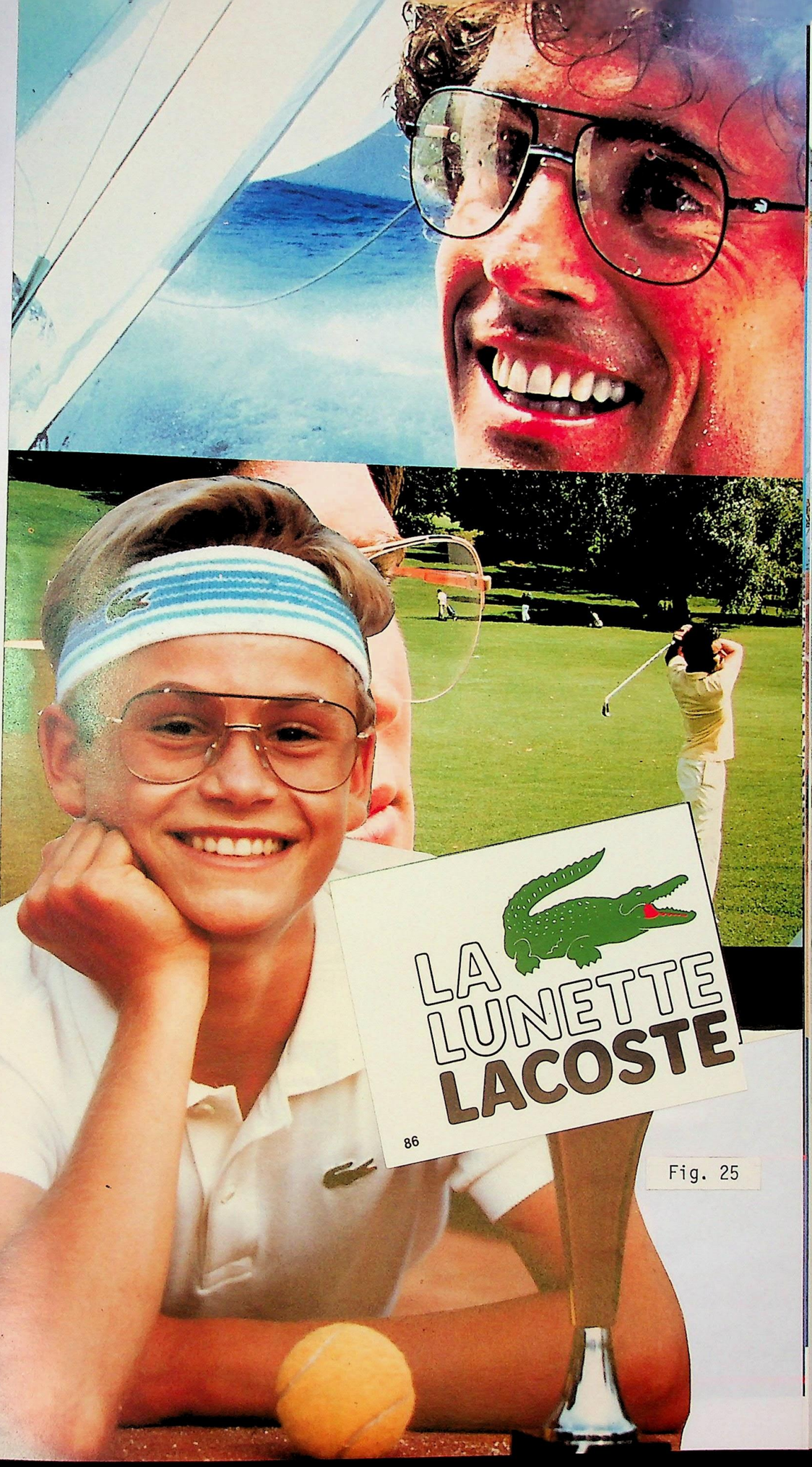


Fig. 25


Alfa Romeo
eyewear styled by LINO VENEZIANI
SpA - Via Prese, 2/E - 30029 SAN STINO DI LIVENZA (Venezia) - Italy - Tel. 0421/36.00.71 - tlx 315050 LIVEN I

Fig. 26


LIGHT MEDIUM BOLD
P.H. OLIVIERO TOSCANI
benetton
FRAMES
by Anser

Fig. 27

On the other hand, the success of the Benetton logo and the experience of Industrie Ochiali Anser of Treviso, Italy created a range of witty light eyewear suitable for any face structure. Two lines are currently available from the optical trade, "Light, Medium, Bold" is one of them - it consists of three basic models

Art - Round / Plain - Square / Press - Pantoscopic

in three versions: the featherweight "light classic", medium and bold. These unisex models came in black, honey, ice green, crystal and mother of pearl.

Benetton eyewear by Anser is sold by leading opticians and at a franchised chain of shops called "Diecidecimi" set up by Anser all over Italy. Anser are the only eyewear makers to ever do this.

The area of sunglasses design is one which has always enjoyed a seat in fashion with a mainly sporty holiday appeal. Many people feel that sunglasses have enjoyed all the "fad" phases possible and that there is little further that the form can go, so it will be the development of the lenses which will dictate its progress from here. However, the 1986 collection showed little evidence to back these opinions.

Sunglasses are always required to be stylish either taking a "classy" or "trendy" orientation. Their markets are diverse, the environment in which they will be worn dictating the wearers choice. A progression from sunglasses to ski-goggles can be seen in the sunglasses form of '86 and '87. Many 1960 shapes have been revived but there has also been a progression in form from the frame holding the protective lenses to an overall frame made of the one material.

These forms have been explored to their limits with clip-on brow-bars available in a broad range of colours, in effect giving the wearer six pairs of sunglasses in one. (fig.29)

The frequency with which these products are worn and removed has led to the development of foldable sunglasses, items which have been victims of the cheap gimmick factor but which have also been taken very seriously and developed by Tatti Industri Ottica of Italy in their "Superleggeri" range. Simple styling and thorough technical study to reduce the amount of plastics to a minimum have been the highlights of this collection. They are small enough to fit in a waistcoat pocket, with a rugged folding mechanism, enabling them to be folded hundreds of times without failing like a toy. They are anything but toys, the technological content of these sunglasses being the outcome of years of research, to improve fitting and strengthen the almost invisible folding mechanism.

F.O.Vs. took a completely different slant with the design of "Columbia sport" made of shatterproof polycarbonate or polymethyl-acrylate. These are available in ten colours, the methylacrylate models allowing the harmless tanning rays through, allowing for an overall tan, even if wearing sunglasses.

Despite a previous bad summer, British sunglasses were in abundance alongside models by Oliver Goldsmith as well as models incorporating the lacoste crocodile on the lens and temples and the Nikon collection which included a model in titanium.

Polaroid sunglasses have always been good to look at, and through,

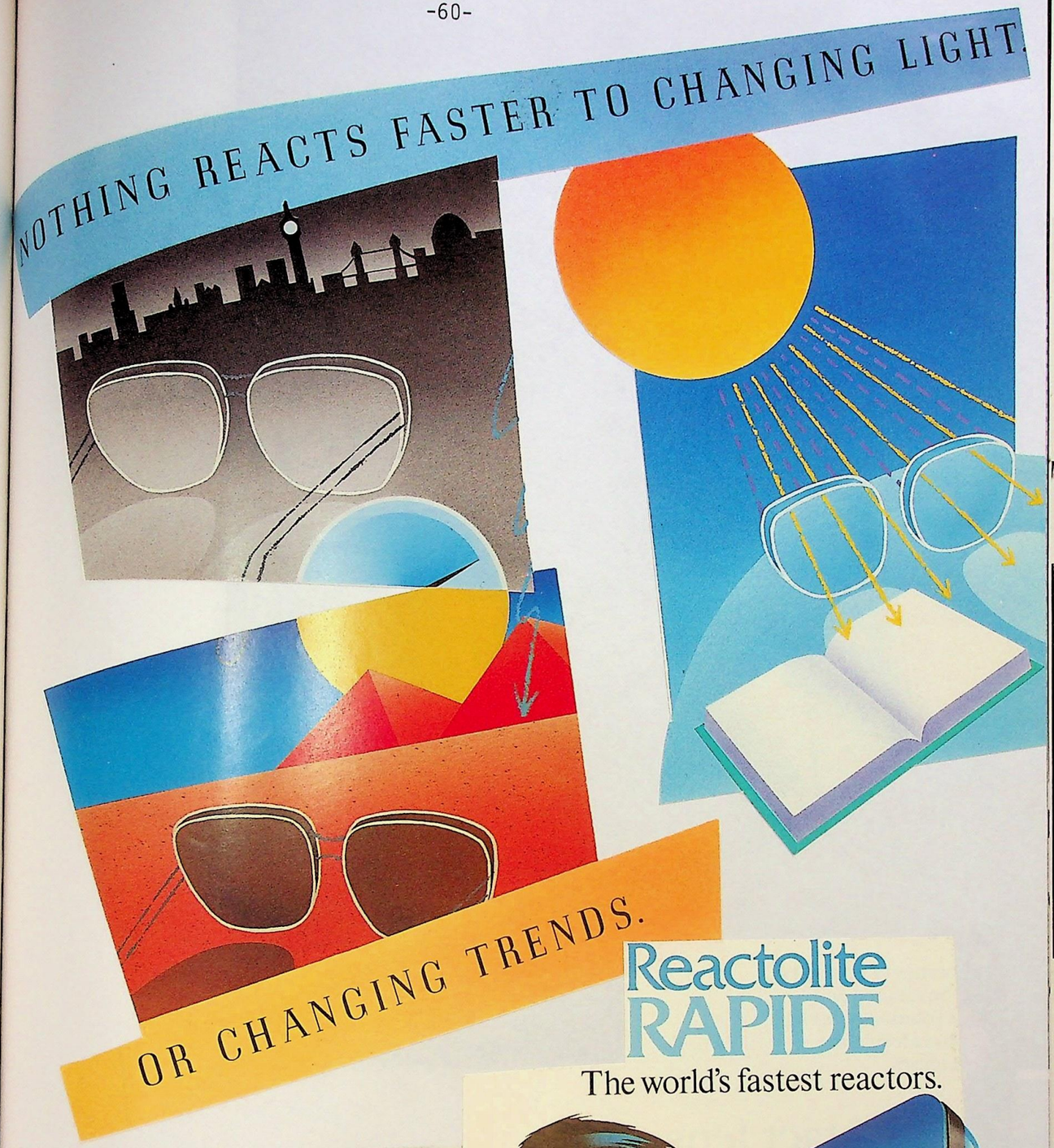

NOTHING REACTS FASTER TO CHANGING LIGHT,
OR CHANGING TRENDS.
Reactolite
RAPIDE
The world's fastest reactors.

