

Adriano Moraglio

# THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS

Mido, 50 years a global crossroads

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# THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS

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Mido, 50 years a global crossroads



*For entrepreneurs,  
who combine  
passion with beauty  
willingness to self-sacrifice  
and the real meaning of life*

*To women,  
Woman, your beauty appeared to me,  
a light divine within my mind*

# PROLOGUE

## To Mido!

*Turin - Milan, Saturday, 23 February 2019*

“Dad, are you ready?”.

“Sure, Paolo, I’m more than ready. Bye Maria, they’re taking me to Mido... I have not been to the eyewear show in such a long time! Since 2009... And Emanuela, are you still coming even though your husband can’t?”.

“Yes, Grandpa, I can’t wait to get going! And he has lots to do here... Grandma and Mom agreed to help out Roberta today, tomorrow and Monday while we spend time at Mido together. I already bought our Frecciarossa train tickets online and booked hotel rooms. I reserved one just for you. Dad and I will sleep in the other one. Grandpa, we need to hurry if we want to get to the station on time”.

It’s early morning and Roberta, the assistant optometrist, is getting ready to open the shop. Business is already brisk in the optical shop opened by Paolo’s father, Giorgio, about 60 years ago. The ultra-modern store is on the outskirts of Turin and was recently renovated with new furniture, eyewear displays and brand-new digital equipment.

Giorgio was an independent optician. His son Paolo followed in his footsteps, and is now getting ready to pass the store on to his daughter, Emanuela, 30 years old, who has been working at her grandfather and father’s shop for a few years. Giorgio – tall, skinny, with a full head of white hair – at the ripe old age of 84, still works at the shop two or three days a week, but only in the morning. Wearing a white lab coat, he helps his son, daughter-in-law and granddaughter take care of customers – as silent as an intern accompanying the doctor on his rounds – occasionally expressing his opinion about the quality of the eyewear.

“Paolo and Emanuela, thanks for taking me with you this year”. Giorgio is delighted, as gleeful as a child, and has not looked this happy in years. He already has his quilted K-Way on, and is ready for the walk to the train station. Then says: “You know, I’d also like to go next year, when Mido celebrates its 50th anniversary.” Then, with a knowing look,

tells his wife: “The shop is now in your hands, just like in the past”. Paolo’s wife Cristina, who was in the back of the shop, fortunately did not hear her father in law’s words and could not take offense.

“Don’t worry”, replies Giorgio’s wife, who is four years younger than her husband; she was a beautiful brunette, petite, slim, with eyes full of life and still a beauty now, in her eighties. “And you Paolo, please keep an eye on your father”, she advises her son. “You know he might wander through every pavilion non-stop, looking for old friends, lured by the wonderful eyewear at the Show”, she chuckles, “and the attractive stand assistants...there are always plenty of them”. “That’s for sure!”, says Giorgio with a playful smile.

Everyone burst out laughing, including the early-bird shoppers checking out the eyewear frames on this Saturday morning.

It’s a nice sunny day, not chilly at all. Before leaving the shop, Emanuela grabs one of the new, rather extravagant pair of sunglasses from a display. “I want to try these on”. The girl has a beautiful face, chestnut hair and a slightly dark, Mediterranean complexion. She is tall, like her grandfather.

Having arrived at Turin’s Porta Susa train station, Giorgio, Paolo and Emanuela are on the high-speed train bound for the Rho Fiera station in Milan. But, even on the drive there, in Paolo’s small and easy to park Fiat 500, Emanuela had started peppering her grandfather with questions.

“You know what? You never told me how you got the idea of opening an optical shop ...”

“Really? Let’s see, how long will it take to get to the expo station?”.

“About fifty minutes”.

“Well then, I can try to tell you how I got into this profession. I’ll reveal something I may not have ever told you... but your dad already knows. And he’d better keep his mouth shut! Ok, Paolo?”.

“All right, Dad”.

“Now, listen carefully. In 1956 I left Taranto, and came to live and work here in Turin. I traveled north with two of my brothers and a sister, leaving my mom, dad and grandparents in Puglia. I was 21 at the time, and worked as a carpenter in Taranto. Once we reached Turin, my brothers and I started looking for a place to live. Back then, as you may have heard, in Turin many buildings had hand-written signs

posted on the front door, stating: “We don’t rent to southerners”. I assure you, Emanuela, it’s true. It happened to us. So, we spent the first two years (and two bitterly cold winters) living in a garage. It was the only place we could find. After a long while, the owner of the building realized we were good people, and rented us a small apartment on the fourth floor. In the meantime, refusing to get discouraged, I started looking for a job and found one rather quickly at a carpentry shop. As it happens, the owner also had a shop that sold photographic equipment. One day he approached me with a camera in his hand, a Reflex with a top viewfinder, and said: “Would you mind taking pictures of the traffic accident that happened nearby? *La Stampa* asked for photos. Slightly taken aback, I explained that I did not know how to use that camera, but if indeed it had to be done, I’d go to the crash site. So, I went, took pictures, came back and, after developing the film, the owner took me aside and said: “Giorgio these pictures are truly impressive, you did a great job! I’ll send them to *La Stampa* right away. Now though, I’d like to make you an offer: would you give me a hand at the photo equipment shop?”. And I said yes”.

“Is that really what happened?”.

“Yes, really, everything was going well at that time, there was plenty of work... You could work as a carpenter, like I did, and be a sales clerk at the photo equipment shop at the same time. That’s where I met the photographic and medical x-ray film distributor I worked for later on. During that time, I met Grandma (she was 17 years old!). A year later we got married and, in 1958 your father was born. Working for this distributor for about five years made me realize that the optical market in Turin was so big and fast-growing that getting a professional license would be worthwhile”.

“I was young”, interjects Paolo, “but I remember Grandpa going to school every evening and studying all day on Sundays...”.

“I spent three years like that, my dear. Then something unpredictable happened. I heard that a woman wished to sell her photo-optical shop. I didn’t think twice. I borrowed money, purchased her store and the business. That’s how I started out. If you two are in the optical business now, it’s because of this rather strange story. But, believe me, it’s a very common story, and circumstances aside, it holds true for many of my colleagues who opened optical shops in Italy back then.

“How wonderful, Grandpa... You’re amazing... Oh, look, we’re almost there. Fieramilano Rho is the next stop”.

“Ok then let’s get up, come on, Paolo, did you hear what Emanuela said?”.

“I’m ready”.

“Emanuela, would you mind telling me what you were doing on your cell while I was telling you my story?”.

“Grandpa, I was using the Mido app; it lets me page through the catalog and contact companies, follow the events, see MidoTv interviews and other things”.

Giorgio leans closer to his granddaughter and whispers in her ear: “Any chance you could download this witchery to my smart phone?”.

“Sure! You’re such a cool grandpa...”.

# Day 1

*Fieramilano Rho, 23 February 2019*

Caroline Abram, a Parisian of mixed origins, approaches Emanuela with a warm smile. Exiting the storage room of her stand in Pavilion 2, she comes toward the trio waiting for her while admiring the frames on display. She looks amazing: a woman of average height, olive skinned, dark hair and eyes, a doll-like face, with a hint of lipstick covering finely drawn lips and large glasses with clear lenses from her fanciful and ultra-feminine collection. “I knew you’d come...”, she says, upon noticing Emanuela. They have known each other for a few years.

“How couldn’t I?”, the girl replies. “This is my father, Paolo, and Giorgio, my grandfather. He’s the one who opened our optical shop in Turin many years ago, in 1960. Today was the first time he told me in detail how he ended up in the optical industry!”

“I imagine it was quite an adventure... It was for me too. I started out making necklaces, frame chains and other accessories, then figured out I could try to make my own eyewear”. Giorgio and Paolo admiringly listen to her. Caroline speaks Italian well.

“I’ve seen you here at Mido with your products for a long time”, says Paolo.

“I just could not miss the Milan expo this year; this is where eyewear manufacturers get their start. You can’t be in the eyewear business and not attend this expo...”.

Paolo thumbs through *Midodaily*, the glossy daily newspaper edited by the publishers of *Ottica Italiana* magazine as a visitor guide. The title speaks for itself: *The future of eyewear is here!* *Midodaily* highlights the daily events, dozens upon dozens of new products presented by over 1,300 exhibitors, and features an array of eyewear services and product advertisements related to the eyewear industry. The eyewear expo occupies a surface area of over 52,000 m<sup>2</sup>, encompasses seven pavilions and dedicated areas for the Fashion District, Design Lab and Design Tech, ranging from the most innovative and sophisticated items in the “More!” section, to the stands of up-and-coming companies known for *avant-garde* design, product originality and business innovation, hosted

in the Lab Academy... And there is also a pavilion for Asian companies, with a catwalk for fashion shows starring Asian models wearing the latest products from the Far East.

“My first time here”, Caroline recalls, “proved to be extremely difficult”. The Show was still being held at the expo center in downtown Milan. It was daunting. I did not have staff to assist me, did not speak Italian, and did not know how to organize my stay. Basically, everything fell on my shoulders. I even drove the van I rented to transport my goods. One day, driving up the winding road to the parking lot I ended up hitting the wall straight on. The rental van? I killed it. Is “killed” the right word?”.

Paolo and his father burst out laughing. “Well, it’s really not a nice memory...”.

“Memories are always good. I liked the idea of being here, in a foreign country; it was exciting. But now, please take your time; look at the new collections and maybe you’ll find some ideas for your shop”.

Giorgio starts to roam the stands with his son and granddaughter, seemingly eager to take charge of the exploration. Maria was right when she told her son: “You won’t be able to stop him”. “Come on, Dad, I saw that my friends Wim Somers and Patrick Hoet’s stands are in Pavilion 4, next door”, exclaims Paolo. The three quickly start looking for the two designers who founded Theo, in Belgium. Patrick just opened a company bearing his family’s surname and that draws on his daughter Bieke’s creativity.

“Wim!”, Paolo exclaims waving his arms as he spots his friend and greets him while approaching his stand. “Come in, make yourself at home”, the designer says. He’s wearing a peach-colored sweater over a white polka-dot shirt. He has an amiable face, a very short haircut, a petite goatee of white hair framing his chin, and lively eyes behind round, black-framed glasses. “Did you know this is our thirtieth year at Mido?”.

“I have always seen you here...”.

“Indeed, it was the first opportunity we had to showcase our products in Italy. Mido still is a major expo; every year it truly showcases all of the latest market trends, allows direct contact with consumers, and is a magnet for opticians. In any case, this is where we can grab the attention of eyewear professionals from Italy and Latin countries”.

“I remember meeting you in the halls of the old fairgrounds in Milan...”.



“Yes, it was a lot of fun; the Show has a totally different vibe nowadays. You know what? I miss the times when Mido was held in May...”.

Paolo and Wim say goodbye. On the horizon, not too far from Theo’s, is Hoet’s stand.” Bye Wim, and good luck”. The two warmly shake hands.

Patrick greets Paolo warmly; he looks at people in a way that shows his guileless soul and rapt attention. “Have you seen the collections? We’re doing revolutionary things with 3D printers, cutting-edge carbon-based materials and even extremely thin marble”.

“And you, like Wim, have come to Mido for many years...”.

“I first came as a visitor, to find and buy things we could use for our work. Then I started to design eyewear and sell our products. My first experience as an exhibitor was in 1990, at the historic fairgrounds in Milan. As I recall, there was only one elevator, and we had to bring everything up to the third floor. Ultimately, on the ground floor, we found about 20 people willing to bring all of our things upstairs for 1,000 liras each....”, says Patrick, laughing. “Frankly, Paolo, nowadays our products are too pricey for the Italian market, but being at the Milan expo is still important for us, as it attracts many foreign buyers. Besides, Mido is in Italy; it’s nice to be in Italy, even food-wise! And the Show is much better organized these days”.

“Yes Patrick, you’re absolutely right! Now, though, I have to leave for my appointment with Henrik Lindberg. Please forgive me, but I’m already running late. Who knows, we might meet again at some time over the next 3 days”.

“Bye, Paolo, see you...”.

The stand of the Danish company Lindberg is in the same Pavilion, so Paolo feels free to leave his father and daughter to roam the expo as they please, and do the same himself. Greeting him at the huge company stand is Henrik, the founder’s son, a white-haired man with an imposing physique. Instead of a tie, he’s wearing an eye-catching scarf, which stands out against his dark-colored shirt and jacket. His light-skinned, full, round face is enhanced by the dark-framed glasses he’s wearing.

“Paolo, how are you?”.

“I’m well, Henrik. I brought along my daughter and my father, who’s in his eighties. He’s long been asking me to take him back to Mido. You

should see how he races from one stand to the next. He's enthralled by everything. And you? Anything new?"

"Take a look around. The wall-mounted screens are playing great videos. You've been our customer for a long time... Come, take a seat at one of these tables so we can chat for a while".

Henrik confides in Paolo, saying: "Truly, Mido is always a big deal for us. It's an extremely important expo for businesses, and all international buyers flock to it. Here in Milan we can present our new collections and, more importantly, get sales, and directly interact with our clients. This is crucial for our business, as we don't have distributors around the world; we deal directly with opticians. And opticians come to Mido! This is a key factor for our business".

"You always told me that coming here has helped you a lot in finding Asian buyers".

"For doing business with Asia, yes, absolutely. And, don't forget how crucially important it is for us to meet the manufacturers of the latest production machinery for our sector". Now the two are approached by Henrik's pretty assistant, Brigitte. "Mr. Lindberg, there's a client waiting for you". "Ok, thank you. Paolo, I have to go. Do come back, so I can show you the new collections".

"I certainly will, Henrik".

The trio is now together again. "Dad can we go to the Modo stand?", says Emanuela. "I'd like to introduce Grandpa to Giovanni Lo Faro, the Ceo of this very interesting company with headquarters in New York and Milan. I saw eyewear I'd like to display on our shelves".

"Let's go. Wait, let me take a look at the catalog". Oh, ok, it's in Pavilion 4 as well" Dad, are you up to it?"

"Are you kidding? Of course, we can go. Let's stop and get something to eat afterwards though. There are several places selling food and beverages around here".

"Agreed. Now, let's head to Lo Faro", says Emanuela, obviously appeased.

Emanuela books the appointment through the fair app. When the three arrive, the Modo stand is very crowded, and the staff is busy showing customers eyewear and helping them try it on. Giovanni is free, and waiting to talk to them.

"For us at Modo, Mido (excuse the play on words)", he chuckles, "is

the eyewear expo *par-excellence*, the only truly global eyewear industry exhibition, and by definition the not-to-be-missed event of the year. We have been coming here for eleven years now, ever since we first opened”, he says to the trio as they glance at the eyewear in the display cases. “We launched our business here in 2008; it was a truly motivating experience, and a great success. And this was where our business took off and started growing, lifting us out of the 20-year-long economic crisis”.

“Thank you, Giovanni”. Can we take a closer look at your collections?”.

“I’ll entrust you to our staff. And in the meantime, let me introduce you to Alessandro Lanaro, the managing director and founder of our company”.

“Are you ok, Grandpa Giorgio?”.

“Yes Emanuela, I am fine, especially now that I’ve had something to eat. And now? Where are we going?”.

“I’d like to drop by another Danish company, Fleye, and then visit the French folks at Minima. What do you think? And you, Dad?”.

“It’s fine by me. Besides, there are so many companies we could visit that I wouldn’t know where to start. We have to consider and focus on the items we wish to carry at our optical shop and sell to our customers”, Paolo says.

“Being here is also a feast for my eyes”, Giorgio blurts out, as a tall, slim, great looking blonde stand assistant walks by. “Dad, you still have great taste, eh? No doubt about it!”. Everyone laughs.

At the Fleye stand, Giorgio, Paolo and Emanuela meet Hanne Anderson. Her distinctive face, with kind and reassuring eyes, is framed by thick blonde hair; she is wearing large eyeglasses with light-colored frames, of the perfect shape for her face. Hanne is welcoming and speaks slowly so that Paolo can translate her words for Grandpa. “We have participated in Mido for 17 years. I perfectly remember the first time; it was thrilling, and a huge step forward in terms of raising the visibility of a small company brand, like ours was back then. And we immediately felt what it’s like to be in Italy, surrounded by fashion and high-quality products”.

“You’ve come a long way”, Paolo says.

“Every year reveals something we can improve on, and by coming here we never stop learning. We always attend Mido because it’s a great

opportunity to meet foreign customers, even from overseas, Asia and the Middle-East. This is where they come and where we can meet them. It's as simple as that".

"Let's go back to Pavilion 4 and visit the French". Emanuela leads her dad and Grandpa through the maze-like aisles of Mido. The secret is to find the main pathway connecting the pavilions, and quickly spot the letter naming the aisle of the company stand you're trying to reach. Minima is at B15/C18. It takes a while for the three to find the stand. Fatigue is setting in. Spending all day at Mido roaming company stands is exhausting. Giorgio stops for a second, and then sits on a steel bench. He opens *Midodaily*, and reads out-loud the welcome by Giovanni Vitaloni, President of Mido and of the Italian eyewear manufacturers' association, Anfao. "*Mido is not merely a business-oriented trade expo, it's a true and proper eyewear design show. Walking through the pavilions during the three days of the expo is an immersive, thrilling experience, and provides unrivaled opportunities to glean interesting insights. It will be an event filled with inspiration and creative ideas, as we approach the historic 50-year milestone within a context that, in spite of difficult international economic trends, has been good for our sector*". "It's true", Giorgio muses. Then catches his breath, and asks: Emanuela did you figure out where we have to go?". "Come on Grandpa, we're almost there".

The three finally arrive at the Minima stand and meet Sandra Timon, daughter of Maurice Timon, founder of the company, the very name of which identifies the nature of its products: minimalistic, simple, practical. "We're here", Sandra explains, "because Mido is a must-attend event that allows us to meet customers, extend our market reach, and launch new products. We've been coming here for 24 years and plan to continue".

"But the expo has changed a lot over time", Paolo remarks.

"Certainly, and its evolution is made clear by its greater diversity, size and especially by the quality of stands and participating brands. My father clearly recalls how we started out".

Maurice Timon approaches. "Pleased to meet you, I am Maurice. Were you talking about our first years at Mido? They were amazing. It was 1985, and we requested a stand for Minima. "We're sold out", they told us. The Show was still being held at the old exhibition center in Milan. Our Italian distributor then said we could have a small area

within his stand if we so wished. I gratefully accepted, but thought ‘we won’t sell anything nor will we have any visitors’. I was proven wrong; we had plenty of visitors, and have not missed a single Mido event since then. We have participated in trade shows for many years. We’ve been at expos in Las Vegas, New York, Beijing, and Europe. I can wholeheartedly tell you, who are Italian: Mido is the No. 1 world trade expo for this market sector. The entire world of eyewear is here”. With Emanuela acting as an interpreter, they understood every word.

Giorgio yawns, turning aside, to avoid giving anyone the impression that he’s bored by *monsieur* Timon’s words. He’s just too tired. Paolo notices: “Dad, should we go back to the hotel?”.

## Day 2

*Milan - Fieramilano - Rho, 24 February 2019*

A sea of people is lined up and waiting to get through the metal detectors in front of the Rho fairgrounds eastern entrance. They are visiting Mido. Faces from Asia and the Far East, Europe, Spain and the Iberian Peninsula, Germany, France and French-speaking countries, the United Kingdom, Scandinavia, Northern Europe, Africa, the Middle-East, Latin America, North America, and typical Italian faces form a true melting pot. "I knew I'd find myself at a crossroads of nationalities and cultures. It's always been like this", whispers Giorgio, glancing at the massive crowd surrounding him, his son and granddaughter.

