

Italian Eye-ware. A Centenary Tradition

Marina Melchionda (March 24, 2010)



In the past days the Vanderbilt Hall at Grand Central hosted "Eyewear from the Beginning to the Future: the History of eyeglasses from their invention in Italy to the latest trends", an exhibit organized by the Italian Trade Commission and the Italian Optical Goods Manufacturers Association

In case some of you don't know, and I bet you all do, Italy is synonymous of fashion, quality, and design. Whether it's clothes, handbags, accessories, shoes, we are at the top. This is true for the optical field as well, where our eyeglasses and sunglasses are among the most looked for and trendy of the world, in both the most recent times and in the past.

In order to honor the antique Italian tradition of eye-ware manufacturing and designing, the [Italian Trade Commission in North America](#) [2] directed by Dr. Aniello Musella and the President of the



[Italian Optical Goods Manufacturers Association](#) [3] Vittorio Tabacchi organized the exhibition Eyewear from the Beginning to the Future: the History of eyeglasses from their invention in Italy to the latest trends opened to the public until March 24 at [Vanderbit Hall](#) [4], Grand Central Terminal, NYC.

The display, designed by award-winning Italian Architect [Giorgio Borruso](#) [5] and curated by Alessandra Albarello, was inaugurated on March 18 at the presence of both Italian and International media.

"It is many years that the ITC collaborates with ANFAO, but this is the first time that we decided to organize something open to the public. The current economic crisis, indeed, requires a major attention towards the public, the consumers, and a greater dialogue and exchange with them", said Dr. Musella.

A collection of hundreds of models, the exhibit featured a chronological journey through the tradition of Italian eye-wear design from its invention in Italy in the 13th Century to the present day and beyond.

The best and most renowned modern brands were accompanied by old eyeglasses models, brases and ivory cases carved with precious designs and materials. "Through this initiative, the American consumer can actually realize how this fashion field has accompanied the history of the Italian society, and has dictated canons of beauty at an international level", affirmed President Tabacchi.

As people crossing the Vanderbilt Hall stopped by to admire the models on display, Director Musella explained us how well this market sector is doing in spite of the harsh economic crisis: "Italy is the second exporter to the United States after China. While the latter produces low-quality merchandise, we are the Americans' favorite manufacturers of luxury eyeglasses, that are both fashionable but that also feature high quality lenses for protecting from sun rays and for correcting sight problems.

Today even foreign brands choose to produce in our country, use our materials and collaborate with our research centers. This proves that the Italian know-how in the field is incomparable, making our country the top producer of high-standard eyewear throughout the world.

The exhibit accompanied the participation of the two greatest Italian Optical groups to the [International Vision Expo](#) [6] at the [Javits Center](#) [7], [Luxottica](#) [8] and [Safilo](#) [9], that include Italian, American, and other internationally renowned brands.

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