Fig. 28

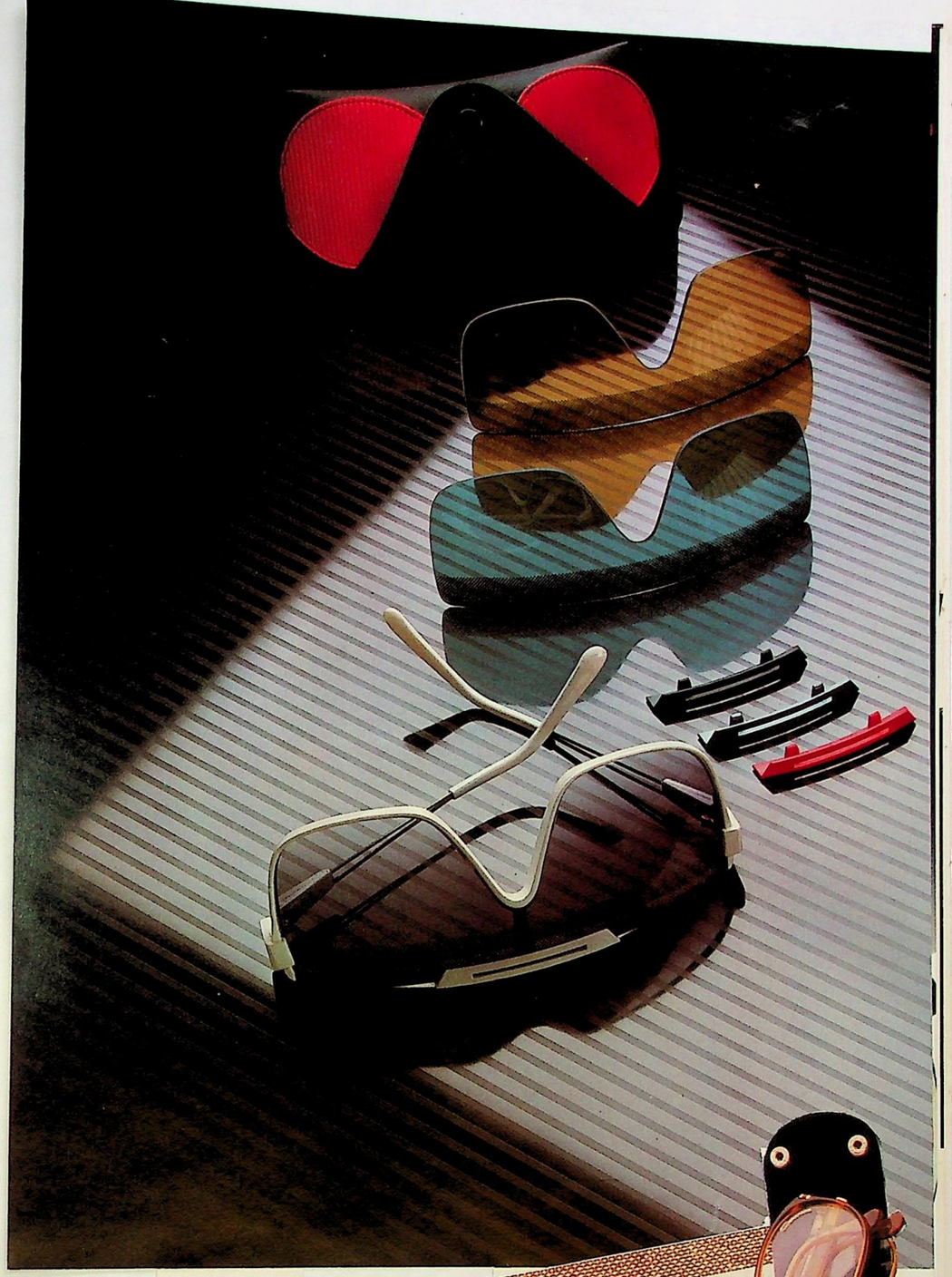


Fig. 29

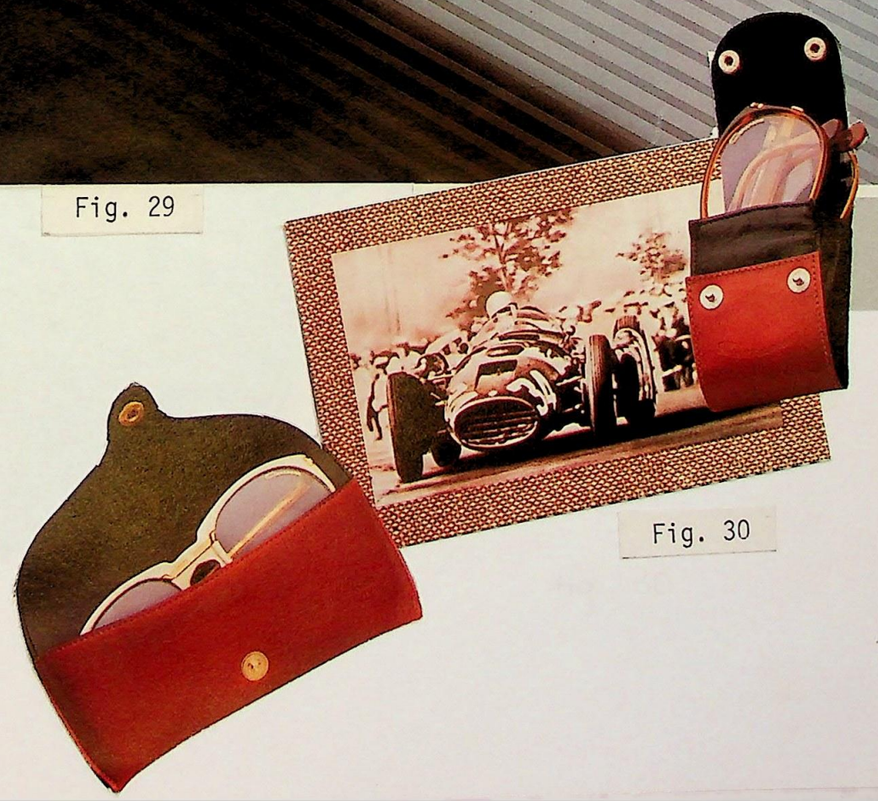


Fig. 30

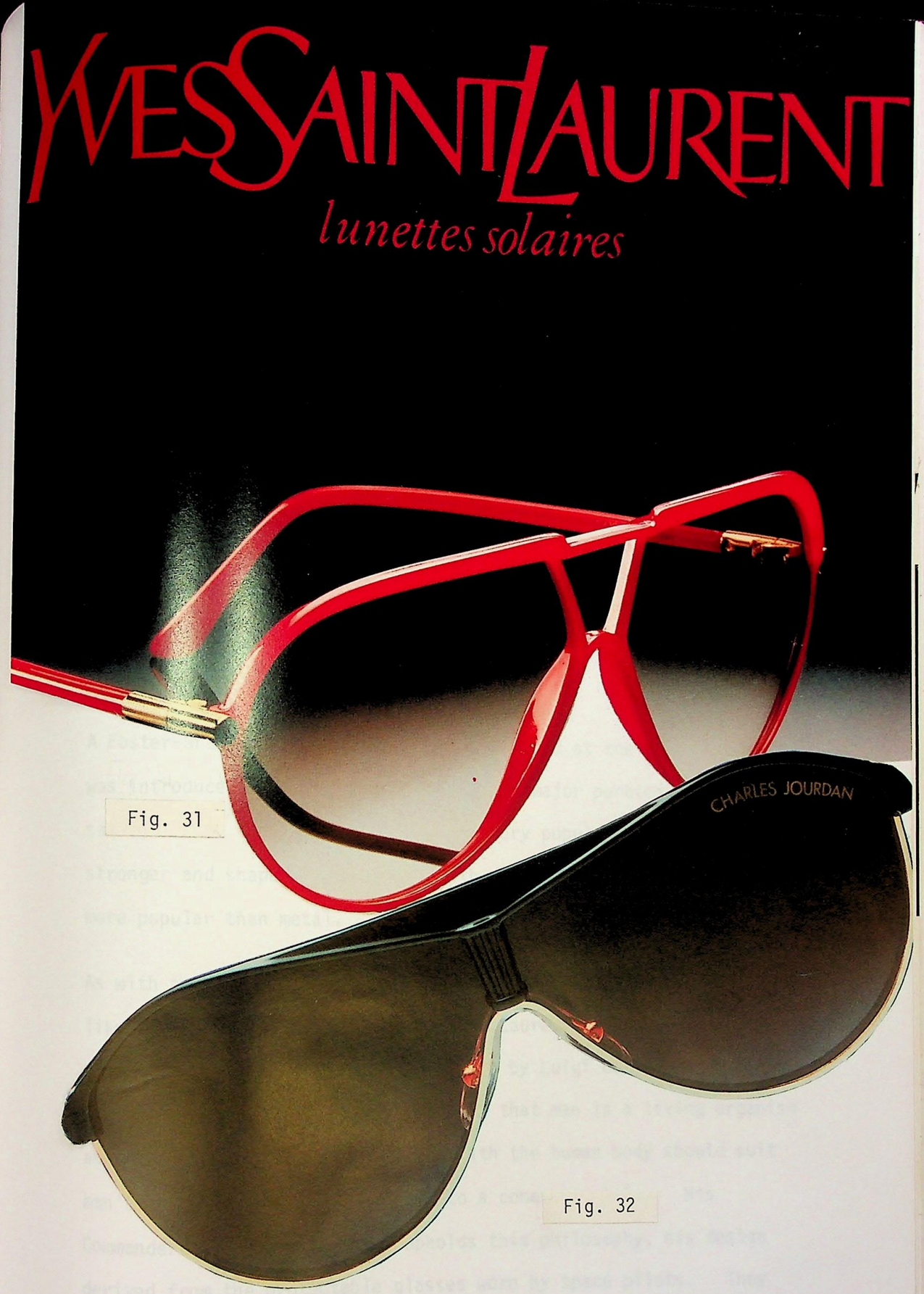


Fig. 31

Fig. 32

and 1986 proved to be no exception ranging from the chemist range with styles in the £5.99 - £8.99 price bracket through to the Classic collection with styles costing £14.99 - £21.99. Clip-ons (shades) were also available, with the versatility of being attachable to any frame, a development in this area being the supply of "uncut shades" to the opticians; these he/she can cut down to fit any shape frame.

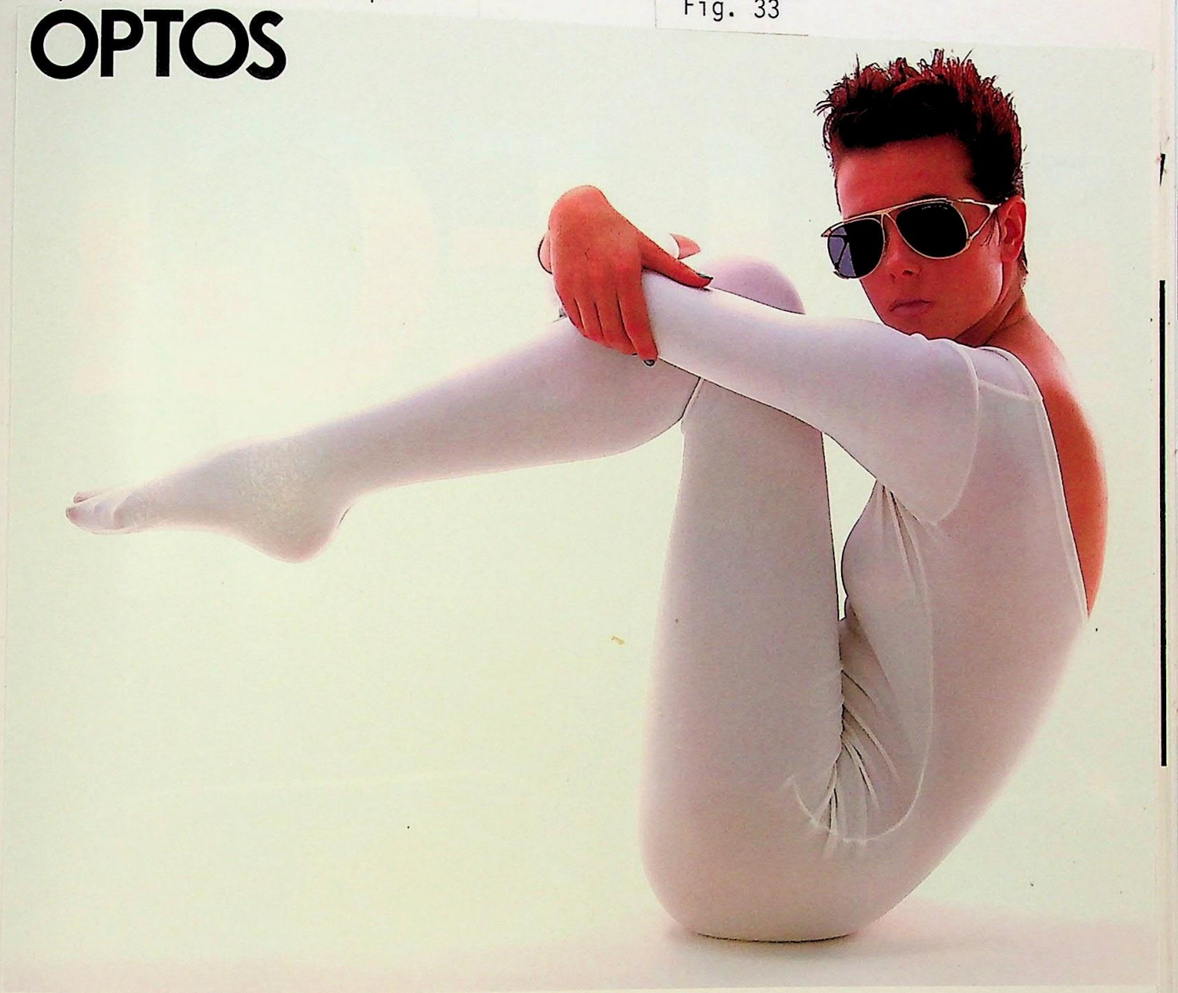
The demand was for sunglasses with darker lenses and reactolite rapide plastic lenses were increasingly popular. These are the fastest reacting lenses in the world (turning from clear to dark in less than 30 seconds). They eliminate the need for clip-ons or second pair for bright light protection. These lenses are used in the Pilkington range of frames.