The queue is orderly. Everyone, as expected, is proudly wearing some sort of prescription glasses or sunglasses on their nose. Giorgio, Paolo and Emanuela are also wearing glasses, with the most beautiful and original frames 'in stock' at their shop. Going to Mido with a brand-new pair of glasses is a tradition.

Emanuela takes the initiative: "Listen, I think we should split up today. There is so much to see, and your level of interest in some things may differ from mine. The *Optical Monitor* semi-annual survey presentation starts at 10 am at the Otticlub. I read they will talk about usage and buying habits of eyewear consumers in China, Russia, the US and Japan. I want to go. We need to understand the sales trends of such important markets".

"I don't", Paolo says. "I'd rather go hear the results of *Mido Outlook* at noon. Experts call it the barometer of the eyewear sector".

"Wow Dad, such erudite words...", says Emanuela.

"Drop it. In any case, it seems like a good idea, right Dad?".

"I'm fine with it. I might see some friends at *Mido Outlook*".

From the stage of the Otticlub conference hall, the President of Mido and GFK experts explain that in China, Russia, the United States and Japan 'off-line' channels, meaning brick-and-mortar opticians, still claim the lion's share of sales, but the importance of online

sales should not be underestimated, as these are up in all countries, and especially in Japan, where growth is in the double digits. Purchase drivers are focused on quality. “With regard to market segmentation”, GfK experts underline, “the main consumer clusters (55% of the market revenue stream) are sunglass lovers, successful people keenly aware of their image, and young fashion hunters, young people who spend their budget on new trends”.

“I really have to discuss online sales with Dad”, thinks Emanuela, “and without demonizing this tool anyone can use now”. Emanuela believes they should stay ahead of the trend, implement this option for their shop, and offer something more to those who come to the shop: friendly, polite, competent and professional customer service. “Yes, I really should bring it up”.

After the presentation, Emanuela notices a group of people talking. She gets closer. Recognizes them. Yes indeed, the one talking is Frank Schroeder, from the German company Obe, which produces hinges, small parts, screws, and all sorts of eyewear components. She listens in, and understands the ‘nagging question’ for most foreign exhibitors, especially those who have come to Milan for at least 20 years, is still the same: “Is Mido better off in downtown Milan or here at the Rho fairgrounds?”.

Schroeder (totally bald, with metal-framed eyeglasses) has clear ideas about it, and tells his friends: “In terms of tourist traffic, the center of Milan might have been a better environment, but from a business perspective, Rho is the right location”. “What matters”, he adds, “is that every year Mido allows us to present at least one of our flagship products, generate buzz, and increase our visibility on international markets”.

“You’re right Frank”, says Maurice Leonard from Gold & Wood in Luxembourg, “this has been the best location for finding big buyers ever since we started. Like many of us, the first time I came to Mido, all I had was a tiny stand with just a few wall panels and eyewear display shelves, nothing fancy”. The entrepreneur, wearing a white shirt stating ‘*Maurice, emotion maker*’ and large sea-blue eyeglasses, then continues “and this is where I met our American distributor. The USA is still our largest market”.

“Us too”, chirps in Rainer Laepple from Imago, wearing eye-catching glasses with shiny metal frames and a light blue suit, “when we

came to Mido for the first time 26-27 years ago, we also had a very simple stand, small and sparsely furnished with few display shelves. We were younger and had a blast, but times have changed and elegant stands are a must now. Nonetheless, the expo still serves the same, important purpose: meeting with customers and distributors. “For Imago”, he says while sipping coffee, “Mido means finding new clients outside of Germany and Switzerland. We now have customers in South Korea, the USA, Canada and Australia”.

“Let’s not forget the Italian element, Rainer”, Schroeder adds, “Italy is home to the largest eyewear manufacturers in the world! We, too, started out with a small, 18 m2 stand as opposed to today’s stand of 96 m2; obviously, that means we’ve grown. The expo is increasingly more efficient, I’d almost say more ‘industrialized’”.

Emanuela, still eavesdropping on the discussion, also recognizes Jens William Sorensen from the Danish company Nine Eyewear. He’s a tall man, wearing an elegant black suit with narrow, shiny jacket lapels and semi-rimmed eyeglasses. “Any serious company”, he says to his friends, “would not miss this expo; with regard to our company, we meet most of our international customers at Mido. We don’t go to Australia, Asia or Russia, but buyers from those countries do come here, and that’s where we connect. You need to go where the clients are. Staying in Italy and especially in Milan for three days allows us to see the latest design and fashion trends first-hand, and bring them into our business. It’s very important for us”.

And Giorgio? And his son Paolo? Where did they end up?

Here they are, at noon, sitting and listening to the annual *Mido Outlook* survey presentation. “The over 1,300 companies from 98 countries interviewed by GRS say the market is stable”, the research authors report. “On a positive note, half of those involved in the survey (53%) expressed a confident outlook, especially in America and Oceania. Exports remain a key factor: over 40% of responding companies reported obtaining over half of their revenue from exports (mainly to Western Europe and America). The USA is the best area for business, while the Chinese market may become a sure bet in the future. Lastly”, GRS experts conclude, “the companies feel that trade expos are the best way to keep pace with the market and boost their business growth (76%). Websites ranked second (66%) and social networks third (55%)”.



“Hey, Paolo”, Giorgio exclaims at one point, “look who’s over there!” It’s Valter Da Rin, owner of Trenti, in Cadore. “Wait, while I go say hi to him”. At the end of the latest *Mido Outlook* survey presentation Giorgio gets up and quickly approaches his old friend, who recognizes him.

“Giorgio, it’s such a pleasure to see you after all this time”. A white tie nicely offsets Valter Da Rin’s blue shirt and gray suit. He is a big man, with an endearing personality. Large eyeglasses with a dark frame highlight his delighted glance.

“I came to Mido with my son”, says Giorgio. “He’s the one taking me places now. I used to bring him to the expo when he was a child. How are you doing, Valter?”.

“I have the honor of celebrating my 49th year at Mido this year Giorgio. I remember the first time, when I found myself with a suitcase full of eyewear, sharing a stand with Fiao in one of the expo aisles. Everything took off from there. You know, if it weren’t for Mr. Lozza’s brilliant idea, and our taking him up on it, none of us would be here. We should acknowledge that what kept us growing and made us the foremost world-trade expo today were the people in charge of Anfao and Mido. They never got complacent (nor did we), and kept looking for ways to improve the expo. And we’ll keep getting better, too, becoming global eyewear market leaders, and will be recognized as such by all”.

“You’re absolutely right, Valter. Mido has changed completely since the late 1990’s”.

“It is totally different. In the 1980’s, 1990’s, and up to the first years of this century, we’d leave Mido and take tens of thousands of orders back to Cadore. I remember that one year we sold a total of 115,000 pairs of eyeglasses. Those were golden years for sure; you came to Mido, in the center of Milan, and wrote orders. Things have changed, the market has evolved, but this Show continues to be the place where we meet, discuss, launch our collections and find ways to develop our business. Well, let’s move on. How’s your shop in Turin doing?”.

As Giorgio and Valter Da Rin keep chatting, Paolo makes his way toward Paolo Seminara, an iconic Italian eyewear designer, considered among those responsible for the success of Vogue eyewear collections. “You’re still here, riding the crest of the wave, eh?”.

“Now that I’m retired, I’ve found a way to keep cultivating the pas-

sion and love I've always had for this industry", the designer replies. His eyes smile beyond a pair of eyeglasses most certainly designed by him, with pearl-gray frames. "I've been at Mido for 49 years, and witnessed epic changes. It continues to be today's foremost eyewear expo in the world, but it started out as a craft show. Back then everyone was taking small steps in designing and bonding different elements; what they brought to the expo was hand-crafted with simple tools, not CNC machines. Granted, today we're better off because advanced technologies have broadened our manufacturing options, but having 1,300 exhibitors makes it harder to pick items of the right quality, look and brand. Wouldn't you agree?"

Paolo has no time to reply. Seminara is literally engulfed by a group of friends, and the two have to say goodbye. Paolo looks for his father, but can't spot him. He was talking with Da Rin, and disappeared. Where could he be? Right then, his cell phone rings. "Hi Paolo, it's Dad. I let Valter drag me away; he invited me to lunch. So, I'll call you later. Feel free to go wherever you want..."

"But... ok, thanks", and hangs up. "And who could stop him?", he thinks to himself.

Now Paolo is in Pavilion 2. He has not heard from Emanuela either. "Hello, Manu, it's Dad. Where are you?"

"I'm at the Lara D stand in Pavilion 2. Do you want to join me? It's at P50. I'll wait for you".

When Paolo approaches the stand, Emanuela is already speaking with Lara D'Alpaos, who is showing her the latest collections of her young brand.

"This is my dad".

Lara has an expressive face, framed by a blonde bob. Large cat-eye eyeglasses highlight her sparkling blue eyes. She immediately says that attending the expo is invaluable for her business. "It's the best Show for meeting old and new clients. We just can't miss it. It would be nice to have you on board. Since I launched my brand in 2012, Mido has gotten bigger every year".

"I love your stand. It's so well-lit and colorful", Emanuela remarks.

"The first time we came, the company was smaller. Now that we have grown, we have a bigger stand. The first time, I was anxious but excited to exhibit at the top exhibition of this sector. Over time we strengthened the relationship with our customers, especially for-

eign ones. Exports account for 95% of our sales. It's easy to see why this is the most important Show for brands like mine. But I am so glad your shop is in Turin! What else may I show you?". They look at more frames, exchange business cards, and then they're off roaming the stands again.

"Manu, we have to find Grandpa", suddenly says Paolo. "Wait, that's Mauro Lanaro... Hi Mauro, do you remember me?".

"Of course! Come visit our new company stand. My daughters are there working. We're doing great, collecting awards left and right! But I see you're with... is that your daughter?".

"Yes, she works with me and my father now. She'll surely do better than us. But tell me about you. I heard something about a new venture!".

"My new company is Pride eyewear and we are located in Cortina d'Ampezzo. Take a look, these are our new collections. Mido was pivotal for us in the past, and it's even more so now. Being here three years ago was a coming of age for us. We gained lots of visibility. It truly was quite emotional for me. It brought me back to when I first started in this business", he affirms. Lanaro is wearing eyeglasses with a clear frame and a turtleneck sweater. "This Show gave my daughters a great opportunity to get experience showing and selling their products. Launching our company at this Show led to the prizes and awards we won in the last few years".

"Great results Mauro, especially with so much competition".

"Yes, indeed, especially here. The Show has changed beyond recognition in the last thirty years. There are many more companies and, as you say, competition. But on the bright side, it speeds up the pace of the sector, boosts product sales, and encourages the launch of new, innovative products. Mido will also have to get on the fast track and follow the international trend of working on different show formats. Now, what about you? Do you see anything you'd like for your shop?".

"Yes, absolutely. I'll stop by later. I need to head over to Opticaldesign. I booked an appointment".

"Oh, at Vittorio Berra's... please give him my regards".

"Will do".

Vittorio Berra, from Treviso, is sitting in a backroom in his company's stand, waiting for his friend from Turin and his friend's daughter.

“Welcome Paolo, come in, and take a seat. Would you like to see our new products? Vittorio keeps taking off and putting on his round metal eyeglasses. He served as Vice President of Mido in the past, and while discussing the new Opticaldesign collections, makes it a point to praise the Milan expo. “I have had stands at other exhibitions in the East and America but I must say that Mido, especially in the last few years, has truly evolved both in size and organization. The organizers did a great job of bringing it to this point”.

“Do you think that being Italian has something to do with Mido’s strong international propensity?”.

“You’re right, Paolo. The Italian nature of this show, and the fact that Milan is the temple of Italian fashion, design and creativity are among the secrets behind its success. People long to come see our country and, to a certain extent, this has helped Mido succeed”.

The discussion among the three of them, Vittorio, Paolo and Emanuela, quickly turns to business and the eyewear collections. Other visitors are waiting to speak with Berra and the two soon leave the stand.

“Where to now, Manu?”.

“Shouldn’t we find Grandpa?”.

“Right. I’ll call him right now”.

Paolo takes his mobile out of his rear pant pocket and dials Giorgio’s number. “Hi Dad, it’s me. Are you done yet? Emanuela and I are bound for Tris Ottica in Pavilion 2 to see Mario Righes, and then stopping at the Lab Academy in Pavilion 6”.

“I’ll wait for you. I’ve been talking with Mario for over half an hour. I’ve known him for a while, remember?”.

“Grandpa is just full of surprises”, Emanuela blurts out.

When father and daughter reach Giorgio, he and Mario are reminiscing about the past. “Giorgio, do you remember when you used to visit our stand at Mido? I could not sell you anything of ours because we were working as distributors, which still is a key part of our business. We used to meet clients in a small office, without windows. We had no storefront or products on display. We did not need any, as we did not sell our own products. Now that we manufacture and sell products by our own brand, we rely on Mido to present our collections to Italian and European customers. They are the fruit of 40 years’ worth of work”.

The day is coming to an end. “Grandpa, do you feel up to visiting the Lab Academy?”, Emanuela asks.

“Sure, why not?”.

The Lab Academy is in a separate section of Pavilion 6. It is an L-shaped space, with many closely placed stands along an imaginary, plywood tree-lined street. This is the showcase of cutting-edge global design. The trio has decided to visit the stands of the British company Kirk&Kirk and of the French companies Pierre Eyewear and Sabine Be.

Jason Kirk quickly greets the trio from Turin with a warm smile, wearing a large pair of blue eyeglasses that take up much of his face. He appears to be someone who knows how to talk to eyewear industry professionals, and especially to independent retailers. With Emanuela acting as interpreter, he says he’s been coming to Mido since the mid-1990’s, and continues: “I feel at home here. This is an international reference point for those looking to find new directions in this field. I clearly recall my first time here, when I found myself at a huge event, with people from all over the world. This is the place to be, especially for designers. From a business standpoint, you have to determine which market segments you wish to cover, and how to satisfy those consumers. Today’s opticians know how to fully explain the products and justify the differences in price”.

A short distance from Jason’s stand is that of Pierre Cariven’s Pierre Eyewear. He is completely bald, and wearing beautiful metal-rimmed eyeglasses that perfectly cover the shape of his eye sockets. Upon being asked to explain his ‘mission’, Pierre smiles, and tells the trio: “We work on design and on how to bring it to its full potential. I enjoy being at Mido because I feel a kinship with Italian design. I also like French design, but I am particularly fond of the Italian approach to design. I love to share and compare and here I can hold my work up next to that of American, Asian and European designers. I spend entire days visiting other stands”.

Sabine Begault-Vagner, a slim, blonde designer with round white eyeglasses, warmly welcomes Giorgio, Paolo and Emanuela to her stand in the Lab Academy: “We are at one of the foremost international trade shows and a very creative one, at that. But, when I first came here five years ago, things really went off the rails. I clearly remember it to this day. I left Paris thinking I had my samples, but when I opened the cases, they were empty! Everything was still in Paris, and

I did not have a single pair of eyeglasses to display. My Italian agent said: ‘Don’t cry Sabine, don’t worry; when the first Mido goes awry, it means that the rest will be awesome’. You know what? He was right!”.

Back at the hotel, while thumbing through *Midodaily* again, Paolo suddenly looked up and said: “Dad do you realize that we missed Cecilia Rodriguez’s Spritz Party at 5 pm?”.

“You might have. I didn’t”.

## Day 3

*Fieramilano Rho - Turin, 25 February 2019*

Corso Italia, the road leading from the East gate of the fairgrounds to the Mido pavilions, seems longer than it actually is, and Giorgio has a hard time walking today. Paolo and Emanuela are a few meters behind, watching and following him. They'd rather not ask if he's tired after two full days of walking from stand to stand, meeting with eyewear manufacturers as well as old friends. They don't want to make him feel bad for slowing them down (besides, they are carrying their respective luggage, packed with a few essentials, as they won't go back to the hotel in the center of Milan). They let their love prevail. Yes, love toward this spunky 80-year-old who won't forgo seeing, admiring and being fascinated by the beautiful, creative and imaginative work of others, and wondering at it all. Ultimately, to *live the wonder*, Mido's main slogan, has always been his motto.

With high hopes in their hearts and eyes, they navigate the halls of the 2019 eyewear expo and approach Pavilion 1. This is the Fashion District. It houses the giants of the eyewear sector. The three exchange just a few words, stopping along the way to visit the Marchon Italia, Marcolin, Safilo, De Rigo, Giorgio Fedon and Luxottica stands. A feeling of awe comes over them as they face these giant, international icons of made in Italy. Across the way, in the lens pavilion, are the big-name brands, from Zeiss to Rodenstock, Hoya, Essilor, Ital-Lenti, Barberini, Optovista and many others. It would take at least a week to see all of the new products on display. The feeling of awe slightly subsides when Paolo reaches the stand of Franco Sordelli, a company from Venegono Inferiore. Through the crowd, Paolo spots the founder's son Dino. The two greet each other warmly; Emanuela knows him too.

"Yes, Paolo, we are here again and bigger than ever. Mido is the top trade show for the global eyewear industry, and an opportunity for companies like ours to meet big buyers, Italian and overseas distributors and a multitude of optical shop owners, like yourself, from all over the world. How's business in Turin?"

"We can't complain, Dino".

“Like Mido, we have evolved year after year, from subcontractors for historic companies that left us when they started manufacturing in Asia, we have grown to market our own brands of sunglasses and prescription eyewear. We set off on this adventure in 2007, and introduced our first product line right here at Mido. This is the best place for new brands and new collections to gain visibility on a global scale”.

“Your stand is amazing, entirely open and see-through”.

“Paolo, you remember how we were, right? In May, as a teenager, I used to come to Mido, roam around and help my father. It was a different world. There were many manufacturers but just a few brands, the stands were closed-in with hardly any room for product displays. It seems like centuries ago”.

Centro Style, a leading eyewear accessories company, is in the same pavilion. “Dad, let’s go see what they have. I think our shop should carry a larger selection of eyewear accessories”, Emanuela says, “I noticed that lately our customers seem more interested in the proper care and maintenance of eyewear and contact lenses”.

They all agree, slowly make their way through the A and G aisles, and immediately find themselves at the stand of Vedano Olona-based Centro Style. The company President, Francesco Conti, wearing a blue suit, a white shirt, and no glasses, is busy talking with customers in an open office area. As soon as he’s free, he introduces himself to the trio from Turin, who by that time has gone through the myriad of items on display. Emanuela is enthralled by a gadget, a keychain with a yellow fabric pouch for storing eyeglass cleaning cloths. “Welcome, thanks for waiting, how may I assist you?”.

Emanuela outlines the needs already conveyed to her father and Grandpa earlier on, and asks to see the latest accessories. “Well, what we are doing now is the most important perk of being at Mido; establishing relationships that lead to long-term business partnerships. Clearly, I sell a lot of items here, a lot, but I could never do without a meeting point like Mido. Here I can interact with direct customers like you, as well as distributors from foreign countries like America, Germany, or Spain, exchange opinions and get their take on initiatives different from my own. Mido remained a key event for us even in periods of crisis, when we’ve had to cut costs and decide which show to attend or cross off our calendar”.



Paolo cuts to the chase, anxious to visit other stands. “Thanks for your time, President, here’s my business card, may I have yours?”. And then says to his father and daughter: “Should we take a look around the Far East Pavilion? The Asian designers’ eyewear runway show starts at noon, and they’re serving *spritz* cocktails; wouldn’t you like to have one?”.