A Foster-Grant range of sunglasses was aimed at the 15-20 age group was introduced and this accounted for the major portion of their sales; French and Italian styling was very popular with colours stronger and shapes explored in depth, with plastic frames much the more popular than metal.

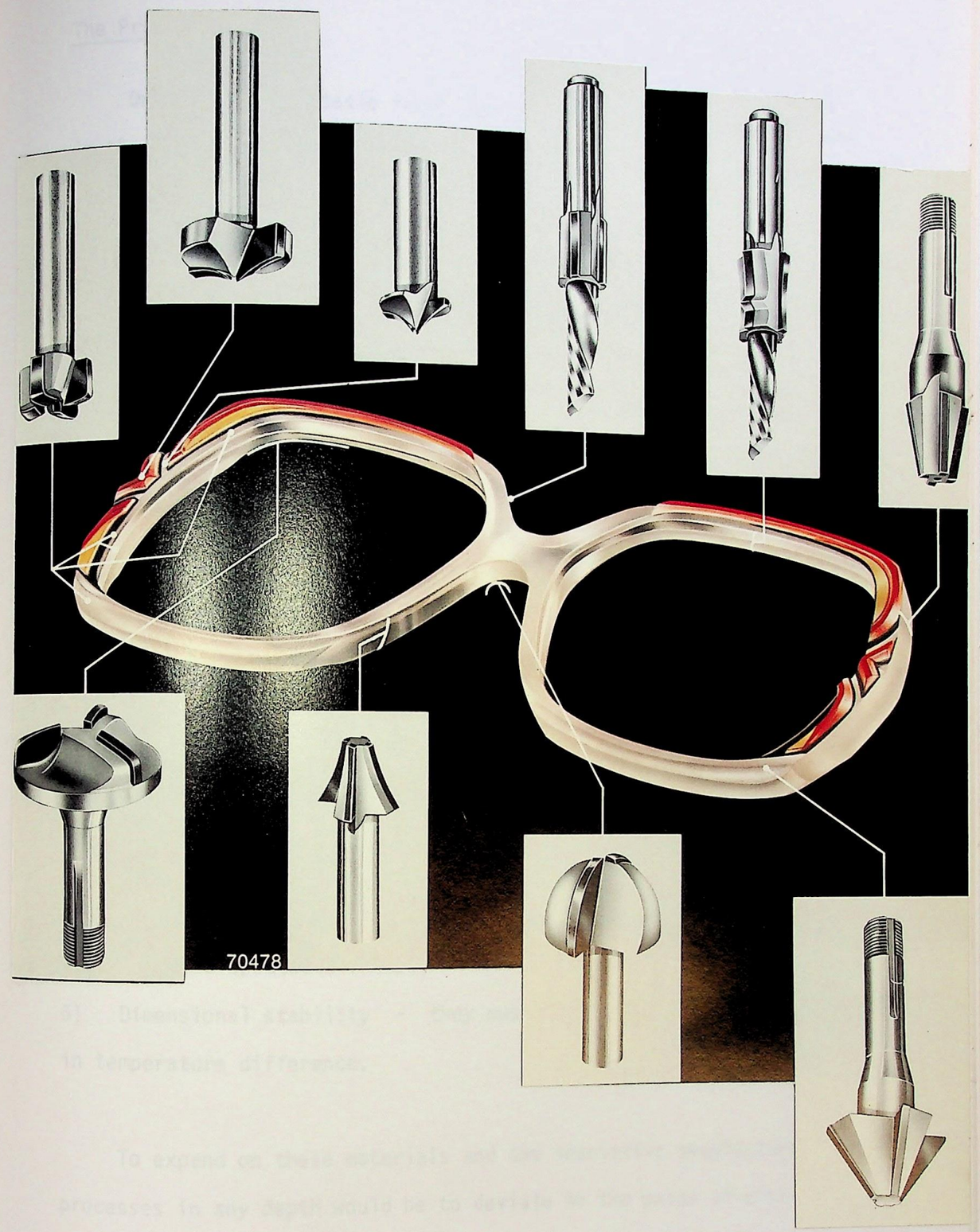
As with spectacle frames, the sunglasses featuring designer names like Mary Quant, Ted Lapidus, Yves St. Laurent and Charles Jourdan were also on exhibition with sunglasses by Luigi Colanni receiving much favour. Colanni's philosophy is that man is a living organism and anything that comes in contact with the human body should suit man's vital functions and blend into a coherent whole. His Commander range of sunglasses upholds this philosophy, his design derived from the protectable glasses worn by space pilots. They

are made by carbon fibre for lightness and ergonomically designed for comfort. With Wing Commander II, Colanni's ergonomic patterns enter the "polymorphe" mechanism which expands and retracts to suit the face structure - "The basic concept", says Colanni, "is simplicity". This concept lies behind the egg line since curves represent a natural shape.

Fig. 33



SPECTACLE FRAMES - THE PRODUCT ITSELF


70478

The Product

One area of spectacle frame design which is universally the same is the basic requirements in a spectacle frame which dictate the materials used in their production. These requirements are defined by the optician, the wearer and our environment.

However, from a technical and practical point of view, there are several things which dictate, and explain to the man on the street, exactly why either metals or plastics are used in mass-production of spectacles.

1) Mechanical durability;

2) Weight;

3) Colour fastness;

4) Ease of manipulation - it is the optician who has the task of making the final adjustments to the frame to step across the line between discomfort and comfort. These adjustments are necessary to compensate for the difference in headshape of people within the pre-defined sizes;

5) Ease of production - 98 percent of the market today is for mass-produced spectacle frames;

6) Dimensional stability - they must be able to withstand extremes in temperature difference.

To expand on these materials and the innovative manufacturing processes in any depth would be to deviate to the point of distraction from the main subject matter, the area in itself being of sufficient quantities for an independent dissertation. However, to have pursued the subject of spectacle frame design without having brought this

Fig. 34

section of the design to attention would have been to neglect an area which has put spectacle frames where they are today and without which the possibility of fulfilling the ideal of a wardrobe of spectacles would not be possible on any scale.

From the Design to the Display

When a design for a frame has been developed and colours have been decided upon, the first requirement is the production of tools. to duplicate that design in a range of measurements and large quantities accurately and consistently. A marriage between the craftsman and the designer has always been necessary for the development and production of a spectacle frame which is mechanically efficient and aesthetically appealing. One of the most difficult processes in the successful production of high-quality fashionable frames is the transition from handmade prototype to a mass-production system.

New colours are constantly being introduced and new plastic materials become available, all offering a new challenge to the artistry of the designer and the inventive skill of the craftsman. Because of the wide range of properties required of spectacle frame materials, it is not surprising that an amusing variety has been used throughout the years - wood, leather, bone, horn, ivory, tortoise shell and both base and precious metals such as steel, nickel, aluminium, silver, gold and platinum. None of these, with the exception of metal, has survived the advent of plastics which arrived half a century ago at a time when tortoiseshell frames were in fashion, plastics quickly becoming the poor-man's tortoise shell.

The materials from which the frames are made do have an important bearing, however. It has been found that often there is little consistency in popularity of a range from country to country. In Europe, several years ago, the man's metal or metal combination frame was most popular, whereas in Britain a heavier monotone or two tone was much more popular. It was not possible to determine any reason for this, beyond it being merely a question of taste.

"Designer" Exclusivety - A Luxury for a Minority

For a minority of spectacle wearers, an individual design and fit are sufficient to make them search beyond the mass production racks despite the vastness of the array.

Tony Gross - of Cutler and Gross Opticians, is one of the few opticians prepared to design and make up individual spectacles on site for his customers at £68.00 a pair. Most opticians do not find it commercially viable. Mr. Gross describes the difference between this and mass manufacturing as "The difference between couture and off-the-peg clothes".

He creates a basic fashion shape, and then makes a series of detailed adjustments - to the bridge, colour, frame thickness and so on - to suit the individual. Gross works on an accumulation of feelings and ideas - he looks at what people on the street are wearing and visits fairs and exhibitions. However, he feels that eyewear fashion does not change and sees this making it a "tricky thing to get right"; his designs are simple but stylish and at a reasonable price.

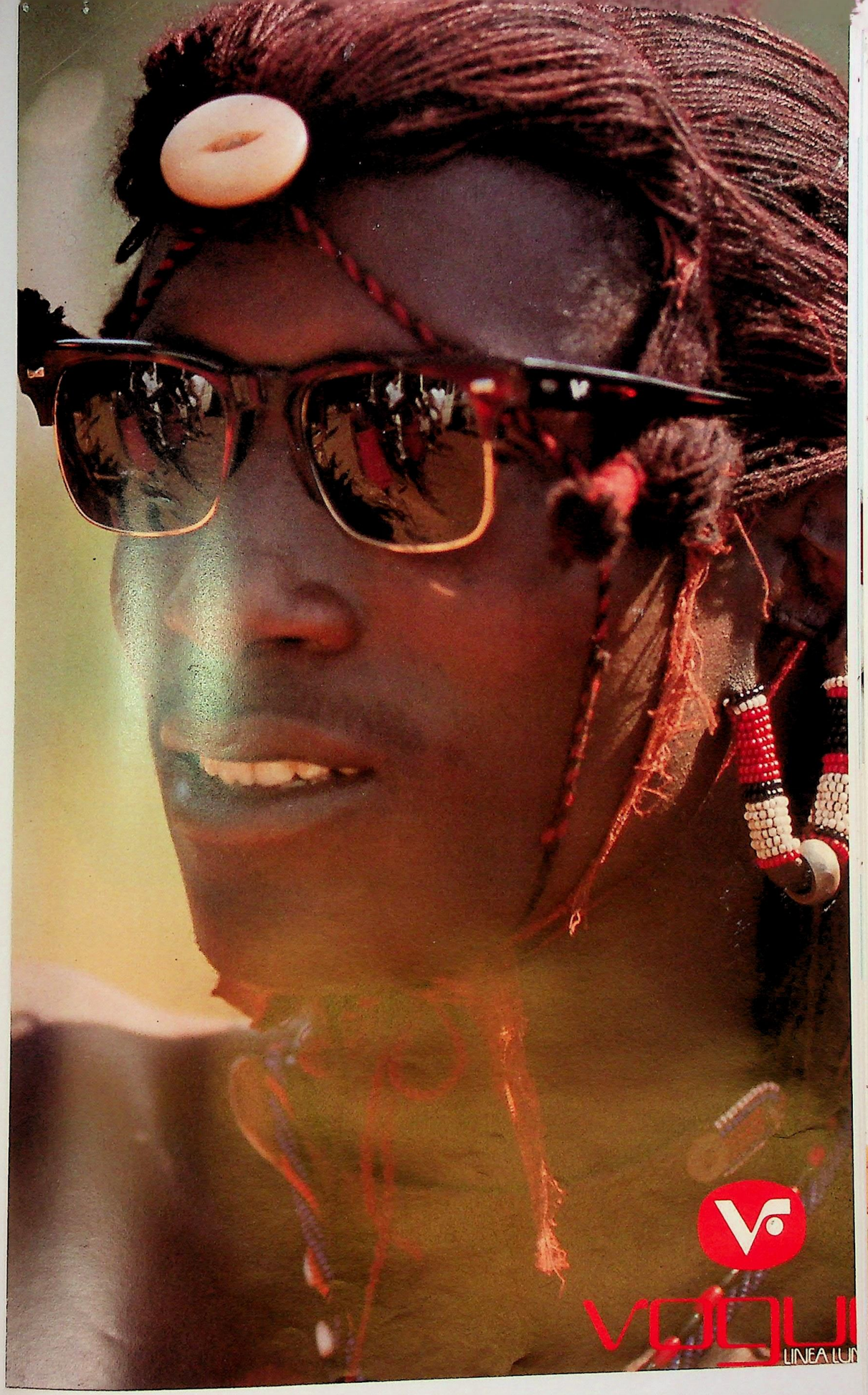
He has also started the design of a range of sunglasses for sale in exclusive fashion shops like "Joseph". Most opticians are conservative in taste and they cannot carry a full range of colours and lenses, he explains. So his designs are wholesaled specifically for the retail fashion market.

Gross is aiming for an individual identifiable style - to stand out among the wealth of bland elements usually seen on the sunglasses stands - however, he does not see originality as the essence of his work.