The Far East companies’ area occupies two large pavilions, 5 and 7, and is teeming with stands. Here lies a mind-boggling sea of Asian eyewear, enough to make your eyes cross. There are hundreds of small and medium-sized company stands, all loaded with products, even those in the tiniest spaces. Paolo, Giorgio and Emanuela get there after a nice walk along Corso Italia. After visiting a few stands, they go directly to the catwalk of the Asian eyewear fashion show, at the far end of the two pavilions. Five great-looking, extremely tall girls wearing black pants and black or white jackets parade in front of the large crowd. They are wearing sunglasses with square or slightly rounded frames. “Beautiful designs...and models”, Giorgio remarks. Paolo and Emanuela look at him, and smile. Their attention then turns to the *spritz* being prepared near the catwalk. And not too far from the Mido Far East beverage station is something only Italians would think to have at a trade show; an Asian gourmet restaurant.

“Can we go there?”, Emanuela asks her dad and Grandpa.

“Sure” they say. “And after that we’ll do one last round and leave”, Paolo says. “We can meet up at the exit by the Rho Fieramilano metro station, take that to the railway station and get on the Frecciarossa. The train leaves around 6 pm. In the meantime, I’ll call and see how Mom and Grandma are doing. We never called last night; they must be worried sick by now”.

After lunch Paolo goes back to Pavilion 2, and sees Connie Abrahams, a Belgian woman with an imposing presence and blue eyes peeking out of an eccentric pair of frames. He hears her tell a reporter the story of her company, which has a truly unique name, Iyoko Inyakè. “We would not dream of missing Mido. Like anyone with distributors in 54 countries, we simply have to be here. We started out with a small stand about 25 years ago, and over time we grew, grew and grew, also thanks to all of our customers”. Paolo, curious about the TV crew and reporter interviewing Connie, decides to follow them. Now the interview is over,

and the group is at stand T31, where a clever businesswoman is waiting for them. She's American, and clearly someone who likes having fun. She is wearing yellow square-shaped eyeglasses with rounded corners, and sporting a tall, white hairdo. She is Gai Gherardi, the founder of L.A. Eyeworks. Speaking into the mike, she says: "Mido is a window onto the world. This is where we meet foreign customers and our friends. Italy is a wonderful place to be. When we came here for the first time, in 1984, there was nothing like this in America, and we had great expectations. We had a very simple stand, covered with wallpaper we painted ourselves. It was a lot of fun, and we sold eyewear to buyers from across the globe. It was unbelievable, a miracle".

The television crew then quickly heads to the stand of iconic designer Jean-Francois Rey from Marseilles, in Pavilion 4. "We've been coming to Mido for at least 30 years", he says. "We loved being here from the start, when the expo was held in May, well into the spring season, at the fairgrounds in the center of Milan. Every time we met customers and distributors from all over the world and, obviously, made a lot of good deals here. Over time the Show changed, also by implementing new initiatives like the Mido Lab. Today, it continues to be an iconic and highly competitive show, the best place to launch our new products".

From Pavilion 4 the crew goes to Pavilion 6, reaching the stand of a company Paolo has never heard of. "Who are they?", Paolo asks the reporter. "This is Erminio Da Vià from Luigi Da Vià, a typical family-owned company from Cadore. The company has long worked behind the scenes supplying small components to eyewear manufacturers. This year, to celebrate their 60th anniversary, they decided to have their own stand at Mido". As Paolo walks away to meet with his family, he overhears Erminio Da Vià confidently saying: "Believe me, other expos are growing, but this Show is livelier and more dynamic. Mido is in a class of its own".

In the meantime, Emanuela let herself be lured to the stand of LG La Giardiniera, and is now talking with Maria Stefania Antognazza, a young woman with an amiable face, who pronounces the letter "r" with a slight and endearingly soft purr. While showing Emanuela her new eyewear collections she remarks that: "Here the atmosphere is different from other shows. Mido gives you a 360-degree view of the eyewear sector. Everyone who is anyone is here without fail, and they

bring their very best”.

Emanuela is now bound for the Lab Academy, to meet with Betty Klein, the daughter of French designer Francis Klein, known for his imaginative and very feminine design style. “The first time we came, about 20 years ago”, she tells Emanuela, “my father found himself in the company of a big eyewear manufacturer, and we were able to acquire several good clients. There’s a lot more competition now, which makes it harder to stay in the market”.

Emanuela has tried on a pair of particularly eccentric glasses; she’s at ease and having fun. “Betty, rest assured that I’ll convince my folks to place a sizable order”.

And Giorgio?

He spent a half-hour looking at Fw-Haug industrial eyewear machinery and talking with the company CEO, Karl-Heinz Pfeifle, who speaks Italian well. This stand is humongous. “Our first time at Mido was in the 1980s”, he tells Giorgio, “and we only brought one machine. This time we have nearly thirty of them! Mido is the #1 technology expo for machine manufacturers like us”.

Paolo dials a number on his cell. “Dad, are you done yet?”.

“Yes, I sure am”.

“Did you see anything interesting?”.

“I stopped at the Haug stand, you know the machinery company. And then I met...”.

Suddenly, music booms close to Giorgio’s location, making it impossible for his son to understand what he is saying.

“Who did you meet Dad? I couldn’t hear you”.

“Oh, no big deal Paolo, I just ran into an old friend. I had not seen her in a long time. Now, I’ll say it again; I want to come back next year. I’ve had so much fun. And besides, it will be Mido’s 50th anniversary celebration. I already looked up the dates. It will be from 29 February to 2 March. Perhaps the weather will be a bit warmer...”.

“All right Dad, we’ll talk about it. Now be sure to meet us in the hallway of the Rho Fieramilano metro station in half an hour”.

“I’ll run right over”.

“No Dad, please don’t run. I’d rather you get there safe and sound. You’ve held up better than we thought”.

“I was kidding Paolo. I’m already quite close to the track for Turin. Who do you think you’re talking to?”.

*Through the looking glass*

On the trip home, Giorgio seems lost in thought. He can't get the "old friend" he ran into just before leaving the fair out of his head. And as his thoughts fly, sweet and pleasant memories from his nearly 50 years of Mido events start to resurface.

# FIFTY YEARS EARLIER

## Ready, set, we're off

*Turin-Milan, 15 May 1970*

“Paolo, are you ready?”.

“Sure, Dad, I’m more than ready. Bye Mom, we’re going to Mido now”.

“Bring this sweater in case it’s cold inside the fairgrounds, and you, Giorgio, please be careful on the expressway”.

Giorgio gives his wife Maria a condescending look. “We’re men, not little girls”, he says, winking at his son. Then turns to her and adds: “The shop is all yours. If customers ask how soon their glasses can be ready, just tell them I’ll be back tomorrow”.

Giorgio and Maria’s house is in a suburb north of Turin. It’s early morning, the air is brisk, and on the horizon, the mountains stand out against the clear sky. Their son had trouble sleeping last night, because his dad promised that today he would take him to the “Italian Optics and Ophthalmology Exhibition” that started yesterday at the Fiera Campionaria exhibition center in Milan, and will end on Monday. This is why he won’t be going to school today, Friday. “Hurray! No school!” he gleefully exclaimed.

It will take about 90 minutes to reach the expo in his father’s stunning Fiat 850 coupe. Just enough time for Giorgio to explain to the boy what Mido is and what he will see there. Paolo is 12 years old. He’s smart and knows that his father is taking him along to purchase new frames. Mido is like a large “emporium” for opticians. Paolo will certainly be at ease, as his father often brings him to the eyewear and photographic equipment store, where sometimes he helps assemble a few pairs of eyeglasses. He has shown him how to use the templates and grinder to shape the lenses. Paolo is already quite familiar with the tools his father uses to make perfect eyeglasses. Giorgio loves to work with the best high-tech tools on the market, which now include a spherometer, lensmeter, pupillometer, and a lens centering machine. He operates the grinder with great dexterity (being a carpenter served him well), and

adeptly uses the ruler and caliper. He enjoys finding the right prescription for each customer, using the case full of phoropter lenses he keeps next to the eye exam chair.

It seems that it won't be long before Paolo takes over his father's job. The boy has already learned eyewear product terminology from his dad. He knows the meaning of eye wire, rim, bridge, front piece, nose pads, temples and hinges. As if by magic, today he'll find himself at a Show totally dedicated to eyewear (frames, lenses, sunglasses, cases, machinery for opticians and ophthalmologists), in the iconic halls of the Fiera Milano exhibition center.

Father and son are in the car now.

"Did you bring your glasses?"

"No Dad, I haven't seen them since yesterday".

"What do you mean by "I haven't seen them since yesterday?"

"Oh, I might have left them in the back of the shop when I went there to study".

"Paolo, you know what the eye doctor said; you should keep those glasses on your nose... Now we can't get them until Mom opens the shop, and the expo starts at 9. Oh, well", Giorgio says with a sigh. Then lightens up, and changes the subject. "Perhaps you keep losing them because you're ashamed to wear them? I do see girls leaving my shop looking embarrassed by them, but you're a boy!"

"You want the truth, Dad? I may be the son of an optician and not a little girl, but I am ashamed to wear the darn glasses and I hate being myopic". Then, in a complicit tone, tells his father: "Dad, girls won't even glance at me. Especially Barbara!"

"Oh, now I understand! But we have to hurry up, or we'll get to Mido too late. Here's what we'll do. You stay home and open the door for the cleaning lady, while Mom and I go to the shop real quick. Then we'll leave for Milan".

As he performs a U-turn, Giorgio starts humming a tune. The song that came to his mind seems to perfectly fit his son's situation. "Who are you girl, who gets here at six/ and sits to watch the sunset/ and why are you here alone, so alone / and stay only for half an hour / you have no friends, don't go dancing / or walk along the streets with anyone / come on, admit it, admit that you're self-conscious/ you're a girl that wears glasses".

Giorgio presses the intercom at the front door of the apartment

building. “Maria please hurry and come down; I’ll take you to the shop. I have to get Paolo’s glasses from the back room. Paolo will come up and wait for Margherita while you and I go to the shop”. As she approaches, Giorgio suddenly feels hot...Maria still looks so beautiful. “Get in, love!”.

In spite of the mishap, Giorgio is in a good mood this morning. How could he not be, today they are going to Mido. The 35-year-old man was just as excited as his 12-year-old son when he read the invitation. As Maria gets in, Giorgio looks into her... metal eyeglasses. He is also wearing eyeglasses, a nice-looking pair, with a black frame. He asks: “Do you remember this song?”, and starts singing. “Girl, you know, behind the glasses you wear/ there’s eyes that give me wings/ and if you smile and give me a kiss/ we’ll make a toast with our glasses/ Clink clink, we’re special / we’re wearing glasses, come with us/ clink clink, everyone owns the world/ the good-looking and the ugly, and can be ours if you wish”.

“Of course, I remember it, it’s by Herbert Pagani and Edoardo Beninato”; she kisses him on the cheek, leaving behind a halo of purple lipstick, the latest fad. Instead of a miniskirt (there are many in her closet), today she is wearing a trendy skirt. They call it a “midi” skirt. This is a throw-back to the era of Rita Hayworth, the designers’ own response to the non-fashion and protests of 1968. Giorgio does not think much of it, all he sees is Maria’s beauty. He recalls the first time he set eyes on her; she had just turned seventeen. He saw her a few more times before he dared to approach and speak with her. She was a well-proportioned petite girl, with a lovely face and piercing green eyes.

The car has reached its destination, and Maria opens the store. A few minutes later she reappears, triumphantly waving and swirling their son’s glasses around by the temple.

“Be careful!”, says Giorgio, and then adds: “I’m going home to pick up Paolo now. See you tonight”.

“All right. Be careful and make sure Paolo sits in the back seat. Call me at the shop when you get there. I’ll be quite busy today. We had a lot of customers yesterday and there are a lot of frames to put back in the drawers. I also wish to call a few manufacturers and see if we can get a few of their new products. Might as well start calling some up in Cadore. They’re all there anyway! And at Mido, try to figure out what the latest trends are”.

“Yes, Ma’am!” Giorgio replies, grinning, right hand on his brow, in a military salute.

Thirty kilometers later, on the way to Milan, Paolo says “Dad, I’m starving, can you get me something to eat?”. Giorgio gets off the expressway and pulls into the first bar-tobacconist he can find. In the bar, waiting for his son to finish a sandwich, Giorgio takes out of his briefcase a copy of *Ottica Italiana*, a magazine by the Federation of optical-optometry and photo-optical business owners. It’s the April issue, announcing the Mido “event” at Fiera Milano.

“What are you reading, Dad?”.

“An article about the expo we’re going to”.

“It talks about us?!”.

“It’s about opticians, and we are opticians, right Paolo?”.

“I want to be an optician when I grow up. Perhaps it’s because people who wear glasses are smart, like the song says”.

“Which song?”.

“You know, Dad, clink clink with our glasses”.

“How do you know it?”.

“You’ve been singing it under your breath for the entire trip”.

“Oh, all right. Now, let me finish reading this article”. Giorgio picks up the magazine and reads the first page: “As a result of a perfectly synergistic agreement between Federottica and AIO, the Show is an event bound to greatly benefit the optical industry in the short and long term”. “Let’s hope so”, Giorgio says to himself with a sigh, looking at Paolo, who has almost finished his salami sandwich; “I wonder if he’ll follow in my footsteps”. Giorgio sips his coffee, and keeps reading the article by Emilio Duranti. “We are glad that manufacturers in the sector accepted our invitation, because otherwise the Milan Expo would have remained a potential opportunity only, in other words, an unrealized dream. The manufacturers are a driving force that should not be ignored or underestimated; on the contrary, they should receive moral support and be encouraged to carry on with their work, which is of critical importance. There is no doubt that with the full commitment of manufacturers and their indisputable contribution, there is nothing we can’t achieve. It is also very likely that the industry’s commitment to the Show’s organization will primarily benefit the customers, who, from a practical standpoint, are the most valuable asset of all”.



Having finished reading the article, Giorgio looks up and asks his son: "Are you ready to go, Paolo?". On the way out, he takes 70 liras out of his pant pocket and buys a newspaper. The headline of an article on the front page reads "Workers' Statute also approved by the Cabinet". It happened yesterday. "Good", Giorgio thinks, gripped by a sense of relief. "It's the perfect way to end this warm autumn, the protests and strikes we have seen in our cities". Giorgio knows, from his own personal experience, how important it truly is to defend human dignity in the workplace. The politics section continues to focus on Mariano Rumor's new government. "All these politicians wear glasses", he mutters. He recalls the faces of the President of the Italian Republic, Giuseppe Saragat, Emilio Colombo, Ugo La Malfa, Arnaldo Forlani, and a young, emerging politician named Bettino Craxi. He approaches the counter: "I'd like a pack of *Nazionali* cigarettes please". "180 liras, sir". And they resume their trip.

The sun follows Giorgio and Paolo as they travel to Milan, and the sunshade on the driver's side at times fails to block the sunlight glaring through the windshield. Giorgio searches his pocket, with only one hand on the steering wheel.

"Dad, what are you looking for?"

Giorgio glances back and sees his son is wearing sunglasses that are way too large for him. "Hey, those are my Persols!"

"I love them!"

"I believe it. They are Persols, by Giuseppe Ratti. The factory is not too far from us. Did you know they are among the top manufacturers of sunglasses? And they are in Turin. Persol is a brand name that means "for the sun". Cadore may be on the forefront in terms of eyewear manufacturing districts, but our city boasts one of the largest manufacturers in Italy. Ratti has been in business since 1917. Now, take off the sunglasses and take a good look at them. Notice the flexible temples; the Meflecto system allows the frame to adjust to the wearer's facial features. Now look at the flexible bridge with three cut-outs; they call it "Victor flex", it increases the curvature of the frame, so it lies closer to the face. And do you see the arrow on the edge of the temple, near the front piece? It was inspired by the swords of ancient warriors".

"Wow, they are amazing Dad".

"Now please let me have them".

"What are you going to do with them? You're already wearing your

eyeglasses”.

“So what? I’ll wear them over my eyeglasses! With them on I feel like one of the actors that wore them in the movies”. “Hey Paolo, we’re almost there”.

Paolo yells: “Mido, here we come!”.

# On the road

*Milan*

In the car, with his son in the back seat, Giorgio decides to take advantage of the travel time to immediately address the issue.

“Paolo, don’t be self-conscious about your eyeglasses. You see, the world is filled with important, smart people who wear glasses, both men and women. And if you’re concerned about what girls think, look at Mom and me, we both wear glasses, right? We fell in love because we wear glasses”.

“Good for you Dad, but Barbara does not wear eyeglasses, only I do”.

Giorgio looks left, and keeps driving, and softly enough to keep his son from hearing, says “I can’t say you’re wrong, my son”. And his thoughts turn to another story, a girl he had a crush on in his youth, back in middle school, in Taranto. She did not wear glasses and only paid attention to boys who did not wear them!

“But Paolo”, Giorgio responds, “what about the famous singers girls go crazy over? Like John Lennon of the Beatles for example”.

“Yes, Dad, but he’s the only one. There were no *four-eyes*, as they say, in Pink Floyd or the Rolling Stones, were there?”.

“Gosh, the kid has an answer for everything”, Giorgio mutters. He can only think of ballad singers like Gino Paoli, Jimmy Fontana, Rocky Roberts, Nicola Di Bari, Al Bano, singers Paolo isn’t interested in.

“Have you ever seen the bottle-bottom eyeglasses worn by Augusto Daolio, of the Nomadi band? He’s very popular, one of my idols. And what about all the women that wear them? You know, many gorgeous women strut around wearing glasses”.

“Yes Dad, but they wear sunglasses. It’s an entirely different thing”.

“Darn it, he’s right again”, Giorgio thinks to himself. Across his mind parade the gorgeous faces of famous models and movie stars with sunglasses on, women he desired and dreamed about in his youth, like Marilyn Monroe, Audrey Hepburn, Grace Kelly, followed soon thereafter by the fabulous Brigitte Bardot, and current movie stars, but none of them, not a single one, wears prescription eyeglasses! Then something

flashes through his mind. Marilyn Monroe, in “How to marry a millionaire”. Was it her character that said in that very movie: “Men don’t pay attention to women who wear glasses”?

Giorgio fires back: “In any case Paolo, recent statistics show that in Italy alone 20 million people wear prescription eyeglasses, and 25 to 28 million people wear sunglasses. So, you might as well get over it, young man!”.

Silence ensues.

This time Paolo does not reply. He stares at the road ahead, as the car speeds along the Turin-Milan expressway. Giorgio is sure that the world of eyewear manufacturers and retailers is about to undergo a revolution. Optical glasses will no longer be just a medical device for correcting myopia, astigmatism, presbyopia and hyperopia, but will become “fashion accessories”, as stated in an article he read in the *Vedere* eyewear magazine issue published to commemorate the extemporary eyewear show held at Fiera Milano in 1967. He knows just about every phrase in that article by heart. “Eyeglasses have come a long way from being simple devices with two vision corrective lenses; they have become “fashion accessories” that meet the daily demands of modern life, follow fashion and aesthetic trends, and are an indispensable fashion accessory for both men and women”.

“That was a good magazine”, Giorgio thinks to himself, “it helps us understand our world; hmm, what did I do with it?”. He turns and asks his son: “Hey Paolo, take the magazine out of the door pocket; it might be the one I misplaced a long time ago”.

“This one?”.

“Yes! Look for the piece of paper I put in as a bookmark. Read the underlined phrase on that page”.

“Here it is, Dad”. “In 1965, while 25 billion liras worth of eyewear were sold in Germany, and 20 billion in France, the Italian market total was far lower. This shows an increase in the Italian manufacturers’ output of products intended for export. As much as this benefits our trade balance and cash flow, it clearly shows that consumption in Italy is lagging behind, and there is plenty of room for it to grow”.

“Dad, should I keep reading?”.

“Go ahead”.

“Italian manufacturers therefore should also strive to cater to the domestic market, and ensure the public understands the need to protect

this priceless asset, which is their eyesight. It will be a long and hard endeavor, but one of extreme social value, which will ultimately also benefit our industry by increasing the opportunities available in an ever-growing market”.

“It’s a good article. Old, but still quite relevant today. Thanks Paolo”.

“Dad, look Dad! A white Volkswagen Beetle like the one in the movie we saw together just went by”.

“Ha! It sure looks like Herbie the Love Bug!”.

Father and son are now very close to the entrance of the Fiera Campionaria exhibition center. There is a big sign on the building, which reads: “MI-DO 1970 – OPTICS AND OPHTHALMOLOGY EXHIBITION 14-18 MAY”. On the cornice under the sign, eight flags flap in the wind, including those of the EU founding members, Italy, France, Germany, The Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg.

“Let’s find a place to park. Look, the entrance is already crowded. Be sure to stay by my side at all times. Don’t risk getting lost!”.

## At the Show

*Milan*

“Paolo, look, that gentleman is Mario Lozza”.

“The one from Lozza eyewear, who invented the Zilo?”.

“Yes, he’s the heir who reopened the first Italian eyewear manufacturing company, and is also the President of Anfao, the national association of eyewear manufacturers. The exact name is National Association of Optical Goods Manufacturers. Mr. Lozza is also the Vice President of Mido”.

“Good morning, Giorgio. You brought your son, eh?”.

“Good morning, President. Yes, this is Paolo. I’m teaching him our profession, and once in a while he already helps me at the shop”.

Paolo looks at him, eyes filled with curiosity, as they stand in the middle of the hallway in Pavilion 30, lined with the so-called ‘stalls’ of expo exhibitors, ranging from manufacturers of frames for optical glasses or sunglasses, eyewear case manufacturers, distributors of machinery and tools for opticians, companies that sell small parts and eyewear assembly components, abrasive compounds, tint service suppliers, all the way to raw material suppliers. Giorgio, who is familiar with this environment, points out to Paolo, the President of Federottica, Luigi Bardelle, the President of AIO, Luigi Mentasti, and the President of Mido, Senatore Borletti. Paolo drags his father from display to display, looking at frames, and keenly observing the eclectic crowd of people talking with the manufacturers, asking specific questions about products, pricing, discounts, writing on their purchase-order pads, reviewing, correcting, signing each order, and sealing the deal with a warm handshake. Paolo looks on, enthralled, a 12-year-old getting a glimpse into the world of adults.

“Paolo did you notice how many foreign visitors are in and around these stands?”.

And indeed, people are speaking in many different languages. To communicate with foreign visitors, exhibitors often rely on neighboring vendors who speak that particular language, but even more often on the Show’s official interpreters, beautiful, confident women, they are the

ones who ask for help from those same vendors. “Excuse me, do you know the English term for ‘*cerniera affogata*’?”.

Italians can make themselves understood by most foreigners using hand gestures and materials on hand, while Brazilians attempt to make Portuguese sound like Italian, and most of the time succeed! People from Spain do the same, quite successfully. Argentineans are best addressed separately. Many of them represent Italian manufacturers, and were born in Italy. Hence their Spanish is peppered with words and cadences that are Venetian, Tuscan or typical of Southern Italian dialects long ingrained in their heads, which resurface when triggered by the language of their hosts. And then, there are the Germans and Anglo-Saxons. “They’re speaking English, right Dad?”, Paolo asks, hearing the language that is fast conquering European music.

“Yes Paolo. These foreigners are a bit stiff-mannered, but nonetheless likable. They like using interpreters because English is not widely spoken in Italy, and when they close a deal, they give you a very powerful handshake!”.

It has been four hours since father and son set foot in Mido. Giorgio is exhausted. Paolo dragged him everywhere, and they spent a long time at Giorgio’s favorite frame manufacturers, and at the stands of machinery and optical tools suppliers. Giorgio is keen to keep pace with the times.

“Paolo, listen, I am exhausted. If you want, we can have a snack before heading home. It’s a long way home and by the time we get there it will be late evening. Mom is waiting for us, and tomorrow I have eyeglasses to assemble”.

“I’m not tired Dad, but I’d love a snack! And if you need me tomorrow, I’ll come to the shop and help you. Thanks for bringing me to Mido!”.

Giorgio learned that 95 exhibitors attended the Show, and the exhibition occupied a surface area of 3,000 m<sup>2</sup>. There were 67 Italian companies and 28 foreign sales agents representing 39 foreign manufacturers. People from 34 countries across all continents attended Mido. The very first Mido event was a smash hit!

“Paolo, we really have to go now. I parked the car a bit far from here, remember? Help me find it, I don’t want to walk around much longer”.

# Going home

*On the expressway*

Paolo is not tired at all, but his father is. It's a good thing that the boy is awake and alert after the intense day at Mido. He's keeping Giorgio from falling asleep at the wheel; otherwise, something dreadful might happen, and not because of anyone's poor eyesight.

"Dad, when were glasses invented?"

Giorgio struggles to remember what he learned while studying for his optician's license.

"There are no exact records as to when the first eyeglasses were made, or who might have invented them. It's not that simple. The first documents we have, like the Venetian glassmakers' guild capitularies, are from the 1300's.

"The 1300's Dad!?"

"Yes, this regulation differentiates lenses used for eyewear from enlargement lenses. This means that by that time, eyeglasses already existed in Venice. And more importantly, that there had to be opticians, like your dad! It was an important profession, and Venetian opticians had shops outside of Venice and even in other countries like Germany, and what was then Flanders. Perhaps that's why my profession came to be practiced abroad. And Florence most certainly was another "cradle" for eyewear. In the 15th century, it may have been the largest eyewear manufacturing area in Italy. They exported glasses as far away as Constantinople, today's Istanbul".

"Dad, you're amazing!". Giorgio takes his eyes off the road for a second, looks at his son in the rear-view mirror of his Fiat 850 and smiles, gratified.

"And what did eyeglasses look like back then?"

"At first, they were designed to rest on the nose and were riveted, so they could be folded and placed in a case; some were arched or had a bridge, and above all, they did not have temples! Then came the *lorgnette* styles, with elegant handles attached to the frame so they could be held in front of the eyes as needed. And let's not forget the *pince-nez* styles which, in fact, like the French word indicates, pinched the nose. The



first eyeglasses were made of steel or other metals like brass, copper or gold, and even carved horn or tortoise shell. Long after that, in this century, manufacturers started using metal alloys, and later cellulose, until it was banned for being too flammable. And then came cellulose acetate and injection-molded acetate, the materials my eyeglasses and yours are made of. Do you understand, Paolo? If we can arrange it, one of these weekends I'd like to take you to see the first known portrait of a man wearing glasses. The painting is in a church in Treviso. Perhaps we can take a day trip with Mom and go see it".

Silence ensues.

Giorgio glances at the back seat. Paolo has fallen asleep. "The warrior is resting", he thinks, "or was he simply bored by my answers?".



# THE ROARING 1970'S

## Defending the most precious asset

*Turin, summer of 1972*

This year Giorgio is unable to go to Mido. He had looked forward to the event for the last 2 years. The Show was not held last year; it only takes place every two years. And this May there was so much work that he has had to spend every weekend at the shop making new glasses, sometimes with Paolo's help. The boy has grown, and getting ready for his middle school graduation exam. Giorgio consoles himself by reading and thumbing through *Vedere* and *Ottica Italiana* trade magazines.

"Dad, the latest issue of *Vedere* just arrived. It talks about this year's Mido show. How come we didn't go?"

"Paolo, you know why. Now, could you hand me the magazine please?"

Giorgio takes a seat in the armchair across from the eye chart, where customers usually sit for eye exams, and starts reading.

*The end results of the 1972 edition of Mido, the international optics, optometry and ophthalmology exhibition, clearly indicate it was a huge success. The stands occupied a surface area of approximately 4,300 m<sup>2</sup>, and the exhibition spanned over one and a half kilometers.*

"And I missed it...", Giorgio grumbles under his breath upon reading it.

*Overall participation by exhibitors included 137 Italian companies, 32 foreign companies, and 61 distributors, representing a total of 230 companies. The Mido trade expo showcased "products by manufacturers worldwide, including eyewear frames and sunglasses, as well as eyewear cases, industrial machinery and systems, opticians' tools, small metal parts and components, lens tinting machines, optical and contact*

*lenses, tinted glass for sunglasses, and raw materials for the eyewear industry. Attendance by eyewear industry professionals was spectacular. The Show attracted nearly 9,000 visitors, about 7,000 of whom were from Italy and 2,000 from foreign countries. The reported attendance by 7,000 Italian visitors clearly indicates that opticians as well as their most qualified associates were at the 1972 edition of Mido. Attendance by foreign visitors encompassed 50 countries. We should note that, to date, no other show has ever managed to host such a wide range of products made in countries all over the world.*

“Indeed, I missed an amazing event!”.

At that moment, Maria enters the store. She also has a magazine in her hand, the latest issue of *Ottica Italiana*.

“This one also talks about Mido!”, she exclaims. “Lozza met with the top management of our association”. They wrote an article on it. It’s titled: “Opticians and manufacturers are willing to join forces”. Listen to what the President of Anfao said:

*You have been at the Show. It’s an event that classifies our industry at the international level, and with it the entire Italian eyewear sector, including its distribution channels. We want to bring the Italian eyewear industry back into the position it rightfully deserves on the European market. Mido will bear witness to our industry’s progress every year. We wish to make this Show the foremost annual event in Europe.*

“And now”, Maria adds, “he also talks about opticians, like us”: *You might have noticed that Mido added an O to the appellatives that define its acronym. The Show has another O, the O for optometry. Mido will be a showcase for optical and eyewear products as well as optometry. This means that we want to participate in everything you do. I hope we will go a long way and succeed together. It will add value to your profession, and help us take Italian products to the next level. Together we will find a solution to a problem that weighs heavily on our society: defending the most precious asset bestowed upon humanity.*

“Nice!”, Giorgio exclaims.

“Yes, very”, Maria adds.

“Maria, they decided to host Mido every year. They say the change was driven by numerous requests from companies in the sector. So, next year we absolutely have to go. In the

meantime, how would you like to take a ride in September and visit the Cadore district? It might relieve the gloom of missing Mido this year”.

“Sure, I’d like to. I’ll start looking up hotels for the three of us right away”.

## In the district

*Treviso and Cadore, September 1972*

“Look Paolo, come, come here. Can you see this painting? Do you see anything interesting?”.

“Yes Dad, of course, that fellow has strange glasses on his nose, without temples!”.

“Exactly. The man in the portrait is a Dominican friar, Cardinal Hugo of Provence, who is also known by other, similar names. On his nose are riveted eyeglasses, the very first type of eyeglasses ever made. They are a bit difficult to balance on your nose, but back then it was acceptable. This fresco was painted by Tommaso da Modena or perhaps by one of his associates, and dates back to 1352”.

“Wow!”, Paolo exclaims.

School starts again next month, and Paolo has said he'd like to attend a classical studies high school. These are the last few days of summer break. Paolo, with his parents, is now in the church of St. Nicholas in Treviso, which houses a very valuable series of Gothic paintings. This first-ever portrait of a person wearing glasses is in the *Sala del Capitolo* (Chapter Hall). The oldest one known to exist in Italy or abroad.

“Maria, do you like it?”. “It's beautiful, just beautiful, and so are this church and the convent....”.

“Now let's get back in the car and resume our trip”. “Yes, the owner of the Hotel Ferrovia in Calalzo di Cadore is expecting us. Come on Paolo, get in the car”.

“We should get there in about 1 hour and 45 minutes. We'll pass by Longarone, the town flooded by water in 1963, when the Vajont dam overflowed. I feel awful just thinking about that catastrophe; it killed almost 2,000 people!”.

The hotel owner, Gino Mondin, is exquisitely polite. After being closed for a few years, the hotel reopened in June, and now offers all the amenities of a fully remodeled and upgraded hotel. “You are in the center of the Cadore eyewear manufacturing district. If you wish

to visit the factories, you've come to the best place". During dinner at the hotel's restaurant, Giorgio explains to his family that some of the largest eyewear companies, as well as many smaller ones, are in this area. "The latest industrial census by Istat (Italian Institute for Statistics) indicates that last year in the province of Belluno there were 137 eyewear companies, with a total of 2,600 employees. There were six companies with more than 100 employees, and 82 with up to 10 employees. I also read that the national census of 1961 indicated that 72 eyewear companies out of the 147 in existence in this area operated at the national level, and employed 2,170 people, meaning 61% of the Italian eyewear industry workforce. Truly mind-boggling numbers..."

"Dad you're always well informed, eh!", Paolo remarks. Maria smiles at her husband, and then admiringly looks at the nice plate of *casunziei* pasta that just appeared in front of her, eager to taste it.

# The pioneers

*Calalzo di Cadore*

“Maria, Paolo, look at this small cottage now in ruins here in the hamlet of Rizzios. It used to bear a sign that said “Eyewear Factory”, and that’s where our story began, or rather, the history of the Italian eyewear industry, and consequently also the evolution of our profession as opticians. Without this pioneering start, I believe we’d be working in a different field. In the year 1878 Angelo Frescura, a man with a big beard who crafted hair combs but was also interested in optical materials, decided to open an eyewear factory right here in these woods, in the area called Le Piazze. His first employees were his younger brother, Leone, and another man from Cadore named Giovanni Lozza”.

“Dad, was he related to Mario Lozza, the man we saw two years ago at the Show?”.

“Yes, indeed Paolo, excellent, but we’ll come back to that later”.

Giorgio, Maria and Paolo had traveled from Calalzo up to the hamlet along the road leading to Val d’Oten, which lies more than 800 meters above the town. Originally the small factory on the banks of the Molinà stream was a mill, which was used to extract oil from walnuts. A hint of emotion underlines Giorgio’s words, as this was indeed the starting point of the entrepreneurial path that ultimately led to the eyewear show in Milan, soon to be held every year.

“Well”, Giorgio says, refocusing his thoughts, “now we’ll follow the stream and make our way back down”. We’ll go to see what I’d call the ‘cathedral’ of the eyewear industry”. He’d brought along a book published in 1956 by a famous scholar, Enrico De Lotto, titled “From Nero’s emerald to Cadore eyewear”, an as yet unrivaled account of the history of the eyewear industry.

Giorgio opens the book and starts reading. “On 21 October 1883, having abandoned the idea of building in Le Piazze, Frescura and Lozza bought a grain mill in Molinà, and turned it into a factory. The new small factory, rising in the shadow of the 16th century Church of the Virgin Mary of Molinà, beneath the homonymous bridge, hence became the first building of today’s globally famous and imposing manu-



facturing complex named Safilo”.

“Now, let’s go see this factory”, Giorgio says to the visibly intrigued Maria and Paolo. In the car, he continues the story, effortlessly recalling what he had studied and read on the subject. “A few years later Frescura died. Giovanni Lozza could not afford to buy the factory, so he sold it to a Milanese company, Colson, Bonomi and Ferrari. In 1887 the factory reopened with about thirty workers. Carlo Enrico Ferrari, who would later become the sole owner of the new factory, played a key role in boosting the momentum of the eyewear industry in Cadore”.

“And Giovanni Lozza, Dad?”.

“Good question. De Lotto wrote that Lozza used the small sum he received from the sale of his old company to build and open a small machine shop near another 16th century church in San Francesco d’Orsina, which is along the road that brought us to Calalzo. Lozza’s large manufacturing plant now lies where the shop used to be. Molinà and San Francesco are the two seminal places of everything that developed since then, up to our era. It’s pretty amazing, right?”.

At last, Giorgio’s Fiat 850 coupe comes to a stop in front of the Safilo manufacturing plant. This facility produces metal eyewear frames, while plastic frames are now being made at Safilo’s new factory in Santa Maria di Sala, a town in the province of Venice, on the border with the province of Padua.

It’s a delightfully warm and sunny day; a fresh mountain breeze blows across the meadows. On the left are the shimmering peaks of the Marmarole mountains, and on the right rise the Dolomite mountains. The Safilo factory lies in the valley between them. Slightly above the factory is a magnificent forest. The complex is surrounded by housing projects, originally built to house the factory’s workers. What is truly amazing is that these were the training grounds of all Italian eyewear pioneers, starting with Frescura, and thereafter Lozza and Ferrari, Ulisse Cargnel, Calisto Fedon, Guglielmo Tabacchi, and even the famous Salmoiraghi. “And in their wake”, Giorgio says while staring at the ex-Safilo plant, lies the long history of many smaller, yet dynamic companies. The Agordo area was the setting for yet another great story, that of Luxottica. I’ll tell you about it on our next trip”.

“But Dad...”.

## Specialized

*Milan, 11-15 May 1973*

Paolo is 15 now and in his fourth year of attending a leading classical studies high school in Turin. He has been a real pain for a few days now, ever since he learned that next week his father plans to attend Mido, see the latest products and place a few orders for the rest of the year.

“Dad, I want to come to the Show with you”, he kept saying, droning on and on relentlessly, like a drum. He even whined like a toddler at times. Every time his parents said no, he’d pout for hours on end, and even when Giorgio and Maria clearly told him: “You’re almost done with school, and you’d better focus on your Greek and Latin since you’re having issues translating them”.

“All right, I get it, I’m a bit behind with Greek, but I’ll be fine”, he replied. “Come on Dad, take me with you Friday, I would only miss two days of school”.

“Have you gone mad?”, his father replied.

And, after much ado, Paolo is now in the passenger seat of his fathers’ sporty Fiat 850 coupe – happier than a child on Christmas morning – as it quickly travels toward Milan.

Father and son are discussing eyewear frames. Great innovations are said to be forthcoming, and that’s why the family chose not to get new glasses yet. They are among the lucky few who can afford to change them often, unlike “common mortals”, who purchase a pair of eyeglasses and then have to live with them until their vision worsens to the point that they have to get new lenses.

Some kids can hardly wait for that to happen. American tear-drop-shaped Ray-Ban styles featuring a small bridge, clear plastic brow bar and a circle in the middle are quite popular with students, as are Ray-Ban look-alike optical frames, but most students wear rectangular-shaped glasses.

Giorgio has made a “battle plan” to visit companies from Cadore and abroad; he’s eager to see the items on display at the Luxottica stand, Leonardo Del Vecchio’s company, which he’d like to visit at some time or another in Agordo. Giorgio has heard very good things about it. Sup-

posedly last year and the year before people were waiting in line to get into the stand.

Paolo stares ahead, lost in his thoughts. He's thinking about the increasingly difficult Greek translations as well as eyewear as a fashion item, realizing that wearing glasses does not bother him nearly as much as it did in middle school, when he felt a bit awkward compared to his friends. Then he suddenly asks: "Dad do you believe that eyeglasses will soon become an item that keeps pace with fashion?"

Good question. Giorgio immediately recalls an article he read in *Vedere* magazine a while back. He remembers exactly what the author of the article wrote: *It's hard to believe how many high-fashion frames are on the market now. In France alone there are almost twenty high-fashion frame manufacturers. What kind of design differentiates high-fashion frames from regular frames?* He knows it by heart, and now he has an opportunity to discuss it with someone. Paolo is smart...

"I think you're right. It's already a major trend in France. There are optical frames by Yves St. Laurent, Nina Ricci, Claude Chevasus of Carven, Carita, Lanvin, Pierre Cardin, and those by Emilio Pucci, which are made in Germany. Italy has not taken that route yet, but I believe that sooner or later that fashion trend will reach our market".

"So, what differentiates those frames from others, Dad?"

"They might have metal embellishments bearing specific brand names or initials, which are usually placed either on the temples or the front piece, or otherwise embedded in the material of the frame itself. For example, the new Pierre Cardin frames have an inlay with the initials 'PC' on the plastic temples. Other frames, like Lanvin's, can only be identified based on their manufacturing technique, such as color or shape. I have seen Pucci's frames; they have large rims, ingenious shapes and a high-quality finish. He also markets metal frames, but plastic is and certainly will continue to be the most widely used material.