The Necessity for New Horizons

In common with the other U.K. designers at the top end of the market, Gross makes 50 percent of his sales abroad in the U.S. and Australia. This pattern suggests the need for U.K. manufacturers with an eye for spectacle frame design to be longsighted enough to be able to reach beyond the home market.

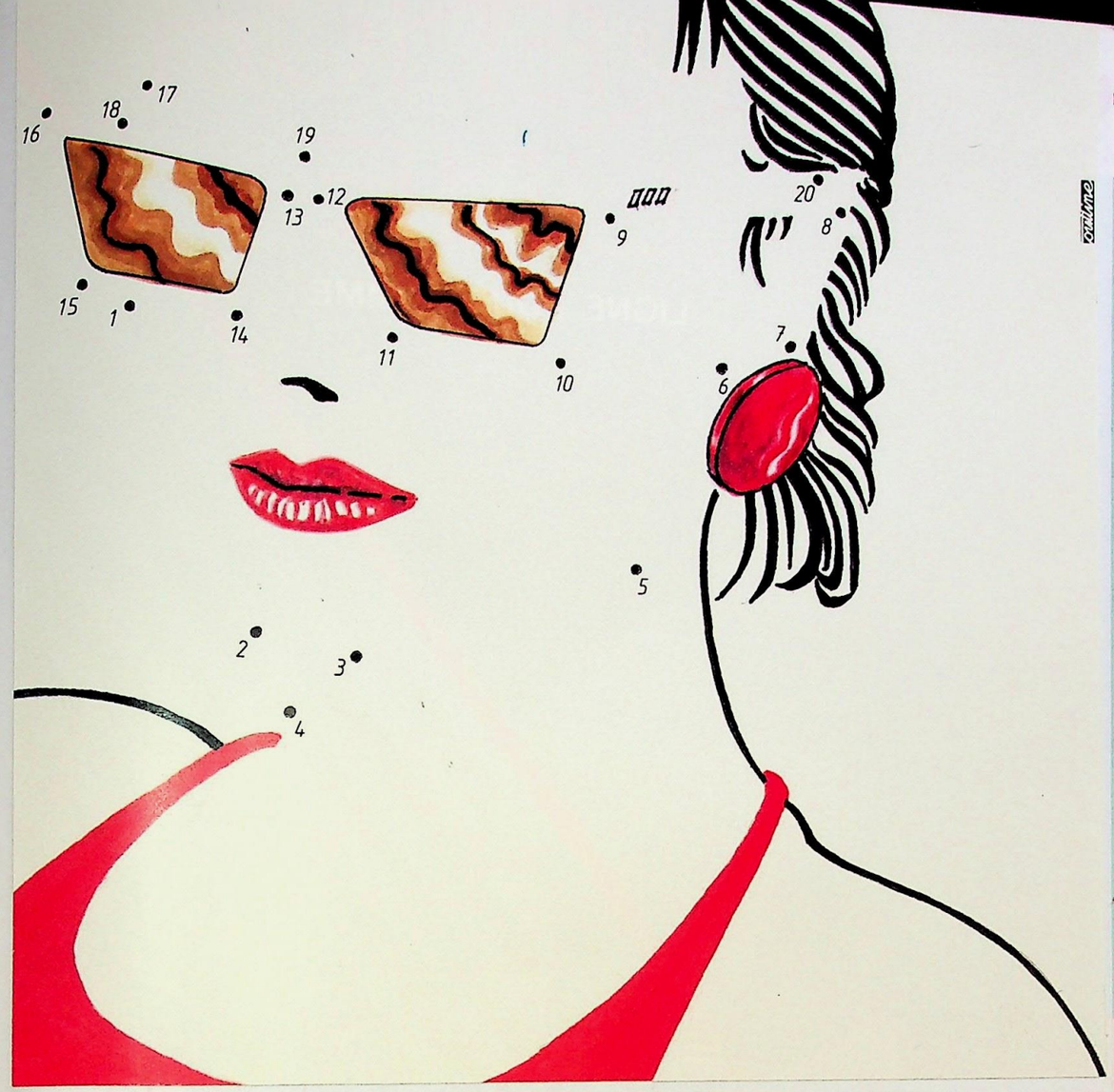
EYEWEAR AND ITS ROLE IN FASHION



Apart from materials, there are considerable headaches when designing for the mass market. The success of a frame is governed by the nose, eye and eyebrow line. These vary widely, so frames are designed to fit the majority. It is necessary not to make the frames too thin or this will minimise their capacity to hold the lenses in place, and often it is the requirement of the wearer that the frame should conceal the thickness of the lenses so that they appear to be less powerful (weaker) than they really are. Also, once fashion was considered in their design (1940) there was at first considerable controversy as to whether the frame should match the complexion or the costume but eventually that was left up to the individual wearer to decide.

Because planning a range is a relatively long project, it makes the designer's relationship with the fashion world a difficult one. They browse the fashion magazines and get information from their public relations people; however, the fashion forecasters tend to 'hedge their bets' and they are usually too late anyway. The best selling British fluorescent colours, for example, were planned two years in advance (fast manufacturing and a quick turnaround of design is crucial).

The fashion influence in frames is mainly in colour. During the period 1955 - 1965, chiefly due to the introduction of acrylic materials, which could take brilliant colours in a vast array and would not fade, colour frames became very popular with ladies and children. However, the last five years of the sixties saw the introduction of heavier black or dark frames which became all the



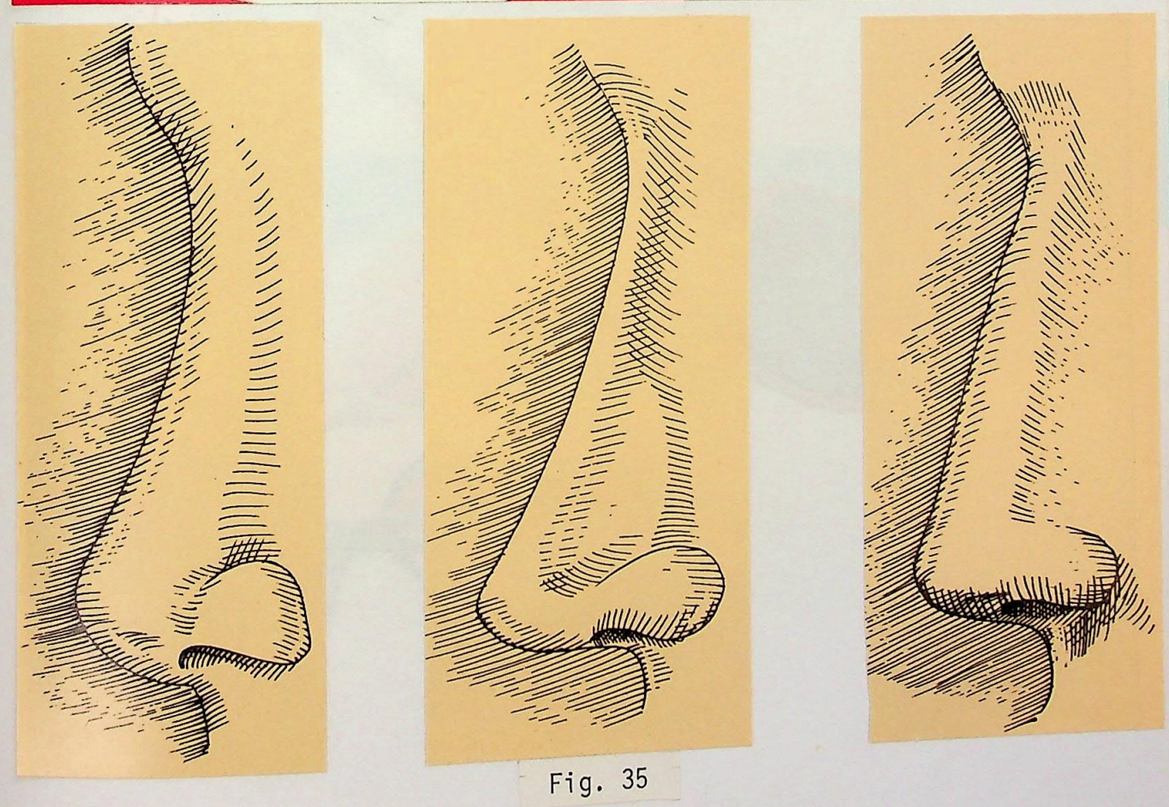


Fig. 35

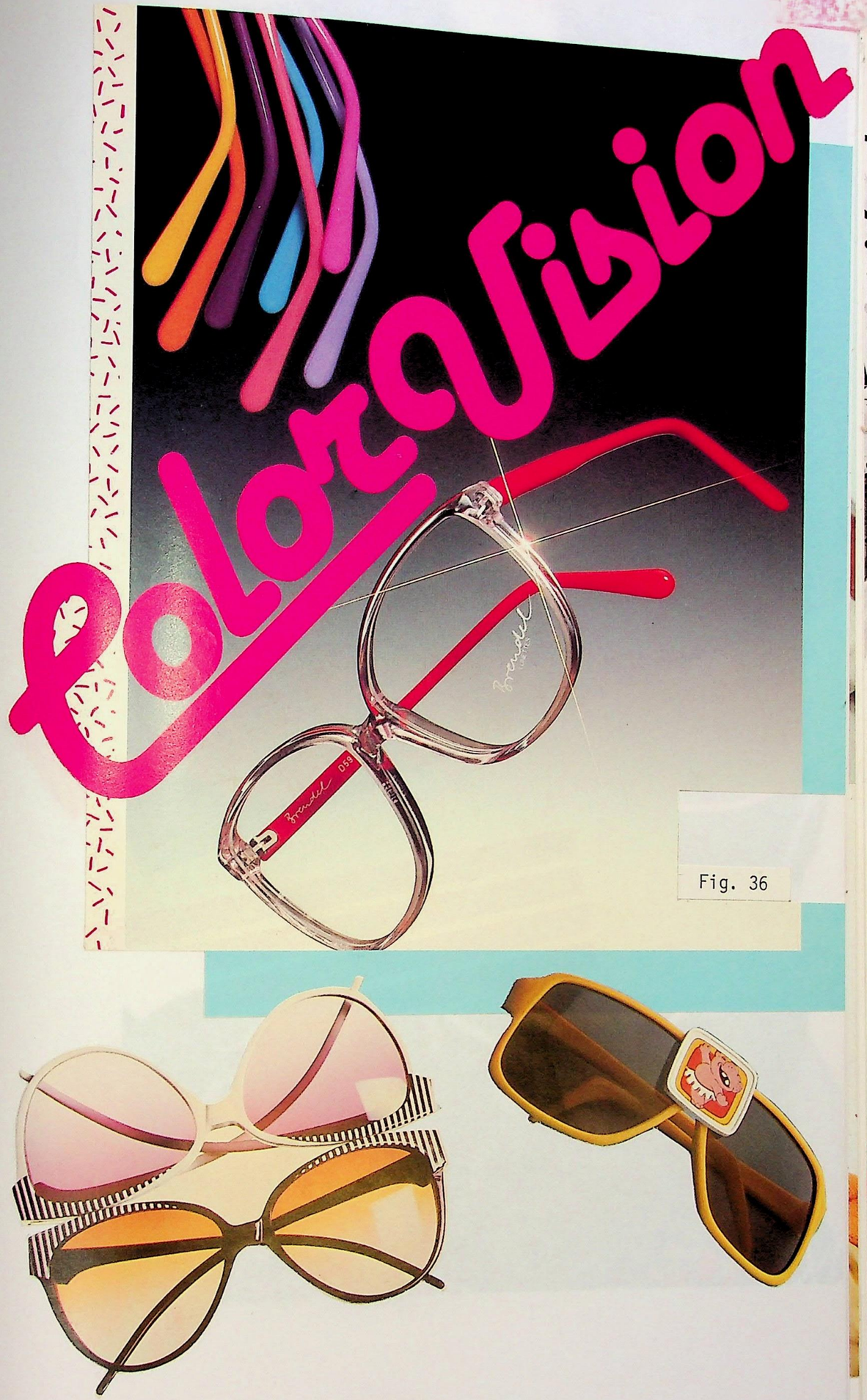


Fig. 36

Fig. 37

SELTI elettronica
SALDATRICI
AD ALTA FREQUENZA
FORNI FUSORI
A MEDIA FREQUENZA
SALDATRICI
PUNTATRICI
ATTREZZATURE

rage. In the early 1970s, black lost its popularity and various shades of brown mottled and lightly mottled plastics took its place.

Fashion's more suggestive creations involve colour interpretations. Designers try to complement textiles; however, spectacles can remain fashionable for up to four years. Colouring is different too. Some of the beautiful colours being used in textiles just would not work in spectacles. For 1986 the colours were soft and spread over a fully renovated chromatic scale. Bold and soft hues were blended in romantic contrast, while graphic strokes of strong, almost shocking colour "re-invented the classic palette".

In the world of fashion, style is an integral requirement. Style is not only what one wears but how they wear it, the extra items they care with them, the way they walk or talk, in fact everything that demonstrates the kind of person they are. This is why spectacles have taken such a prominent role in fashion - because hardly any other accessory emphasises a personal style better than eyewear.

Trends in frame styles for men, women and children are not universally the same. However, a Vogue article in the sixties stated that there are basically two types of women: those who resent having to wear spectacles and want them to be as inconspicuous as possible, but still attractive, and those who, whether they really enjoy wearing spectacles or not, figure there is no use trying to hide them, the latter being women who wore extreme styles which varied from season to season. However, today's fashion-conscious women are now discovering eyewear as a fashion accessory, picking the shape and colour of the frame, as any other detail to suit their own image.

Fig. 38

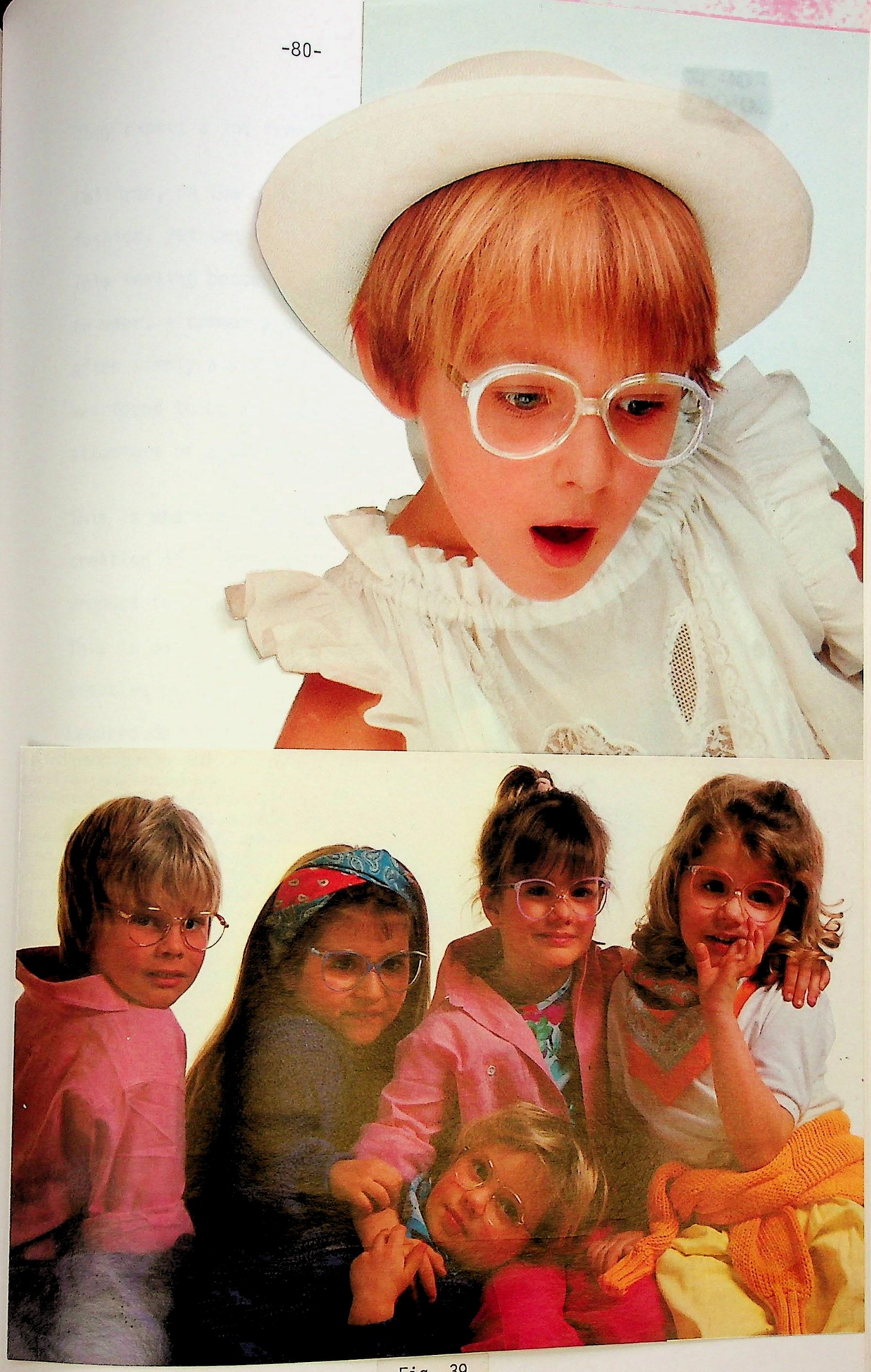


Fig. 39

They expect a lot from their eyewear as well as their attire.

Children, on the other hand, tend to be relatively innocent of fashion, yet can find strictly functional spectacles repellant. This feeling becomes stronger if the spectacles are not comfortable to wear, a common problem in the past as children's eyewear was often simply a scaled-down version of the models for adults. This was found to be an inadequate approach because of the different sttucture of a child's face.

This is where the designer's responsibility asserts itself in the creation of a comfortable, efficient and aesthetically pleasing product for the wearer's major form of expression - his or her face. This is particularly true of Leonard De Neffe's collection, his creative philosophy concentrating on the wearer's individual charm. Leonard de Neffe ranks highly in harmoniously matching elegance and advanced design. Each frame is designed around a style and is the expression of an innovative spirit. When Leonard de Neffe founded his company in 1979 in Switzerland, his thought was to offer something to people which would give them pleasure. He began his career with five styles manufactured under his own name, with his wife as head designer. Within seven years he had built up a far-reaching retail sales system which today includes over forty-one countries, serving them exclusively with about 60 styles in over 1,000 variations. His own design studio also creates and manufactures accessories such as expensive silk scarves. "L.D." did everything himself. His success proves that this was the right policy. His insistence at the highest quality and the best design leadership from the very beginning was confirmed by the fact that most styles

remain in the collection for years, needing no changes to satisfy fashion demands. The philosophy of L.D. pays homage to the modern way of life, the modern look; it expresses a new approach to life, a blend of fashion and classic elegance. It was L.D. who introduced the metal model with the hand engraved zodiac sign of the wearer to New York, Cologne, Milan and Madrid, another of De Neffe's means of giving his collection a personalised elegance. De Neffe's models are worn by personalities from the world of politics, the stage and industry - a collection which has been described as "embodying everybody's wishes but not their expectations".