"I understand, Dad. Now, how long will it take to get there? If this car had a radio we could tune in to 'Alto gradimento', it's such a shame that we can't listen to it".

"You're right Paolo" ...and they start cracking jokes.

"Dad, I really like professor Aristogitone. He reminds me of a few professors I had".

"I spent 40 years teaching and working hard between these four classroom walls...", Giorgio says, imitating the character's quivering voice.

“Right on Dad! Ha ha ha... Can you do accountant Affastellati now?”.

“Whyyyyy, whyyyy didn’t you come tin? Why didn’t you come tin? I’ll tell yooou why you didn’t come tinnn”.

“Daaaad, catch her catch her...” . And they keep joking and laughing till their sides hurt, all the way to Mido.

Father and son arrive at Mido with teary eyes from laughing so hard imitating characters on Boncompagni and Arbore’s radio show. Flags fly above the main entrance to the expo. Taxi cabs, mostly Fiat 124 or 125 models, come and go in front of the entrance, dropping off passengers and quickly driving away. Many clearly appear to be from foreign countries. Upon entering, Giorgio and Paolo are dumbfounded. The place is huge. Once again this year, the exhibition is over a kilometer and a half long. A few steps ahead, Giorgio meets the expo management team; Mario Lozza, President of Anfao and Mido, Luigi Coltelletti, the Show’s secretary, Giuseppe Ricco, the President of Federottica, and the President of the Italian opticians’ association, Aldo Regattieri. For the first time this year, the stands at Mido are arranged by specialization. Eyewear manufacturers are on one side, and machinery manufacturers on the other. Industry professionals like being able to find the stands that interest them most without delay.

“There are so many companies Mario”, Giorgio says to Lozza.

“Hi Giorgio, you should have been here last year... This year’s attendance is even higher. We have 229 exhibitors. There are 153 Italian companies and as far as foreign exhibitors go, we have – hold on, let me check my notes, here we go – 29 German, 6 US, 5 UK, 4 Indian, 3 Japanese, 2 Spanish, 2 Austrian and 2 Swiss companies. Not bad, right?”.

“That’s great Mario. We’ll chat in your stand one of these days”.

“Sure thing”.

Now father and son are bound for the Luxottica stand. Upon arriving, they meet Leonardo Del Vecchio and his right-hand man, Luigi Francavilla. Del Vecchio and Giorgio are of the same age, and at ease starting a conversation. Giorgio says he’d like to bring his family to Agordo and visit the factory. “How did you end up in Agordo? Weren’t you working in Milan?”.

“When I moved to Agordo I was a subcontractor, and made parts for several eyewear manufacturers. I took all the equipment out of my

tool and die shop in Milan, loaded it on a truck and moved up there. At that time, Agordo offered plots of land free of charge to any factory willing to move there. So, I left, hoping to make a better life for myself. And then at one point, since I've always hated being dependent on anyone else, I decided that all products made at my factory should bear the name of Luxottica. We exhibited at the first edition of Mido three years ago, with seven or eight metal frames we hand-crafted in 20 days. Mido is where Luxottica truly took off. From then on, our sales have boomed. I must admit that it all started because I dreaded putting my future in someone else's hands. And here we are. So, Giorgio, would you like to see our new frames now?"

Giorgio and his son then meet a truly exceptional man. He's an optician from Rome, by the name of Alessandro Spiezia. Paolo cannot help but stare at him in awe, when he hears that this man has made prescription glasses for Federico Fellini, his wife Giulietta Masina, even Marcello Mastroianni and Francis Coppola. "Dad, have you ever made eyeglasses for anyone that famous?"

"No Paolo", Giorgio replies, slightly annoyed. Alessandro is friendly and does not put on airs about being in contact with famous people or movie stars. "Coming to these shows is the right thing to do, Giorgio. We can be sure to find something new and innovative for our clients here. Mido is helping all companies in the sector gain confidence, and launch innovative products with an all-Italian flair. Please, do come to my shop in Rome when you get a chance".

"And if you're ever in Turin, let me know!"

The next day Giorgio phones Maria from the hotel, in an effort to reassure her. "We were at Mido the entire time, don't worry". News of today's riots and violence in Milan were broadcast on the radio, and later in the evening on television. During an unauthorized rally led by Ciccio Franco, a deputy of the Movimento Sociale Italiano, demonstrators clashed with the police. The riot resulted in the death of police officer Antonio Marino. "Don't worry, our day at the Show was tiring, but we were perfectly safe. Paolo? He's fine, just dead tired, and so am I. We walked for kilometers, up and down the aisles, looking at frames and talking with manufacturers".

"What did you see, anything new?"

"Many new things Maria, but above all I had the opportunity to

meet many manufacturers face-to-face. Guglielmo Tabacchi of Safilo, Giovanni Marcolin, Giuseppe Ratti of Persol and the much-talked-about Leonardo Del Vecchio. I also met people from smaller companies. Do you remember Valter Da Rin, the one with Trenti? I also saw Mario Postizzi of Metalvista. I found them next to the Luxottica stand. They are all companies of great prestige, and several of them have factories in Cadore, the area we visited last year. I also met Antonio Da Rin Vidal and “Fiori” Zanella, the founders of Luxol. I ordered a lot of things, Maria, perhaps too many, but just wait till you see the eyewear we’ll be able to offer our clients! We’ll be home tomorrow as planned. Paolo is delighted to be here”.

Many days have passed since the event. The opticians’ trade magazine, *Ottica Italiana*, has published the results of Mido 1973: *The 3<sup>rd</sup> International Optics, Optometry and Ophthalmology Exhibition was a great success. Although when it started, in 1970, the expo was supposed to be held every two years, soon the organizers felt the need to turn it into an annual event to meet the requests from industry professionals who look at Mido as a place where optics and optometry industry professionals worldwide can meet and compare notes. Large crowds of Italian and foreign visitors flocked to the Show, and attendance was 23% higher than last year’s remarkably successful event. With regard to exhibitors, the Show is fast gaining visibility abroad; attendance by foreign exhibitors increased by 34%, as opposed to the 19% increase reported for Italian companies. A unique eyewear exhibition featuring innovative eyewear by up-and-coming designers took place at the same time as Mido, and allowed visitors to take a peek into the future of the eyewear industry.*

Paolo is home. He went to school to check his final exam results. “Dad, Mom... I passed! Can I get new frames now? See? I told you that going to Mido wouldn’t hurt my marks!”.

# Poker

*Milan, 10-14 May 1974*

Paolo, now wearing dark olive-colored Zilo prescription glasses, the latest version of the 1950's most iconic Lozza style, is in his room, studying. The sound of the long play record he received as a birthday gift from a few classmates has been filling the room non-stop this afternoon. It's the latest album by Cat Stevens, *Buddha and the chocolate box*. Paolo is a huge fan of the British singer-songwriter. Often, while taking a break from doing homework or reading school books, he picks up the guitar and tries to play his idol's songs. He started playing guitar in middle school, and plays rather well for being self-taught. However, his interest in optics and eyewear has seemingly disappeared. In fact, it has been a few months since he last asked if he could tinker around in his father's workshop, and even though it's May, the month of the Milan eyewear trade show, he hasn't yet broached the subject. Just last year he was pestering his poor parents about it...

After a busy day at work Giorgio is home with Maria, and decides to get her take on the subject. "Do you know what's going on with Paolo? Do you think he'll come to Mido with me this year like he used to?"

"No Giorgio, I don't think so. I believe that Paolo has other things in mind. I wouldn't be surprised if he chooses to seriously pursue a music career".

"Oh, there you are Paolo". The teen just appeared in the small dining room. "Listen, I'm going to Mido on Friday. Would you like to join me, as usual?"

"Dad, just go by yourself this year. I'm not as interested in it anymore. I'd rather hang out with my friends. We meet at the school in the afternoon where we get a chance to talk, and we play our guitars sometimes. But listen, have you decided how you're voting on the referendum yet?"

"Right, the referendum", Giorgio mumbles. On 12 May Italians have to cast their vote to decide whether to uphold or repeal the divorce law currently in force. "Mom and I have not decided how to vote yet", Giorgio elusively replies. The television is on and on the black and

white screen politicians are urging people to vote. The civil unrest and political tensions plaguing the nation have been further fueled by yet another appalling event; on 18 April, a terrorist group known as the Red Brigades kidnapped judge Mario Sossi in Genoa.

“Giorgio, have you heard? They issued an ultimatum. In exchange for Sossi’s freedom they are demanding the release of the ‘22 Ottobre’ gang members, and yesterday the judge’s wife issued an appeal, begging President Leone and even Pope Paul VI to intervene”.

“Times are tough, Maria... Listen, would you like to go to Mido with me?”.

“No, I’d better not. Don’t worry, you go. Besides, who’s going to mind the shop? Go, make your usual rounds, and place orders for the entire year. We’ll need them, and you won’t be able to stay as long as usual this year. You have to be back in time to vote on Sunday”.

“You’re right. I’ll barely have time to get everything done. As it turns out, it might be a good thing that Paolo won’t be there. Besides, I can’t force him to go! He’ll be the one to decide if he wants to do our job when the time comes”.

This year is the 4th edition of Mido since the first in 1970. But there is also another reason for Giorgio to be here on this Friday, the 10th of May 1974, the Show’s opening day. The first thing he does is look for Safilo’s stand. Guglielmo Tabacchi, one of Mido’s greatest supporters, passed away two months ago. He was the founder and the main driving force behind the success of the eyewear manufacturing public company known by its Italian acronym Safilo. Giorgio is about to meet Guglielmo’s sons, Vittorio, Giuliano, and Dino Tabacchi. Vittorio is a few years younger than Giorgio, and the two hit it off immediately.

“I am sorry that you lost your Dad, and wanted to offer my condolences”.

“Thank you, Giorgio. It’s hard, but we have to keep going, also to honor his memory and everything he did. We were determined to be here at Mido, just as determined as he was. The Show was established by a group of entrepreneurs to allow eyewear manufacturers in Cadore to sell their products in Milan. And today, as you can see, it has already become a gathering place for the entire eyewear industry, its supply chain and eyewear-related businesses worldwide. It’s a melting pot of cultures and different areas of operation”.



“Here is where I first learned about your company, Vittorio”.

“Mido was our launching pad, an opportunity to go beyond Italy's borders and the Cadore area, and put our company on the world map. I hope my brothers and I can continue our father's work and do it justice. Thanks for standing by us, Giorgio”.

Among the many people crowding around Guglielmo Tabacchi's sons is forty-year old Giovanni Marcolin, the owner and driving force of a thriving company in Vallesella di Domegge in Cadore. “Your father and the rest of us were right in thinking a trade show would boost our business. It gave us a showcase in Milan, and helped raise our visibility. We did penetrate a few foreign markets by ourselves, but Mido is allowing us to reach markets in other geographical areas. We're making progress, Vittorio”.

Giorgio has been extremely busy for the last two days. Free to roam the stands by himself, he managed to see a lot of new products and place several orders for his shop. Now he's on the train, on his way back to Turin. He chose not to drive this time. Tomorrow he has to vote on the divorce referendum, but he is thinking about the people he met at the Show. He can't get his mind off of Toni Frescura from Kador, a distant relative of Angelo Frescura, the first pioneer of Italian eyewear, the exceptional man that started it all. He's also very fond of Mido.

And that Austrian, Robert La Roche, with his Lunettes...What a character! Giorgio recalls the amusing story Robert told him about his first time at Mido. “Everything we brought had to fit in my car, and therefore we rented stand furniture from Mido; rather unsightly chairs and tables, which we ended up covering with white tablecloths. An utter state of chaos greeted us outside the expo; cars everywhere, adamantly vying for the best spots to unload. Amid this confusion, unemployed Italians were shouting ‘cart, cart!’, and preying of the fools that did not ask how much they charged for their service beforehand. Fortunately, I spoke Italian pretty good, so I fared better than others and did not lose anything, Giorgio. I heard horror stories about things being left on the sidewalk, some even lost entire collections of eyewear. I don't believe that Mido's management ever authorized that service, but everyone thought it was quite useful, and in some ways a typically Italian thing to do.

Giorgio, I have never, ever seen anything like that service at other shows”. Good thing that Robert can laugh about it!

During a lunch break, Giorgio also met a sales agent. His name is Cesare Massaccesi, and he works for Edgardo Scarrone, a large distributor based in Turin, through which Giorgio purchases Austrian Silhouette products for his shop. A friendly, lively and exuberant young man, Cesare, who has always worked in the industry as an agent, told Giorgio that the rumor circulating among industry professionals is true, and that indeed Luxottica is poised to purchase Scarrone. This vertical integration, based on Del Vecchio’s ambitious plans, should boost the leverage and distribution range of the already famous brand from Agordo.

It’s been a month since Mido 1974 ended. The latest issue of *Ottica Italiana* magazine just arrived at Giorgio and Maria’s shop. As expected, it features an article on Mido as well as a few nice photos. Maria “devours” it.

*Mido’s success is no longer making headlines. We have become accustomed to the ever-increasing influx of visitors, exhibitors and foreign company representatives, and no longer marvel at the sight of customers from remote lands, in their country’s traditional garb. This feeling is the foremost indication that Mido 1974 marked a significant milestone in the history of the global eyewear industry. It shows that Mido is an integral part of the eyewear business. Mido 1974 showcased the very best products offered by the global eyewear industry.*

*The Show keeps growing. Since last year, the amount of floor space occupied by the Show increased by more than 10%, and the event has seemingly outgrown the over 11,000 m<sup>2</sup> worth of space spanning multiple floors of hall 30 at the Fiera di Milano exhibition center. This year, from the 10th through the 14th of May, Milan served as a gathering point for businesses across the world.*

*In fact, Mido was not only a foreign eyewear product showcase, but an international sales hub, a place for business deals and business growth, where entrepreneurs can find products made in Italy as well as imported products. The Foreign Buyer’s Club, an aptly-named visitors’ service center, was extremely busy throughout the event, but its gracious interpreters never skipped a beat. Different sources are of the opinion that this Show is the most important in Europe, and perhaps in the world. This is an expo that walks on its own two feet, or better yet, runs by itself. There is no need to promote it because of the very products it showcases, the professionalism, and prestige of exhibitors that gather at Fiera Milano, where products shrouded in mystery, are finally unveiled.*

At the shop, a customer pokes her head in the door: "May I come in?".

"Of course, please do", Maria replies, and then, inspired by what she read, adds: "Come in, I'll show you our brand-new eyewear frames. They arrived shrouded in mystery".

## At a distance

*Turin, Milan, 10-13 May 1975*

Sometimes opticians simply can't take time off to go to Mido (appointments, workload...it does happen). Giorgio cannot possibly go this year, and the reason for it truly irks him. In two words? Broken leg. How? Skiing. When? In February. Where? Obviously – where would anyone go who was born in or, like Giorgio, moved to Turin – Sestriere! Every morning someone has to drive him and his casted leg to the shop, where he “directs the circus” all day long. Mido will be held on 10-13 May at Fiera Milano, and all he can do is read about it in trade magazines, which started publishing the usual previews months ago. Anfao's director is now Leonardo Del Vecchio and, in his own words, “the 1975 Mido edition has a list of participants that goes as far as the eye can see”. Eyewear that keeps pace with fashion trends and superior customer service, the two “musts” of this edition tauntingly appear in Giorgio's mind. He cannot go to Mido because he has to walk with crutches, and sometimes uses a wheelchair to get around easier.

After eating lunch in the backroom, he picks up and reads the previews in *Vedere* magazine. As usual Mazzucchelli, the company from Lombardy with production factories in Castiglione Olona (province of Varese) and Montville, near the French town of Rouen, will be exhibiting at this year's eyewear show. The company, well established on international markets, celebrates its 50th anniversary this year. It produces cellulose sheets for high quality prescription glasses and sunglass frames. The article talks about the evolution of the company, established in 1849.

*Today, SIC Mazzucchelli produces most of the cellulose sheets used by the global eyewear industry. The Group's sales have sharply increased every year, despite the still-prevailing recession. From a customer service standpoint, the company is working on speeding up delivery times and enhancing product quality, in spite of the difficulties of increasing capacity and manufacturing the staggering quantities required to fulfill worldwide demand.*

And fashion is also adamantly knocking on the doors of Italian eyewear companies. Giorgio now reads about Mazzucchelli's newly es-

tablished “style center”, which “is set to launch a line of products for the fashion industry as early as in 1976”. The article stresses that the company has enlisted experts in the fashion clothing and accessories field “to specifically anticipate the trends of a market that is increasingly dynamic and focused on the constant search for new styles. This style center will rely on world-class fashion designers to provide Mazzucchelli’s customers with “insider insights” as to the colors and designs most likely to fit the taste of opticians and the general public”.

And, as the famous proverb says: if the mountain won’t go to Muhammad, Muhammad will go to the mountain. The shop bell rings. It’s a sales agent, the notorious sales agent from Austrian eyewear company Silhouette, a brand Giorgio has long carried in his store.

“Good afternoon Giorgio, may I bother you for a minute?”.

“It’s no bother at all. Come on in”.

“I wanted to bring you up to date on two topics: fashion and children. As for the first, I’d like to show you some very interesting and exclusive new styles, and the Silhouette-Fashion line we are currently showcasing at Mido. This product line includes stylish women’s frames that transform prescription glasses into accessories that emphasize the personality of the wearer. Some have temples connected to the bottom part of the frame, and brand-new color combinations”.

“Anything new for children?”, Giorgio asks, intrigued. An increasing number of children need glasses nowadays.

“Yes, we do”. Silhouette has created a specific line of eyewear for children that goes beyond the industry practice of offering smaller versions of eyewear designed for adults. Our company is now making frames that enhance the beauty of each child, and offers an entire line of eyewear with unique technical features and embellishments”.

“Let me think about it, it might be a good idea...”, Giorgio replies, from his wheelchair.

Sales agents from Fedon, a case manufacturer established in Cadore back in 1919, as well as agents from Lozza also contacted Giorgio. The former explained that the company has focused its efforts on customers, and is using an “electronic brain”, by which: “Sales management can access the historical data in the Ced (data processing center) and learn about the entire life and characteristics of every customer now. Customers will be thought of in a different way. They will increasingly become

friends we happen to do business with, partners who know everything about our company and have a stake in it”.

Leaning on his crutches, Giorgio is now listening to Lozza’s rep illustrate their new “Colorama” collection. “In addition to outstanding design and silhouettes, this new line comes in a wide range of new colors, specifically researched and developed for this magnificent collection of frames, which have technical and construction features as unique as they are”.

Then the representative from Metalflex in Venas di Cadore showed up. Giorgio had stayed home to rest his leg and so today it’s Maria’s turn to listen to the rep illustrate the “wide range of classic styles in gold metal and plastic, and a new collection of enameled frames and Uniblock frames for men, women and children, featuring integral hinges and interchangeable curled temples, drop temples or plastic temples; the unprecedented versatility of these frames is bound to appeal to all types of consumers”. While lying in bed, Giorgio has finished thumbing through *Vedere* for the second time. He is intrigued by the new titanium lenses by Roman Optica. Besides other advantageous features, these lenses are much thinner than usual. Farewell bottle-bottom glasses?

## A troubled edition

*Milan, 8-11 May 1976*

Giorgio is on his way to Mido, but with a heavy heart. An earthquake has caused widespread devastation in the Friuli Region. He had been eagerly awaiting this moment ever since he broke his leg skiing, which prevented him from going last year. And although Paolo, yet again, was not interested in going with him, until a few days ago he was brimming with happiness, so elated that he even felt like singing. He was going to Mido, a fabulous party for opticians, their customers and suppliers. And now the party mood is utterly ruined; the nation is grieving.

Giorgio is in his new Fiat 131 – he replaced his sporty Fiat 850 coupe with this more “sedate” style, better suited for long trips – driving fast on the Turin-Milan expressway, and occasionally glancing at the article on the front page of the newspaper lying on the passenger seat, about the devastation in Friuli. At around 9 pm two days ago, many municipalities including Gemona, Maiano and Buia were leveled by an exceptionally strong earthquake. It was a terrible earthquake, measuring 9 on the Mercalli scale, so powerful that it was felt in central Italy and abroad, in central Europe and the Balkans, from Austria to Switzerland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Belgium and The Netherlands. By today’s counts, the newspaper reports, around 600 people died and 50,000 are homeless. Giorgio repeats the numbers in his mind... “Unbelievable”, he mumbles. And, to top it off, the government – the single-party democratic government led by Aldo Moro and disbanded on 30 April, just 45 days after its establishment – has appointed undersecretary of internal affairs Giuseppe Zamberletti as special commissioner for the earthquake relief and recovery efforts. As luck would have it, Italy is also on shaky ground from a political standpoint. When Moro’s government collapsed, Italy’s President Leone dissolved both chambers and set the elections for 20 June. But now, everyone’s attention is on the dead, wounded, homeless and their devastated cities. “I hope our friends in Cadore are ok”, Giorgio thinks as he drives, “it seems that area was not affected, but they

might have felt some shocks.” In fact, the area of Belluno – which had been severely damaged by an earthquake 100 years earlier – was spared this time.

When Giorgio arrives at the expo, happy to be in his favorite place again, surrounded by crowds of people swarming the stands, he starts to realize that all visitors and Italian exhibitors are feeling just as sad and uneasy as he does. He overhears the latest news here and there; the earthquake toll has risen. Today they are saying that 800 people died and over 22,000 were injured. What a catastrophe. How can we think about work? How can anyone feel like celebrating anything? How could they, with all these deaths right here, in Italy? And yet Mido is on, everything is ready, and this ex-carpenter knows how much work and sweat it took to set it up. The expo can't stop, the show must go on, and it's not because people don't care; Giorgio knows all too well that tragedies are best approached by rolling up your sleeves.

The 1976 edition of Mido is another smash hit. This year the “spring of eyewear expos” starts in Paris – where the 10th edition of Silmo will be held – arrives in Milan for the sixth time on 2 February, and continues on to the 4th edition of the Optica expo in Dusseldorf. The three eyewear shows attract more or less the same number of exhibitors, around 420-450, and 8,000-10,000 visitors. The concurrence of the events means industry professionals have to hustle to attend all three shows and sometimes have to make tough choices as to which shows to skip or attend; as do visitors. Giorgio has chosen Mido for several reasons, but ultimately because it's “his” show. Once again this year, Leonardo Del Vecchio is presiding the event.

Giorgio is confidently roaming Hall 2. He goes through the stands of small and large manufacturers. Luxottica has 2 locations, F62/64 and a large stand at G43, 45, 47 and 49. Marcolin Occhiali Doublé, with headquarters in Vallesella di Cadore, is at F28, 30 and 32.

It's open war between the giants. “Marcolin”, Giorgio reads on a large advertising poster, “is better than those you thought were the best – a little better”. In this same area, near the escalators to the upper floor, he looks at the latest styles by the De Lotto company from Cadore, then stops in front of a series of stands hosting Lozza, from F15 to F21. Here he meets a man of his same height, and possibly his same age, with a distinctive look and elegant manners; his name is Theo Mohwinckel.



"I am personally acquainted with President Lozza, I think a lot of him", Giorgio starts saying, and breaks the ice. Theo is ready to meet visitors at the stand, and has just been hired by Lozza. He has a background in photography, and served as director of Agfa. He therefore has a good aesthetic sense of style and beauty, so they chat a bit about that. Giorgio also has a background in photography. Shortly thereafter, however, the topic inevitably turns to the terrible earthquake in Friuli. "I was in Calalzo, in Cadore the day before yesterday, when the initial waves destroyed everything. We felt them too. I still feel that tremor, that feeling of disorientation, of being lost, of free-falling without a net that gripped me at that moment, and my wife felt the same. Giorgio looks into his eyes, understanding; everything can be gone in an instant. A Lozza stand assistant approaches Theo and Giorgio, breaking the awkward moment.

"This is Carla, one of our stand assistants".

Carla is tall, slightly shorter than Giorgio. Her hair is blonde, layered in the front and longer in the back. Her face is oval, with a nice smile and warm, deep blue eyes. Her body is well proportioned. She's truly beautiful. Her green patterned dress has a high bodice that highlights her bearing. She is wearing comfortable, closed-toe shoes with heels of medium height.

"Pleased to meet you; I'm Giorgio, and have an optical shop in Turin".

"Well", Theo says, saving Giorgio from the embarrassment of being caught gawking at the girl, "I'll let her show you our products".

"So, should we get started?", Carla asks.

"Certainly", Giorgio replies. The two approach the display cases, which are lit from above to illuminate the frames. Across the top is Lozza's logo, a pair of round frames with eyes looking through them. Carla – who is about thirty years of age, ten years younger than Giorgio – is not only beautiful, but friendly and well informed about the products made by the company in Cadore. She leads Giorgio toward the women's eyewear displays and, one at a time, puts on frames by Perla, Bermuda, Lotus, Klam, Camaleonte, Bahia, Estoril, Hoby, Swing...- each time asking, in a slightly coquettish manner "Do you like this style? What do you think of it? Do I look good in it?".

Giorgio is stunned. The frames are oversized, and the sunglasses highlight Carla's beautiful face. "The Perla styles look great on you".

Next, the talk turns into action. Giorgio signs an order for a few dozen men's and women's frames and sunglasses, mostly from the Perla line. The awkwardness has subsided, and now Giorgio feels at ease with Carla. He's no longer nervous, and she keeps acting as if they have known each other for years. She picks up the order and asks if he wishes to accompany her to the bar – it's after 1 pm – and she's starting to feel hungry.

In the bar they sit at a table, and continue the conversation they started at the stand. Giorgio tells her he's concerned about his son. "Paolo is attending a classical studies high school, but I really don't know what he'll do with that degree. He loves playing music. He used to say that he wanted to do what I do, but now he seems to have lost interest in it".

"I think it's just a matter of time. Your job lets you interact with people, handle products that are works of art, help people live a better life, and even look better. I read about a survey that asked teenagers between 15-18 years of age how they felt about eyewear. It was conducted by *Vedere International*, the first international trade magazine in our sector, edited by Claudio Morpurgo".

"I read that magazine regularly, but I don't recall seeing that article".

"One thing was made quite clear by that survey, Giorgio. When asked 'Does eyewear make your face look better?', 50% of respondents said yes. I don't believe the percentage would have been that high or prevalent had the question been asked a few years ago. It indicates that people are slowly overcoming the stereotypes regarding the aesthetics of eyewear. Contrary to what teenagers thought up to a few years ago, wearing eyeglasses is no longer something to be ashamed of".

Giorgio looks at her admiringly, grateful for the information and advice she has given him. Looking at her, he puts on a pair of prescription glasses. "I'm slightly myopic", he says, and smiles. Then the blissful mood shatters, as he abruptly comes back to reality, and asks: "Carla, why do we have earthquakes? How can everything end in an instant, even what we hold most dear"? She looks at him, but does not reply. Yet, her glance is serene. "I look forward to seeing you next year", she says, and disappears into the Lozza stand.

# Catwalk

*Turin-Milan, 7-10 May 1977*

“I’d like to remodel our optical shop, make it more modern; change the furniture, get new displays, find a new way to make our customers feel welcome, and buy a few more optical instruments for our exam room. We need more space for our ever-growing selection of prescription glasses, sunglasses, contact lenses and accessories. What do you think Giorgio, should we do it?”. Maria, having served dinner to her husband and son is now in her chair, and lays all of her wishes on the table. Women are like that, they think about multiple things at the same time, multitask, and take care of everything, ever present.

Giorgio agrees with Maria, all those things need to get done. The difference is that for her the optical shop is like a second home; she’s been taking care of it for a long time. She opens the shop early in the morning, closes it late in the evening, and does any housework the cleaning lady can’t do, keeps an eye on Paolo, who is studying for his final high school exam; Maria tries to do the best she can. And so does Giorgio. They are a very close couple, their marriage is solid, and he truly loves her.

“I too believe we should put some money into the shop”, Giorgio replies. “I’ll stop by the bank, figure out how much we have in our savings, meet with the manager and get an idea of how much they might be willing to finance. We’re good customers, and I trust they’ll treat us fairly”. After dinner, with the kitchen back in order, Maria and Giorgio sit on the couch and go over the estimates received from two contractors from central Italy as to the overall cost of remodeling their store. They asked for white cabinets with lots of drawers, wall mounted displays and hanging display cabinets, tables for the sales area in the middle of the shop, and floor cabinets with sinks for hand-washing. “Let’s buy them!”, Giorgio exclaims, hugging Maria, and then turns on their new television, which started to receive broadcasts in color on 1 February of that year.

The evening news broadcast, on the Rai 1 channel, is disheartening. The climate of violence and terrorism gripping the nation has reached

new heights. The President of the Italian Bar association, Fulvio Croce, has been assassinated, and the Red Brigades claimed responsibility for his murder. Croce was in the process of assigning defense attorneys for Renato Curcio and nine other Red Brigade members due to stand trial in the court of Bologna.

“Are you really up to going to Mido next week under these circumstances?”, Maria asks, looking straight at her husband’s face. She’s right to be concerned; the country truly is in a state of chaos. Besides the danger of terrorism, the Chamber’s approval of the law on abortion has triggered widespread political outrage, and after the incidents at the University of Rome – clashes and evacuation of the occupied campus – Andreotti’s government has banned all public demonstrations. “There’s always a lot of policemen there, and there will be even more now”, Giorgio replies. “And besides, Mido is very important. We have to place orders for the entire year. I will only be there for 2 days. That way you won’t worry as much”. And then kisses her lips.

Giorgio is on the train, bound for Milan. A trade magazine explains what he will find at Fiera Milano: a new layout. “The ground floor will be dedicated to machinery, accessories, raw materials, optical lenses, contact lenses and ophthalmology equipment. The first and second floors will house a wide range of products by manufacturers from all over the world; eyewear frames, cases, and sunglasses. This year’s Italian market conditions lead us to expect a remarkable influx of foreign buyers, as the technology and aesthetics of Italian products have improved yet again, and also because global currency exchange rates now favor foreign buyers, and have made Italian products more appealing price-wise”.

Upon walking into Mido – this year, for the first time, presided by Giuliano Tabacchi, the son of Safilo’s founder – Giorgio once again plunges into the familiar, festive vibe that characterizes the show. He knows exactly what he wants and where to get it. Catalog in hand, he decides to diversify his purchases a bit and look at frames made by producers he does not normally deal with, including Safilo, and other Italian and foreign manufacturers. He is intrigued by the products of the French company Morel, and rightly so. Represented by the Tod-Ao sales agency, at stands G76/78 in Hall 2, monsieur Morel’s brand reveals its secret: knowing how to combine classic taste and contemporary style.

Giorgio is impressed by the gold and silver styles of the new Jean Lafont collection. In the same pavilion, at the Safilo stand, everyone is talking about fashion, of the type made within the design lab of the company, which now has a flagship store in Padua. "We have eyewear and fashion designers", a pretty stand assistant tells Giorgio, "who work as a team and share information; this led to the most striking trait of Safilo's new frames, well-balanced lines that are fashionable without dominating the wearer's face". Then, still in Hall 2, a poster with a big cat captures Giorgio's attention. It's a catchy invitation to stop at the stand of Livio Gatto & C., the 40-year-old eyewear case company from Domegge, in Cadore, founded by brothers Vigilio and Remo De Silvestro, together with Livio Gatto. Giorgio has thought about "branding" his own customers' cases. "I should buy some and put our shop's name, address and phone number on them".

And Carla? Giorgio suddenly recalls the beautiful girl he met the year before. "She said she'd like to see me again this year. I wonder if she's here". He had thought about her a few times in the last year. On several occasions, trying moments at work, minor spats with Maria, and confrontations with Paolo, he asked himself "What would she say?", for a fleeting moment. Now he feels the need to see her again. "It's almost 1 o'clock, could she be at the bar on break?", he wonders. He runs, literally runs to the bar; sure enough, she's there. She's alone, eating a pastry, with a steaming cup in front of her beautiful face. "Carla, Carla", he calls as he gets closer. Carla turns and recognizes him immediately. "Giorgio, finally, didn't we agree to meet again at this edition of Mido?". She's cheeky, disarmingly transparent, and incredibly beautiful.

"We might as well drop the formal appellatives, right?".

"Sure, gladly. Where do you work now?".

"At Mazzucchelli. I'd like you to meet one of the company's researchers, Regina Rossi. She's very enthusiastic about her job and highly esteemed already".

Carla was right on. She has a knack for finding beautiful things and people at Mido. Regina's enthusiasm is off the charts, and infectious. After being introduced to Carla's friend she says: "I must confess that I'm thrilled. I've only been with Mazzucchelli for a short time, and I'm already working on new designs and color combinations that fit the current fashion style. It feels as if I opened a window onto a brand-new world this morning, on my very first day...", she remarks, sipping her

coffee. "I can't tell you how many people I've met, and all the countries they came from! There's been a line at the stand since this morning!". She takes a bite of the small pastry, and then resumes her account: "I couldn't even stop and eat something till now. Even the Americans from Bausch & Lomb showed up, the owners of the Ray-Ban brand launched 40 years ago. It's so exciting, isn't it? Well, I have to go now". Regina stands up. "It's been a pleasure to meet you Giorgio. Please come visit our stand".

"Of course! I'll come with Carla".

Giorgio is now alone with Carla. "Would you like to see the eyewear runway show? The people at Mazzucchelli asked me to go see what it's all about. It's the first time Mido has done anything like it".

"Sure, we can go. Do you know where it is?".

"Follow me".

All seats by the catwalk are occupied. Four female models wearing black bodysuits, black stockings and stiletto shoes (Kessler twins look-alikes) and two male models with dancer-like bodies, strut on the runway wearing sunglasses and prescription glasses produced by 16 companies, from Italy and abroad. The audience, which includes reporters from leading women's and fashion magazines, applauds each time a model appears. It's a success. Giorgio, seated next to Carla, applauds enthusiastically.

It's almost evening now, and Mido closes at 6 pm. Giorgio accompanies Carla back to Mazzucchelli.

"How's it going at home, everything ok? And your son Paolo?".

"Everything's fine Carla. Paolo is focusing on his final exam, and I'm sure he'll pass. He's quite diligent".

"Give it time, be patient... He is bound to follow in your footsteps".

"How can you be sure?".

"I just know".

"Which hotel are you staying at"? Giorgio suddenly asks.

"We'll meet here at the stand tomorrow. Sweet dreams".

# Centennial

*Turin, Milan, 6-9 May 1978*

“Dad, can I come to work with you?”. The other day Giorgio was leaving the house, on his way to the shop, when Paolo stopped him at the front door. Looking into his eyes, Paolo told him: “I’ve never stopped thinking about it. Tinkering with eyewear, doing what you do, has always been a dream of mine. I set it aside for a while to consider the options, but now I am sure that my path is the same as yours. If you need a hand, call me”. That was something a very mature boy would say. “So, Carla was right, I just needed to wait”, the thought flashed through Giorgio’s mind, as often happens when she comes to mind; like a green traffic light suddenly coming on, telling you to go ahead.

When he gets to the shop, he’s light-hearted and brimming with joy. Maria already opened the optical shop, and is organizing the drawers of the new eyewear cabinets when he enters and loudly announces: “Paolo is going to work with us! He asked me when I was leaving the house!”. Putting on his lab coat, he starts thinking about what role his son might play at the optical shop, and how Maria would finally be able to relax a little. Then, he stops in his tracks: “I shouldn’t get ahead of myself, Paolo still has to get licensed. Until then, I will teach him all about my job. He has to learn how to do everything”.

Maria is just as delighted, and even danced a couple of steps, singing under her breath. Last week the couple went to the movie theater to see “Saturday Night Fever” with John Travolta, and ever since then she can’t get the songs of the sound track out of her head. And today she truly looks great. At one point, Giorgio puts his hands on her hips and pulls her into a tight hug. At that very moment, the shop door opens and, grudgingly, he lets her go back to what she was doing, to take care of the customer.

Giorgio is getting ready to attend the 8th edition of Mido in a few days; this year the event will be presided by Giuliano Tabacchi from Safilo, because Leonardo Del Vecchio has stepped down.

The latest issue of *Vedere* magazine has arrived at the shop. Giorgio is reading the article previewing the three eyewear trade shows being held

this spring. “Mido in Milan will be the last to open its doors, but is certainly not last in order of importance. Our data indicates that, in terms of exhibitors and exhibition floor space, this edition far exceeds the record-breaking figures of the 1977 show”. This year, the article further details, Mido will occupy a gross surface area of 24,000 m<sup>2</sup>, and will host 400 exhibitors, with foreign exhibitors up by 12%. Last year the expo attracted 357 exhibitors, 208 of whom Italian, and 149 from foreign countries. “Attendance by visitors is expected to skyrocket. Mido’s office at via Petitti no. 16 has already received an overwhelming number of requests for admission passes from people all over the world. The 1978 show will also celebrate the 1st centennial of the Italian eyewear industry.

“Right...”, Giorgio thinks, then calls out: “Maria, this year Mido will celebrate the eyewear industry’s 100th anniversary. *Vedere* says there will be a special exhibit on the history of Italian eyewear featuring interesting examples of eyewear from the past. And the eyewear runway show will be held again this year”.

“I’d like to go, Giorgio, but first we have to train Paolo. Once he knows how to mind the shop, I’ll go to Mido with you. I promise”.

The day Giorgio leaves for Milan has arrived. The new removable radio in the glove box of his Fiat 131 will keep him company along the way. But the radio news broadcast is far from encouraging. It has been 51 days since the head of the Italian democratic party, Aldo Moro, was kidnapped in Rome and five of his police escort were killed in the ambush; yesterday the Red Brigades issued an announcement stating: “We conclude the battle by executing the sentence to which Moro has been condemned”. The announcement is causing tension and angst across all Italian political parties. Giorgio is pensive. “Where are we going to end up...” he asks himself. But he has to focus on his self-imposed task for this year’s Mido: “mission: lenses”. In addition to placing orders for optical frames and sunglasses, this time he wants to gain a better understanding of the latest innovations in ophthalmic lenses. He will be in Milan for the entire duration of Mido, so he should have enough time.

In Pavilion 30, where stands occupy the ground floor, first floor and the second balcony level, spanning three exhibition halls, Giorgio finds the usual hustle and bustle, and many friends. Everyone is excited about



the eyewear industry's centennial, and many companies decided to honor the event with celebratory posters and special stall decor. Lozza – true to form – has put its own spin on the celebration and its stand at F15, in Hall 2, bears an advertising poster inviting the viewer to make a toast: “To the foresight of eyewear”.

“Giorgio! You're finally here”. It's Carla.

“Why are you here? Are you with Lozza again?”.

“Yes, they asked me to come back this year. Would you like to see the stand? But first come with me, let's sit at this table. I want to read you the President's message to everyone at Mido”.

Carla takes out a stunning eyeglass case (by Fedon? Gatto? Giorgio can't figure it out), and puts on a pair of prescription glasses that make her look even more stunning than when he first saw her today. “These are for reading”, she tells her friend from Turin.