Fig. 40

Leonhard DeNeffe®

Lunettes
Zürich · Paris · New York

THE PRODUCT MESSAGE

The destiny of eyeglasses has certainly been amazing, evolving from rudimentary instruments smelling of sulphur to fashion accessories in their own right. They have become protagonists of a new life-style.

Another aspect of eyewear fashion is the fact that behind the appearance of playful fashion trends, glasses contain within themselves secret codes to be deciphered by observers who are able to read so many things into a person's personality, hidden in the face behind the frames. Spectacles are much more than the optically functional and fashionable qualities they project. There are those who see them as a message, an expression of self.

The "Safilo" range of frames has been designed with these considerations in mind. The structure and finest detail, the content and the message, have all been worked into that moment when the final product is presented to its potential purchaser. If the emphathy comes across, the potential buyer will have no problems expressing their personal recognition. From that moment, that "model message" becomes the personal symbol of the individual who has made it his or her own. The colours, transparency and model lines translate the personality in a collected multitude of expressions, as many as the changing inclinations of character come to suggest. This changing needs certainties and in the Safilo collection.. the safest guarantee is granted to even the most flighty and fickle interpretation of character by the parameter of perfect quality.

Fig. 42

OPTICAL INDUSTRY
OPHTALMIC & S.F LENSES
See us at SILMO 86
Stand F-66

An Element of Fantasy

Alain Mikli, of Paris, on the other hand, explores fantasy eyewear: eyewear to see and be seen in. Since 1978 Mikli has explored all aspects of eyewear as "objects de fantasie". His models today are less daring and more balanced, frames are thicker, trim is more subdued and materials are simpler, yet there is no lack of innovation and originality.

Mikli relies on the close collaboration of Chantal Thomas, Anne Marie Beretta and Claude Montana and now exclusively launches his phosphorescent eyewear: traditional looking frames that absorb light in daytime to release it at night.

The element of fantasy has always played an important role in the promotion of sunglasses, conjuring images of sun, sea, sand or holidays. Wide spaces, sun, sea and freedom are all part of the "Club Mediterannee", an image which is highlighted in their eyewear line for 1987, particularly in the following models.

Lifesavers and Ropes : Round or octagonal shape with gold coloured ring and a thin thread to underscore the "lifesaver" effect.

Windsurf - Squarish, graded trim to give the impression of a surfboard in water.

Maga of Italy, on the other hand, took a different approach to their sunwear in 1986 with a range of "retro frames" for the more sophisticated, the engraved rings and tortoise shell bar promoting the look of "the intellectual on holiday".