“Here's what he says”:

*Lozza toasts the Italian eyewear industry's centennial. One hundred years have gone by since 1878, when Angelo Frescura and Giovanni Lozza first came up with the idea to open an all-Italian eyewear factory, or better yet, a “fabbrica” as they said back then. After one hundred years of hard, painstaking work, perfecting techniques, researching materials and production methods, studying anatomy and morphology, of continuously tracking changes in the market, today, thanks to this work, the Italian eyewear industry boasts a tradition, a “school” that places it among the very best in the world. And it has a peculiar characteristic: the ability to reinvent itself and be innovative. The transformation of eyewear from a vision-enhancing device to a life-improving device occurred, at least in part, because Lozza understood before anyone else that what is useful can also be beautiful, that beauty and functionality go hand-in-hand. Trailblazing new paths, going where no-one has gone before, staying ahead of the times; this pioneering spirit, which ties back to the ancient factory in Molinà, is what we celebrate today.*

“It's great”, Giorgio blurts out.

“I believe it's an invitation to live a good life in this world”, Carla says in turn, “to persevere, improve, and know how to reinvent ourselves. It summarizes one hundred years of history and its teachings”.

Giorgio is ecstatic. Every time he meets Carla and listens to her speak, he feels reassured, confident, guided. “Who is this woman?”, he thinks.

“Giorgio, I have to go now”.

“We can meet tonight, tomorrow, or tomorrow night...”.

“You are staying till the 9th right? Well, we’ll say good bye at the end of the show. I just have too much going on. Sorry”.

Giorgio is on turbo speed. He started off the second day by roaming all three halls. He forgot about Carla, or rather, he told himself “I have to put my head down and get busy, or I won’t get her out of my mind”. Pavilion 30 is filled with visitors, thereby dissipating the pre-expo concerns that the stagnant global market situation and tense political climate in Italy might hinder attendance. He heard there are foreign eyewear companies from 74 countries at Mido this year! Giorgio shakes hands, talks with stand assistants, company owners and their associates, asks to see collection after collection, going from one hall to the next, up and down elevators, placing orders and shopping for the latest and most innovative items. As planned, he spends the third day looking at lenses. More specifically, he visits Essilor, a Parisian company, and two Italian companies, Galileo and Salmoiraghi.

“Please come in, Sir, take a look at our MBX automatic grinder”, says a young man at Essilor’s stand, speaking Italian with a thick French accent, it’s a high-precision high-speed grinder. The MBX model comes with or without a water adjustment/shut off valve, and in two different versions, with manual or hydraulic closure, and can also replicate lenses using an actual lens or a plastic master pattern”.

Giorgio approaches the stand of Oftalmica Galileo, a lens company from Marghera. “You’re an optician? The quality of our lenses is the best in the world”, explains a girl with an unmistakable Venetian accent.

“I’m from Turin, I am quite familiar with your company”.

“Come in, have a talk with our manager. In the meantime, I can tell you that our lenses are made solely with raw materials that have passed extremely strict purity tests and precision-manufactured using cutting-edge processing techniques. Galileo lenses, Mr...”

“Giorgio”,

“...Mr. Giorgio, are checked individually, one by one, and no lens is put on the market unless it passes inspection. Here, let me introduce you to...”.

And Giorgio ends up being there for over an hour. Then, feeling a bit tired, he looks at his watch. “It’s 3:30 pm. I’ll head to Salmoiraghi, and then to the fashion show”.

Salmoiraghi is in Hall 1. There’s a line when he gets to the stand, so

to save time (he wants to see the runway show) he picks up and reads their products catalog. The new lenses are impressive. *Tilens* are titanium-coated ophthalmic lenses with a high reflective index, *Gradualux* and *Gradualux 30* are gray and brown photochromic lenses, which automatically adjust their absorption according to the intensity of the light, and therefore adapt to the needs of the wearer's eyes, while the *Anultra* lenses are made with glass that effectively filters ultraviolet rays. Giorgio now has their phone number. He'll talk about it with Maria when he gets home, as he also wishes to evaluate the offers received from Oftalmica Galileo.

On his way to the runway show, his attention is captured by a poster promoting Metalflex, the Agordo company where Leonardo Del Vecchio got his start in the industry, and its new collection of sunglasses by fashion designer Fiorucci. Perhaps the Italian eyewear industry will soon embrace the whims of fashion... On the poster, two young angels wearing yellow and blue eyeglasses hover in a black and green universe filled with planets and stars. And there they are, Fiorucci eyeglasses, right in that display. Time will tell...

Giorgio spends the morning of May 9th roaming around Milan, and even stops at the cathedral to entrust his son's future to the Virgin Mary. He arrives at the expo in the afternoon and goes straight to the Lozza stand to see Carla, who had said they could meet again today, the last day of the show. Giorgio's heart is beating fast by the time he gets to the stand. He looks around, sees Theo Mohwinkel talking with a group of people, and then spots her. She's bent over a table. He quickly approaches. When Carla raises her head and looks at Giorgio, her eyes are filled with sorrow.

"Have you heard?", she asks.

"Heard what?"

"Giorgio...Aldo Moro has been found. They found him dead in the trunk of a red Renault 4, half-way between the headquarters of the democratic party and the communist party in Rome".

"No.... And now what's going to happen? This is open war!"

"It's up to us; we have to resist, fight back, but continue doing what we do, and show the beauty and value of what we believe in. By our own behavior, little by little, we can change this direly complicated world we live in".

"This woman is incredible", Giorgio says under his breath. And then

nods, saying “You’re right...I actually finished my rounds last night. I might as well go home. Maria and Paolo will surely need me there”.

“Good bye Giorgio. I’ll see you next year. Here again, right? Same beach same sea, as the song says? I hope they’ll hire me again. They seem happy with me”. “Same beach, same sea, agreed. Thanks for being there for me”, he replies.

Giorgio got home late in the evening. “How did it go?”, Maria asks.

“Well. Mido keeps getting better, in spite of today’s bad news....”.

“True. What do you think, can we overcome this?

“It’s up to us; we have to resist, fight back, but continue doing what we do, and show the beauty and value of what we believe in”.

# Returning to Mido

*Milan, 5-8 May 1979*

Father and son are once again driving to Mido together. It's been 5 years since they were there together, and just as many editions of Mido that Paolo missed, even though Giorgio always invited him or, at least hoped to finally hear his son ask: "Can I go with you?". Now that things have become clearer, Paolo feels as if he's "returning to the palace", validating his willingness and desire to be part of that world.

Finally, Paolo and Giorgio are on the same path – the expressway between Turin and Milan, and bound for the same place – the exhibition center in piazza VI Febbraio, just as they used to do. Paolo is in the passenger seat next to his father and freely speaking his mind. Giorgio will be 44 years old this fall, and Paolo has just turned 21. "While I was at optician's school", Paolo is saying, "there was a lot of talk about sunglasses, and it made me wish that our shop carried many more of them. See, Dad, among the things I've learned in these months of training with you, is that sunglasses have become widely available to consumers and, in addition to opticians' stores, are now sold in grocery stores and clothing boutiques. But they have also become more than something that protects our eyes from the sun, they are fashion items, like hair clasps, and accessories for sundresses or swimsuits. People even wear them at night, as the dark lenses shield their eyes from overly bright artificial lights".

"Indeed, they closely follow fashion trends", his father says. "Cellulose injection-molding technology has greatly benefited sunglasses. Christian Dior grasped that immediately; he might have been the first to match clothing with eyewear. Did you notice that last year I purchased Fiorucci collections at Mido? I believe we're at the dawn of a new era, that of designer eyewear, and especially designer sunglasses".

Giorgio's Fiat 131 has just passed the Novara exit, and is fast approaching Milan. Father and son remain silent for a long while, lost in their own thoughts. And Giorgio is unavoidably thinking about Carla and the fact that Paolo is with him this time. Well, there's nothing strange or "illicit" going on between him and Carla, right? She's just

a friend, a dear friend Dad sees every year at the trade show, nothing more. Suddenly Giorgio breaks the silence. "What does today's newspaper say? Care to take a look?"

"The conservative party won the UK elections. Their leader, Margaret Thatcher, is in the process of forming her government".

"And what about Italy?"

"Well, the spotlight is on the political crisis; we've had no government for a month, Pertini dissolved both chambers and, as you know, the elections are on 3 June. I too have to vote this year. And there's still talk about political terrorism and the arrest last month of members of Autonomia Operaia..."

"These are terrible times, Paolo. When I was coming home from Mido last year, they had just found Moro's body..."

The 9th edition of Mido is a turning point. Almost 50% of all exhibitors in attendance are foreign companies. This is totally unprecedented. Last year's edition was still dominated by Italians, who accounted for 60% of the overall number of exhibitors. Mido's organizers, once again directed by Leonardo Del Vecchio this year, reacted to the data by saying that "this indisputably proves the importance and international appeal of Mido, a show that instead of resting on its laurels has continuously striven to improve its services and efficiency".

Roaming the stands in the three halls, Giorgio and Paolo immediately realize that the number of foreign exhibitors is indeed substantial. Everything is new to Paolo, as if this were his first time at the eyewear show. Everything intrigues and excites him; he searches for the large and small manufacturers, chats with foreign exhibitors and seems to make himself understood quite well using the basic English he learned in school. All by himself, he goes to Bausch & Lomb to see their iconic Ray-Ban line, then to Industria Ottica Italiana Pietro Barberini, the manufacturer of amazing optical lenses for sunglasses, the historic Casal, Mario Postizzi's Po-Le Optik, and Riccardo Polinelli's Polinelli. And then he stops at the stands of Giuseppe Ratti, the manufacturer of Persol eyewear from Turin, Rodenstock Zeiss, Polaroid and so on. By the time he runs out of steam he is dazed, dead tired and utterly content. And that's how he spends three entire days, roaming by himself, with his father, and by himself again... The other day he met Ennio De Rigo, who opened a small frame manufacturing site in Pozzale di Pieve di Cadore with his

wife Emiliana. The factory has 15 enthusiastic employees, just like his wife Emiliana, who is talking with customers at the Charme Lunettes stand. Ennio De Rigo told Paolo, who stopped to chat with him for a moment, that they designed and built the stand themselves. They did not have a lot of money, but were determined to be at Mido. Paolo went looking for his father to show him their collections. Giorgio went along with his son's wishes and placed a sizable order.

"Thank you, Dad! Just one more thing, how would you feel about our specializing in children's eyewear? I was at Trenti's stand in Hall 2; they brought in an entire children's collection named Lilliput, with over 30 frames in different styles and materials. Would you like to see it?"

Paolo and Giorgio spend the fourth day looking at trendy designer eyewear, which is steadfastly gaining ground at Mido; designer Emilio Pucci's Casa Alta Moda Firenze is exhibiting cellulose acetate frames and sunglasses; Fiorucci has brought its sunglasses and eyewear cases, Givenchy is showcasing plastic frames, Nina Ricci has brought sunglasses and accessories, and even Roberta di Camerino is here with optical frames and sunglasses. And this is where Giorgio gets a huge surprise. He runs into Theo Mohwinckel and learns he left Lozza to start his own company.

"It's a whole new adventure, Giorgio!", Theo exclaims.

"Leaving such a big brand takes a lot of courage".

"Fashion trends are changing the eyewear industry. It was inevitable. I want to keep pace with the market. I've been working with Roberta di Camerino, and it's been great. Look at these beautiful glasses..."

At the end of their conversation, Giorgio blurts out: "Theo, have you seen Carla at all?". "No Giorgio. I know she does not work at Lozza anymore or at Mazzucchelli. No one has seen her around. She would not go unnoticed".

"Yes, you're right. She'd be hard to miss".





# 1980'S FASHION WHIMS

## The decennial

*Turin, Milan, 3-6 May 1980*

“It’s up to us; we have to resist, fight back, but continue doing what we do, and show the beauty and value of what we believe in”. That phrase, that exhortation Carla so adamantly expressed while pondering the threat of terrorism in the wake of Aldo Moro’s murder, seems to have become Giorgio’s life plan. He has not seen her in over a year. Her beautiful face and stunning profile seldom resurface in his mind now, but what she taught him has since taken root in his heart.

The threat of terrorism has yet to subside. The Red Brigades struck again in January. Their latest victim was the President of the High Council of the Judiciary, Vittorio Bachelet. And at the end of March, in Genoa, the Carabinieri police force arrested four members of the Red Brigades in a raid. The battle continues, and everyone is called to fight in their own trench.

In the meantime, Giorgio’s relationship with Maria has grown stronger, and more intimate. Giorgio is nearly 45 years old, and she’s 4 years younger than him. Their harmonious relationship is making life easier at work as well. To see a married couple work together as a team, like they do, is delightful, and in many ways, miraculous. In fact, without saying it to each other, Giorgio and Maria have arrived to the same conclusion: their path to self-fulfillment as a man and a woman has to pass through the present, through “this” shop, “this” son, “this” husband or “this” wife, not through secondary routes.

“I’ve never met opticians as friendly and professional as you. It’s truly commendable”, a sales rep told them the day before yesterday. And hours later, a customer dropped by and showed the same kind of appreciation: “I’ll be back with my daughter”. As opticians, they share the desire and commitment to keep improving their store, build closer relationships with their customers, and help them find eyeglasses that properly correct their vision and also fit their personality and face, whether men, women or children.

Paolo is also doing his part. At age 22, having earned his optician-optometrist diploma, he dove into the family business. These days he spends more time than his father preparing glasses in the back of the shop, and his father indulges his eagerness to do whatever he can to help out. Besides, he's good at it! Of his own initiative, he set up a display just for sunglasses in a corner of the store. Most optical shops don't have such a thing.

The other evening, while eating dinner, Paolo started a discussion about the importance of selling sunglasses. "Dad, I do believe this is the right path, also because fashion houses are betting on sunglasses. And feedback from our customers confirms it".

"Would you like some pasta Paolo?"

"Yes please, Mom".

He then continued: "The Fioruccis are all sold out, as well as your friend Mohwinckel's Roberta di Camerino styles. Even Trenti's Lilliput children's eyewear collection is flying off the shelves. We're almost out of everything we purchased at Mido last year, and we are selling a good number of Ray-Bans, and Zilo by Lozza. This year we might have to place larger orders".

"Listen Paolo, tomorrow you're going to Mido, by yourself. We are putting a lot of trust in you, but I'm sure you'll do great".

Maria has finally sat down at the table and started eating. With her mouth half-full of food, she gives Paolo a hint of a smile. She truly believes that her son will do a great job.

Giorgio and Maria quickly clean up the kitchen, and having bid good night to their son – who's already gone to bed because he has to get up earlier than usual tomorrow – sit down to read. After a while, they look meaningfully at each other, go to bed earlier than usual themselves, and turn off their bedroom light. Two hearts and two bodies, serene and full of trust, surrender themselves to each other in a way that has not happened in a long time.

Paolo came home from Mido beaming and excited, with a nice stack of orders. Every night he called his father to get his take on the type of frames, manufacturers' names and quantities he wished to order; and went back the following day to finalize and sign the purchase orders by himself. It was Paolo's first time... What a thrill!

Now in the family's living room, comfortably seated in his favorite armchair, Paolo shares what he saw in Milan. "First of all, Dad, Mido

has never been this huge! You should have seen it. And, unlike me, you missed the 10th anniversary edition! It still feels like a big party, with people everywhere, greeting each other warmly and chatting. They even go to restaurants in Milan and have dinner together. I didn't go anywhere because no one invited me, but perhaps next year I'll manage to do something, you'll see. In any case, this year the exhibition stands occupied four halls, one more than usual. And can you guess who I recognized and even spoke with? Del Vecchio, the President of Anfao and Mido! As I was walking around the halls, I saw a group of people crowding around someone, so I quickly approached to see who it was. And it was him. So, I stepped forward and introduced myself. 'Oh, you're from Turin?' he asked me. 'You have a big company in Turin, Ratti, the maker of Persol'. 'I am quite familiar with them, Mr. Del Vecchio', I told him, 'we carry them in our shop'. 'Have you seen Luxottica's yet?', he asked. 'Not yet', I had to admit, slightly ashamed. But he just patted me on the shoulder and invited me to see their stand. After that I went to Ratti's stand, I remembered you talking about them all the time, and there I met their general manager, Mr. Guido Balocco".

"Good, good...you even took care of public relations".

"And roaming the stands confirmed that fashion houses are definitively getting into the eyewear market. I knew there would be eyewear by Fiorucci, Emilio Pucci, Nina Ricci, Roberta di Camerino, but take a look at this ad in Mido's official catalog: Disco Italia is the exclusive distributor of optical frames and sunglasses by these prestigious fashion brands...what does it say, Dad?"

"Balenciaga, Celine, Ted Lapidus and...Valentino!"

"You see, Dad, that's where the industry is headed, and I believe there's no going back. You'll see".

## The venture into beauty

*Milan, 8-11 May 1981*

The Italo Cremona stand, a company from Gazzada, in the province of Varese, has been swarmed by a huge crowd. This year it brought the latest eyewear collections designed by Valentino and Gianni Versace to Mido, proving that the thoughts Paolo shared with his family about a year ago regarding the fashion industry's growing presence in the eyewear sector were in line with the actual market trend. Besides, Italo Cremona and the two prestigious fashion houses have been jointly working on this goal for years. Many other fashion and beauty brands are also at Mido. There is eyewear by Renato Balestra, Roberta di Camerino, Fiorucci, Givenchy, Missoni, Emilio Pucci, Nina Ricci and even Krizia, a brand that owes its presence to Theo Mohwinckel's company, Thema.

Visitors to the Milan eyewear expo are crammed inside and outside the Italo Cremona exhibit area at F20-22-24-26 and G27-29-31 in Hall 2 of Pavilion 30. The stand features eight of the many types of merchandise found at Mido, from eyewear frames to sunglasses, sports and protective eyewear, cases and other accessories, corrective lenses, sunglass lenses, eyewear components, small parts and raw materials; an amazing selection of products, made even more iconic by the addition of two illustrious Italian fashion brands. Italo Cremona made a clever marketing move: emblazoned across the cover the official catalog of the "International Optics, Optometry and Ophthalmology Trade Exhibition", presided by Giuliano Tabacchi from Safilo this year, are the names of the two fashion brands.

Giorgio is in the crowd, trying to get closer to the window displays. This year he decided to come to Mido by himself, and leave Paolo at the shop with Maria. Giorgio is eager to see Valentino and Versace's styles. The idea of bringing home a few orders for designer sunglasses appeals to him. While trying to find a way to squeeze through the mass of bodies and make it into the stand, he feels someone, an unmistakably female presence, behind him.

"Giorgio, Giorgio..."

Giorgio turns around, but he already knows who it is. "Carla... you've come too". Carla gets closer and is suddenly shoved against him.

"How 'bout we get out of here", Giorgio blurts out.

"I think you're right. Let's get out of this crowd and go the bar at the far end of the reception area".

"Two coffees please", Giorgio says to the female barista, and then sits at the bar counter next to Carla. She is wearing a short black skirt, which shows quite a bit of her beautiful legs as she takes her seat, and a gray, oversized crew neck t-shirt under an open cardigan sweater. Her amazingly beautiful face has aged slightly, but is still framed by a wealth of blonde hair.

"You don't work here anymore or are you on a break? This does not look like a stand assistant's outfit to me".

"No, I no longer work here. They never called me back, but frankly I was tired of working at Mido anyway. I only managed to get into it because of my previous employers".

"Come on, let's sit at a table".

Giorgio is about to inquire further, but Carla cuts him off. "Tell me, how are things with your family?".

"Paolo works with us now. He's very good at it, he's helping me tremendously, and I'm sure I can trust him to take over the shop someday. He also has a beautiful fiancée named Cristina, who shares his interest in optics and eyewear. I could not ask for more than that. Maria is still the guardian angel of our family".

"As she should! I understand perfectly, and I'm glad...".

"Carla, listen. What you told me right after Aldo Moro's murder is always in the back of my mind. Those words are my guiding principle, and my life has been great since the last time I saw you, but Carla, I hope you don't mind my saying that I have truly missed you.