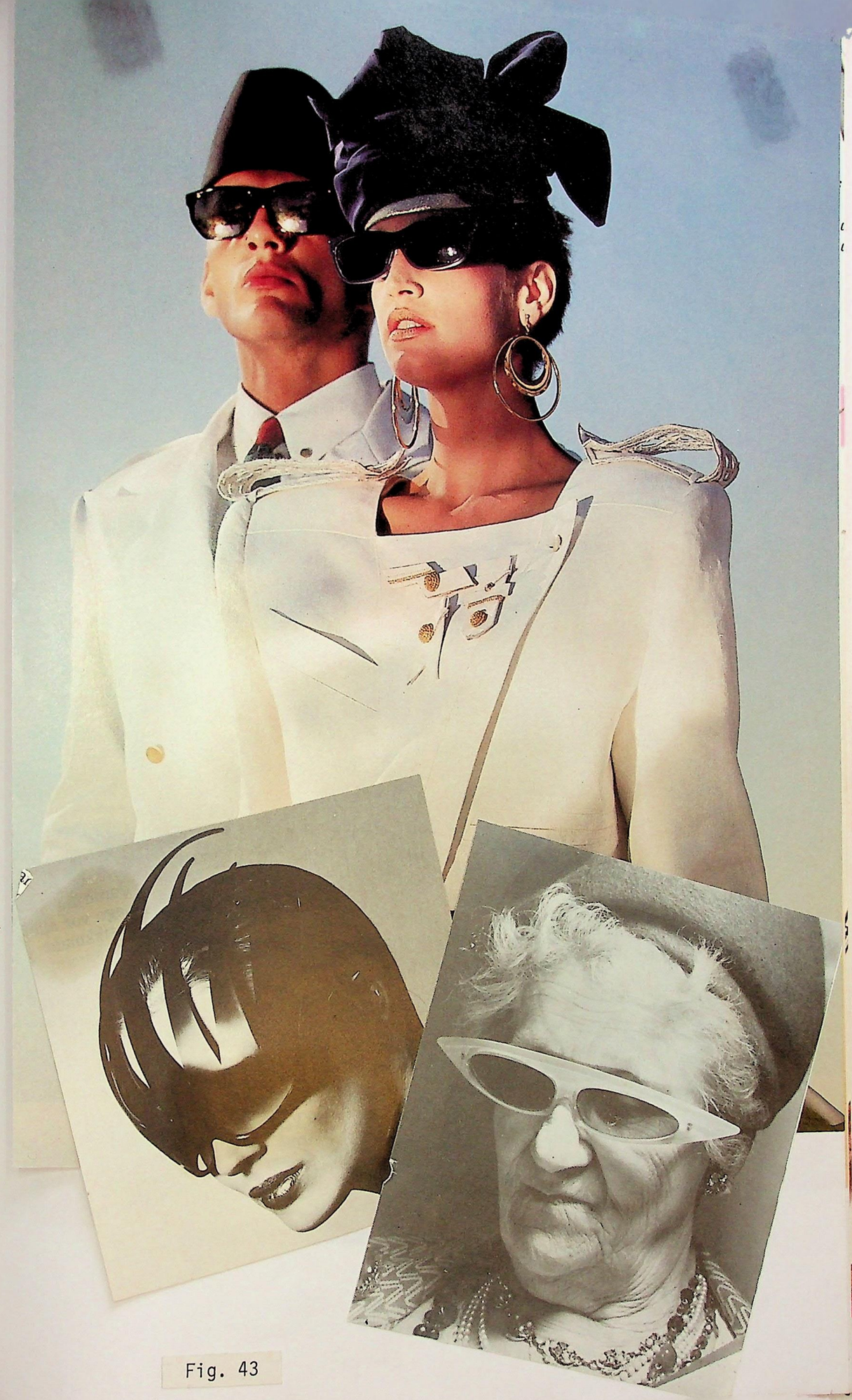


Fig. 43

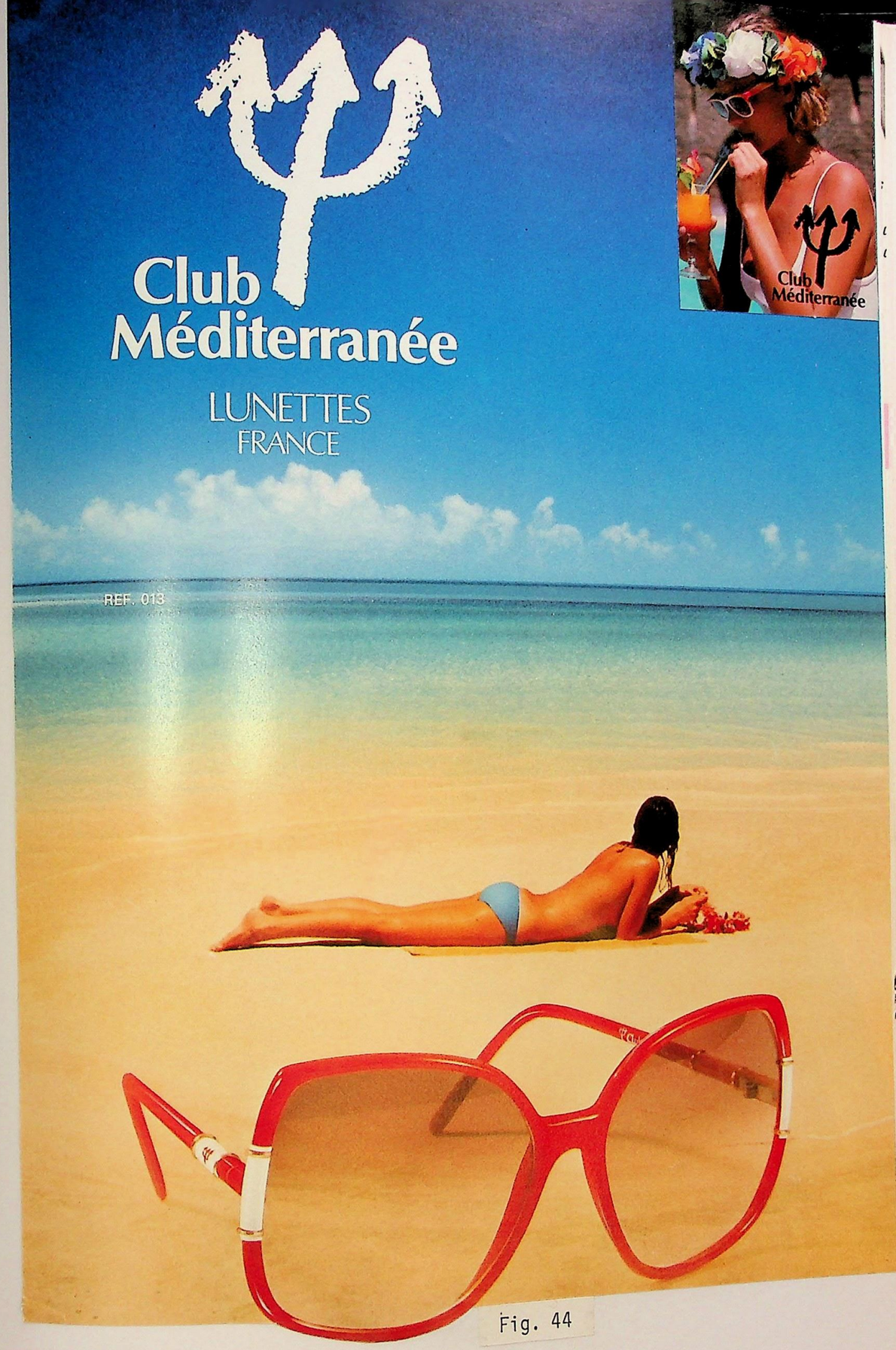

Club
Méditerranée
LUNETTES
FRANCE
REF. 013
Club
Méditerranée

Fig. 44

In 1930, P. G. Woodhouse listed the risks for novelists relevant to the wearing of spectacles.

> These may be worn by 1.. Good uncles. 2 Clergymen. 3. Good lawyers. 4. All elederly men who are kind to the heroine. 5. Bad uncles. 6. Blackmailers. 7. Money lenders those beastly tortoise shell rimmed things are never worn in fiction. Spectacle frames neither necessarily unromantic nor beautifying, they lend an air to the appearance.

Today, however, no matter what their purpose, spectacles are items which can be enjoyed as a form of self-expression - by the wearer and the designer.

Fig. 45

WHERE ARE WE NOW

WHERE ARE WE GOING

- THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE

TRENDS

Trendsetters in Sunglasses: Revival from the Fifties. The classic shades in black, tortoise, demi-blond and burgundy. By Robert La Roche.

Trendsetters "Classic Look": Understatement in design. Visible hinges in the most beautiful tortoise and demi-blond shades, shiny black and a vibrant burgundy. By Robert La Roche.

Trendsetters in Sunglasses: "Asymmetric Look". Glitter material inlays in contrasting colours. Left glittery white, right glittery black. White and red, black and red. Exiting and joyful as the summer-season. By Robert La Roche.

The eyewear industry has now acquired a more international look; this can be explained by the fact that sun and sight eyewear now belong to the world of fashion.

This spurs the joint development of machinery, materials and design, leading to a significant improvement in quality of spectacle frames, particularly sunglasses.

In frame materials, plastics still hold their ground and with the ever-increasing pace of development of new materials and new production flexibility is opening up.

Metals are coming back, as their lightweight and malleability are more and more appreciated. New surface treatments are used to impart the most different hues to metals. Improved production processes allow production of new forms without impairing function-ability.

With regard to dimensions, there is full freedom. The excesses of the past belong to the past, the trend at the moment is towards large but not overlarge frames where sides and colours play an important part. The half-moon frame is no longer a sign of old age: the designer has turned it into a sign of witty maturity.

Inlay and multi-layer materials now occupy an important position in frame manufacturing, no specific colour predominating. The general public is taking more of an interest in colour; old subdued shades have changed to more vivid ones - solid pinks and blues being indicative of an incredibly broad palette including the hitherto neglected green - and not just for women's spectacles and sunglasses.

A new breed of optician has emerged. In Britain alone, there are 7,000 retail dispensing practises, providing both eye-care treatment and a range of fashion items. This new generation of opticians are modern business people.

Manufacturers now see the purpose of their advertising campaigns being to make the public more aware of what spectacles can do to balance the appearance, whereas from the frame designer's point of view, taste means fashionable design without excesses and full awareness of the optical and aesthetic requirements. Prices have dropped, business is brisk, and there is a much stronger awareness of the aesthetic value of spectacles.

Patterns, styles and even materials still vary from country to country, with the social benefit systems in some European countries having a restrictive effect on their industries - the variation of frame styles and materials across Europe is a reflection of national characteristics and of likes and dislikes.

Today, as with the watch industry, if sales growth is to be maintained, manufacturers must persuade the customer to treat spectacles as a fashion item, prompting the concept of a wardrobe of glasses to co-ordinate with clothes.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Clayton, G. H.: Spectacle Frame Dispensing
Association of Dispensing Opticians. Nov. 1977.

Corson, R. : Spectacle Lens Technology
Peter Owen Ltd. 1980.

Orr, Hugh : Illustrated History of Early Antique Spectacles
The Greenford Press. 1985.

ARTICLES

Design Magazine - Design for Sight, Sam Black.
Vol. 55. July 1953 (pp. 28-31).

Design Magazine - An Industry Refocussed
Nov. 1984 (pp. 42-43).

Design Magazine - Spectacles : Finding a Fresh Focus
August 1982 (pp. 26-29).

Vedere International
1982 - 1986 Ariminium.

Optician - Consumer Industries Press
1982 - 1986.

Radharc Magazine.

Vogue Magazine
1960 - 1965.

U-Magazine - A Fresh Focus
September 1986.

- Just on Specs - Christina Murphy
December 1986.

Blitz
Vol. 23. July/August 1984

Catalogue of the Science Museum - Clothes for the Job
J. E. Smarl.

Novum
Vol. 44 - Nov. 1973.

Cosmopolitan
1980 - 1985

ILLUSTRATION DETAILS

Figure		Page
1	Rivet Spectacles	8
2	Leather Spectacles	13
3	The Perspective Glass	14
4	Horn Frames with a Slit Bridge	13
5	The Prospect Glass (Spy Glass)	16
6	Temple Spectacles	16
7	a Iron Frames with Horn Rims b Steel Frames	16 16
8	Quizzing Glass	18
9	Magnifier Glass	18
10	Scissors Glasses	19
11	Lorgnette	20
12	Lorgnette Embedded in Fan	20
13	Opera Glasses	23
14	Handled Spectacles - Patented 1925	23
15	The Monocle	25
16	Pince Nez	28
17	Double Spectacles	31
18	Bifocals and Trifocals	31
19	Although Varying in Materials - Little Aesthetic Innovation in Form Took Place in the 1940s	37
20/21	A Broad Range of Materials Were Used Ranging From Leather to Wood - Some of Which Are Still in Use Today	40
22	Samples From the U.K.O. Range of Frames	46
23	Oliver Goldsmith - The Man With His Work	47
24	Silmo Exhibition - Paris, October 1986	58
25	Lacoste Designer Eyewear	55
26	Alfa Romeo Range - Image Associated Merchandise	56

		Page
27	Benetton - The Light/Medium/Bold Range by Anser	57
28	Reactolite Rapide Lenses	60
29	F.O.V.S. - Clip on Brown Bars, Giving in Effect, Six Paris in One	61
30	'Superleggeri' Range - Foldable Sunglasses	61
31	Yves St. Laurent	62
32	Charles Jourdan	62
33	Luigi Colanni - Designer Eyewear	64
34	From The Design To The Display - Plastics and Metals	68
35	The Success of a Frame is Governed by the Nose, Eye and Eyebrow Line, All of These Vary	75
36	The Main Fashion Influence is in Colour	76
37	The New Colour Range - More Subtle/But Not Subdued	77
38	Eyewear Has Become an Important Accessory - To Compliment the Wearer and Their Clothing	79
39	Eyewear for Children - A Separate Design Approach	80
40	Leonhard De Neffe - The Engraved Zodiac Sign, Personalised Eyewear	82
41		83
42	The Safilo Collection - Samples	86
43	Alain Mikli	88
44	Club Mediteranee	89
45	Maga Designer Eyewear	90

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Association of Opthalmic Opticians of Ireland
10 Merrion Square, Dublin 2.

Optics Dept., Kevin St. College of Technology - Mr. Fred Walker

Anglo-American Optical Company Ltd. - Mr. Lawrence Jenkins
2 Park End, South Hill Park, London NN3.

Invicta Frames
Priory Road, Tonbridge, Kent.

Pilkington Opthalmic Products
Lemberts Road
North Farm Industrial Estate
Tunbridge Wells, Kent.

UK Optical
Bittacy Hall, London NW7

Mr. Hugh Orr
106 Hayes Lane, Beckenham, Kent

Studio Eyewear - Mr. Gert Lacheiner (General Manager)
Clonroad, Ennis, Co. Clare.

British Association of Opthalmic Opticians

Silhouette Optical Company
70-72 Old Street, London EC1V 9AN

Mr. Oliver Goldsmith
18 Station Close, Potters Bar, Herts ZN6 IT5

Norville Optical Company Ltd.
Magdala Road, Gloucester GL1 4DG.

Mary O'Loughlin
Show Off Design and Display, Blessington Street, Dublin.

To my Mum and Dad for all their encouragement and support.