"Giorgio, what can I say...I missed you too".

Carla looks into his eyes, pushes back a lock of hair with one hand, and grabs Giorgio's hand with the other. He quivers, then snaps out of it by asking: "Would you like to roam around the expo with me for a while? I have to pick out a few frames. You could model them for me....".

Carla smiles. "Sure, let's go!".

Giorgio wants to check out Charme Lunettes. Paolo told him about the company, and even ordered a few of their sunglasses and optical frames. When he arrives at the stand, on the second floor of Pavilion 30

in Hall 3, Ennio, the company's owner, and his wife Emiliana are there. Giorgio introduces himself, speaks of his son and of the first orders they had placed. The stand showcases "Piuma" sunglasses. Their feather-light weight is a key selling point. Carla tries on a few pairs; it seems like nothing can possibly look bad on her. Her face is so remarkable that she can wear eyeglasses of any shape, large, small and elongated, square, rectangular, hexagonal, anything. And she smiles, happily, freely, and perhaps conscious of her beauty.

Next, they stop at Luxottica's stand in Hall 2. The Agordo-based company has grown into an international business in only 20 years. It has a subsidiary in Germany and, with the acquisition of Avant-Garde Optics, one of the largest distributors of the times, has definitively entered the American market.

Carla tries on pair after pair of sunglasses; "How do I look?", she asks, grinning when Giorgio exclaims: "Perfect".

The scene is repeated at the Marcolin stand, also in Hall 2, with oversized or medium-sized prescription frames and sunglasses. "How do I look Giorgio?". "Terrific!"

As usual, Mido closes at 6 pm. The two have spent the entire day together, and now head toward the exit in piazza VI Febbraio.

"Ok, where should we go now? I brought my car".

"Two years ago, I moved to Rho, just outside of Milan. If you wish, we could eat something at my house. My refrigerator is full. I'm a good cook, you know...".

The two look at each other for a moment, without saying a word.

"All right; let's go to your house".

Dinner is simple but utterly delicious: spaghetti with seafood, salad, a cheese platter, and strawberries.

Then, at one point, Carla stands up: "I'm going to take a shower".

"If you don't mind, I'll wash the dishes", Giorgio says. "I'm used to it".

"Sure, why not?".

Carla comes out of the bathroom, and now stands stark naked in front of Giorgio. She removed her bathrobe and let it fall in front of him.

"My God...Carla. Why are you so beautiful? What did I do to deserve this gift?", Giorgio exclaims, his voice cracking with emotion. He takes in her face, her rounded features, penetrating eyes, and then lets

his eyes slide down to her graceful shoulders, full, round breasts, creamy flanks, flat and lithe abdomen, and her long, shapely, pearly legs.

For a moment, a series of images flashes through Giorgio's mind, the mind of an ex-photographer, as if he was walking through a long art gallery... Horst's stunning odalisques and Koppitz' women, or de Dienes', or Lindbergh's absolutely ordinary ones... followed by random female portraits by master painters: nudes by Goya, Manet, Monet, Casorati, Botticelli, Degas, Coubert and Gauguin, and then those by Velazquez, Modigliani, Tiziano, Renoir, Klimt, Giorgione, Rembrandt, women from every era and latitude.... And the immortal statues by Canova...on and on, to infinity.

Who knows how they felt, spending hours and hours in front of those magnificent bodies, or imagining and painting them? For a man, and especially for an artist – Giorgio thinks during those few seconds in front of Carla – a woman's naked body is nothing but an ecstatic experience of what he is missing. An experience that can open the mind to the mysterious beauty that surrounds and supports life itself.

For an instant, facing Carla's unveiled body, Giorgio feels like he did as a child, when he used to spend hours and hours looking at the sea in Taranto, or when he found himself in front of the Dolomite mountain peaks that frame the area of Belluno, the land of eyewear. He's gripped by the same admiration, the same bewildering awe one feels looking at a starry sky on a summer or mid-winter night; the same heat emanated by the sun, which warms the world and people everywhere. Some might smile, but for Giorgio that marvelous body, so different from his own, so desirable, so enchanting, so disconcerting, that figure that inspires gratification and ecstasies, warmth, softness and gentleness, is not a sex object, it's something to be worshipped.

"Woman, your beauty appeared to me, a light divine within my mind": suddenly, the lines from Leopardi's *Inno ad Aspasia* come to mind. Giorgio had read them once in a collection of poems taken from the bookshelf in a library, almost without comprehending. But now, yes..., now, yes... the same experience.

All of this flashes by in one single instant, while Carla stands there in front of him.

## A sabbatical year

*Milan, 7-10 May 1982*

Maria, 12 years after Mido began, finally gave in to her son's request to accompany him to the eyewear show. Giorgio is staying home, and will mind the shop. This year he won't see any of the new products manufacturers will be exhibiting within a space that, according to *Ottica Italiana*, is bound to set a new record. Paolo and Maria have already left, bound for Milan, by train.

Giorgio is instead waiting for customers to arrive at the shop, and kills time by reading the article previewing the Show, trying to imagine what his wife and son will see in the three halls of Pavilion 30 and in areas of Pavilion 29: "...twelve years ago Mido occupied a surface area of about 3,000 m<sup>2</sup> while today's exhibitors can count on over 14,000 m<sup>2</sup> of net exhibition space! Everything was easier back then. The expo could be seen in one day and visitors, particularly foreign visitors, had no problem quickly finding what interested them most. Instead, today, to facilitate finding the different product areas, the exhibition space had to be divided according to the type of goods, based primarily on the need to separate industrial machinery exhibits from those for eyewear frames".

The weather in Turin is nice and warm. Peeking out of the shop's doorway, Giorgio looks up at the sky, and thinks about not being able to see Carla. "Perhaps she won't be there, either". And thinking about her brings back the words she said last year, when they parted ways after spending the night together: "When we experience beauty, we have to accept a path of renewal and growth, trying to find small bits of it in all aspects of our lives, in things, in people, in what we do. And in the beauty of ordinary, everyday life, which is not any less real than the dazzling beauty you claim to have seen in me. Don't live in the past. Move forward, confident in what you have". Where could her words have come from? Giorgio takes a piece of paper and a pen, and tries to immortalize them in writing. "I don't want to forget them".

The truth of what Giorgio read in the optical trade magazine is immediately apparent to Paolo and Maria. Upon entering the expo, they



instantaneously know where to go. Guest services have been greatly streamlined by the addition of a second entrance in piazza VI Febbraio and the new system, by which visitors can have admission passes mailed to their home. Paolo and Maria received theirs, and before entering Mido they hand over one copy and keep the other as a receipt in the event of controls.

The view that greets the mother and son is spectacular. People are swarming the large and small parallelepiped stands, which host manufacturers and distributors of products for the eyewear industry. Half of the hall on the ground floor is dedicated to industrial machinery and raw materials, the other half to instruments, materials and various items specifically designed for opticians (including everything having to do with contact lenses). The entire first and second floors are instead reserved for eyewear, meaning frames, cases, and a wide variety of accessories. It's a clever layout, which keeps visitors from having to walk by one stand after the other before reaching their desired destination.

Maria is particularly enthralled by the products of fashion designers. For the first time this year, Laura Biagiotti is at Mido. The designer invested in an eyewear partnership with Oxsol, an eyewear manufacturer from Rivignano, in the province of Udine. Stand F69, on the first floor of Hall 2, is extremely crowded. Maria marvels at each style in the collection, sunglasses and prescription frames. They are ergonomically designed and light-weight, with flexible temples, interchangeable lenses, and an innovative flex micro-hinge.

"Paolo, should we get some?"

"It's up to you, Mom. I think they're wonderful. And you already know that I believe we should carry more sunglasses, especially women's".

Maria does not wait to be told twice, and places an order with the stand assistants. Laura Biagiotti's eyeglasses are riding the wave of a trend that finds confirmation in the halls of Mido; Gianni Versace, Missoni, Pucci, Nina Ricci, Roberta di Camerino are all here with their products again, as is a new arrival, Guccio Gucci, with his Gucci Plus sunglasses ...

Paolo and Maria go home happy... and with empty wallets. The new year will bring great sales, thanks to their shopping at Mido.

It's evening, Maria is curled up on the sofa with her head on Giorgio's lap. "I'm glad I went. I needed to. Now I understand what you have

always told me about Mido. It was a beautiful experience, and I want to bring that into our work, and with you, my love! It was enlightening. Now I really understand what Paolo has always told me about sunglasses, and fashion. And then, I saw so many foreign exhibitors there, almost 200, I was told. The world is at Mido... I saw a lot of people from France, as this year Silmo is being held in October, and fewer from Germany, because their show is coming up soon”.

“There’s a great vibe in those pavilions, right”?

“Yes, absolutely, Giorgio; the organizers encourage everyone to be friendly, attentive, and considerate, especially toward foreign exhibitors and clients. They speak their language and all of this clearly boosts the number of participants. They must have done that all along. But, now, can you give me a kiss?”.

Giorgio looks at her, blissfully smiles, and lovingly caresses her right cheek: “Of course you can have one, Mrs. optician, and not just one...”

## Great events

*Milan, 6-9 May 1983*

Giorgio is back at Mido, filled with curiosity; this year's edition – they said – will be greater than ever. There were so many reservations that the organizers, directed by Giuliano Tabacchi, had to find a way to meet the requests for participation received from additional manufacturers and distribution agents all over the world, including Japan and Hong Kong. That's why Mido 1983 will occupy six halls: the ground floor and first floor of Pavilion 30, as usual, ground floor and first floor of Pavilion 33, plus the ground floor and first floor of Pavilion 31, the ex-ports center. It's an extraordinary, spectacular space designed by Paolo Vietti Violi in 1929. The arena, filled with stands, is encircled by a balcony, also brimming with the stands of companies in the eyewear industry. Gianni Versace did not waste any time, and immediately reserved several stand spaces on the ground floor and first floor. Giorgio walks from one place to the other, placing orders for different quantities of eyewear. He definitely wants to sell Versace eyewear to his clients.

Giorgio finds old friends among the opticians visiting Mido, who recommend seeing the collections of a French designer by the name of Alain Mikli, who, they say, designs wonderful frames and sunglasses. His stand is at D12, on the first floor of Pavilion 33. And as it turns out, his optician friends were right on target.

But everyone seems to be talking about a new, intriguing brand of sunglasses named Police, reminiscent of the shape of Ray-Bans' Wayfarer, the entirely black sunglasses worn by the Blues Brothers.

When Giorgio arrives at the Charme Lunettes stand, B21 and B23 in Hall 1 of Pavilion 31, he finds a cluster of people talking with a young designer. His name is Bruno Palmegiani. He explains that he has a long-standing, successful partnership with the company from Cadore. With them, he launched his first line of women's prescription frames and sunglasses, named Vogart, and gained a lot of experience selling eyewear products for Essilor. He's young, but certainly not a novice.

Male and female reporters from eyewear trade magazines encircle the designer, and Giorgio carefully listens to his every word. "I am sure there is a huge demand in the market for sunglasses specifically inspired by the successful legacy of icons like Zilo and Persol, which seem to have lost some of their momentum. Police eyewear originated in Rome", Palmisano points out. "I worked for several months on this project, which tangibly expresses my desire to create an Italian product capable of catalyzing the American dream of today's youth. It had to be done quickly, and that's what I did. I discussed the project with Charme Lunettes, and we created a uni-sex product that reinterprets the Blues Brothers' Wayfarers blatantly American flair".

"Why did you call them Police?"

"It happened by chance, a divine intervention of sorts for me. While we were discussing this product, an American named George, for whom the De Rigo brothers were making eyeglasses, stopped in and told us that Bausch & Lomb, given the waning demand for Wayfarers, had donated a massive quantity of them to New York city policemen. Hearing those words, we looked at each other and understood: our eyeglasses had to be named Police. At that point we started production, and I started working on a compelling poster for our advertising campaign. You can see it right here: two young people, a boy and a girl, wearing the same Police sunglasses near a stunning Cadillac with the Brooklyn bridge in the background. They stand as symbols of the American dream of our youth, which is exactly what I wanted. I then sent prototypes and posters to all of my optician friends in Rome, Naples, and the rest of Italy. They were an instant success, which led to ongoing repeat orders. And now we are here at Mido, with our Police. Aren't they beautiful?"

Giorgio went back to Turin that same evening. He had ordered enough eyewear to last them for a long while, including some truly innovative styles; to keep pace with the times. And he also placed a sizable order for Police sunglasses.

And Carla? He did not see her, nor did he even try to find her this time. The allure of having her in front of him had faded over time as he realized that he had lost nothing about her, but had started to live by the words she left him with, her final act on that unforgettable evening at her house. Giorgio has since learned to

find beauty in his ordinary, everyday life. Her words still echo in his head... “Not any less real than the dazzling beauty you claim to have seen in me. Don’t live in the past. Move forward, confident in what you have”.

## A wedding

*Turin, Milan, 4-7 May 1984*

“Kiss, kiss, kiss!” people shout from the church steps, applauding Paolo, who is wearing a dark blue suit, and Cristina, in her amazing tight-fitting, sleeveless Mikado white gown, with a stylish, rounded neckline. They just appeared in the doorway of the church, slightly anxious, as they know they are bound to be hit by volleys of rice. It’s 12:30 pm on Sunday, May 6th, and the young couple just became husband and wife. It’s a warm day, considering we are in May, but the sky looks as if it might rain. The 14th edition of Mido opened in Milan three days ago, but this year Paolo and Cristina’s wedding made their customary visit to the iconic eyewear event a lesser priority.

Giorgio, Maria, and Cristina’s parents Giovanni and Gemma are standing side by side in front of their newlywed children. When the couple walks down the steps with the train of Cristina’s gown trailing behind her, people suddenly start throwing rice. Paolo has no time to regain his composure before friends pick him up, throw him up in the air, and catch him in their arms as he falls back down. Fortunately, he did not wear his prescription glasses... Cristina had found some comfortable latest generation soft contact lenses for him.

They’re young. He’s 26, she 25, and dream to be joined as one in everything, including their profession. For several months they have been working together at Giorgio and Maria’s optical center. She immediately brought her enthusiasm and taste into the shop she can now rightfully call “her family’s”, earned her optometrist’s diploma and, over time, specialized in fitting contact lenses. Many young people long to get rid of their prescription glasses, so the contact lens market is growing, but she is exceptionally fond of frames and sunglasses... And there’s a surprise in store for the group photo shoot in front of the church: Giorgio and Maria decided to gift sunglasses to the newlyweds and to everyone invited to the wedding. Paolo received a pair of the new Police style by Charme Lunettes, while Cristina received a pair of Laura Biagiotti sunglasses purchased at Mido last year, the one she’s had her eye on all year long.... Wedding guests received Persol men’s and women’s sun-

glasses. It couldn't be otherwise, in the hometown of the quintessential Giuseppe Ratti company. Among the invited guests was also Guido Balocco, the company's general manager, who arrived with two boxes filled with Persol sunglasses.

The following day, May 8, having recovered from the exertions of Paolo and Cristina's wedding, Giorgio is tidying up the shop. It's not open today. The shop is always closed on Mondays. He declutters things, but above all, his mind. At one point he receives a phone call; it's his Roman friend and colleague, Alessandro Spiezia, the optician of Fellini, Giulietta Masina, and Marcello Mastroianni. "I did not see you at Mido, Giorgio...". "I could not make it, my son Paolo got married to Cristina, who's been working with us for a few months". "Well, in that case, you're forgiven. It was a great show; it has always been a great source of inspiration for me. I want the very best for my customers".

"How was Mido this year?"

"Size-wise, it was the same as last year, including Pavilion 31 in the ex-sports center. It was grand and spectacular; the view from the balcony stands was truly impressive.

"Did you find anything new, Alessandro?"

"Fashion, Giorgio; it has taken our industry by storm, especially in terms of sunglasses. I saw Laura Biagiotti's stand and visited Gianni Versace's, which showcased the Metrics line. And there was Fiorucci, a regular presence at Mido by now, and Gucci, with his sunglasses. I saw the Carrera style for the first time... I even stopped at Lozza's. Their styles are always stunning".

"Ah! Lozza! You've heard, right?"

"Yes of course, at the end of last year it was purchased by the company that makes the Police, that goes by the name of...hang on, I can't remember...oh right: Charme Lunettes. And let me tell you, they took on the great responsibility of reviving the oldest eyewear brand in Italy. It's a steep challenge. Let's hope they can do it".

Giorgio is home from work. He turns on the television. Mido closed today. Perhaps the newscast will say something about it. But the lead story is awful, and erases his interest in anything else: A strong earthquake – of the 8th magnitude on the Mercalli scale – has hit the regions of Abruzzi, Molise, Lazio and Campania...widespread destruction, injuries; poor Italy.

# An international show

*Milan, 4-7 May 1985*

Giorgio – who is turning 50 this year – is finally at Mido again, after last year's hiatus for Paolo and Cristina's wedding. And, just like in the good old days, he came by himself. He showed his pass at the new entrance in piazza VI Febbraio, the one that leads directly into Pavilion 33, and walked through the halls to get a general impression of the stands. He's astonished by the massive presence of foreign exhibitors. Then again, he read about it prior to his departure in *Ottica Italiana*, the optician's trade magazine: "Of the 80 trade shows held annually in the pavilions of Fiera Milano, Mido boasts the highest attendance by foreign exhibitors...". But his immediate destination is something other than the individual stands of international manufacturers.

At the Milan fairgrounds he immediately feels at ease; it's an atmosphere he is familiar with: busy, cheerful, convivial, multilingual, multicultural. And he sees many of his friends again; opticians, like him, looking to place orders for the year, and several Italian and foreign exhibitors. He recognizes the layout the expo adopted three years ago: six halls, distributed among three pavilions, and the "pearl" of it all: the ex-ports center.

Giorgio briskly walks toward the Cesare Nava Hall, on the first floor of Pavilion 30, where the President of Anfao and Mido, Ennio De Martin, has convoked newspaper and trade magazine reporters for a press conference on Mido's current situation, 15 years after its first edition. Giorgio is eager to know how this show that plays a starring role in his life is doing, and therefore, before diving into his usual frantic search for new products among the stands, he decides to sneak into the crowd of reporters and company representatives.

"This is Mido's 15th edition", President De Martin explains, "enriched by its well-earned status of international event, which it actually acquired from the very start, and was thereafter officially recognized by a decree by the responsible Italian Ministry. Here are the figures for this 1985 event: 586 exhibitors (a 4.5% increase over 1984), 17,200 m2 of net exhibition space (up by 4.3% vs. 1984), with 6,000 industry professionals from all over the world expected to visit the show. These



figures summarize better than any speech the recognition and success of our show, which indisputably ranks first worldwide for quality and quantity". And then he adds: "Besides the massive participation by Italian companies (325 in total, mostly from Cadore, the historic production area where 90% of Italian eyewear is made), attendance by foreign exhibitors includes an outstanding number of companies from France, 98 in total, followed by Germany with 46, and the UK with 25. Although lower quantity-wise but no less important or prestigious, is the participation of companies from Switzerland, Austria, The Netherlands, Spain, Portugal, Hungary, the United States, Brazil, Israel, Australia, Japan, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore. The presence at Mido of 261 foreign companies (a 7% increase over the 1984 edition, equal to 44.5% of all exhibitors) is the most definite proof of the important role our country plays in the eyewear market. And in fact, many Italian companies do a great deal of business in foreign markets, exporting as much as 80% of their overall production".

"Mr. President, please excuse my asking", says a reporter, interrupting De Martin in mid-speech, "Are you also alluding to the growing success and rising status of *made in Italy*?"

"Our industry is experiencing what is happening with other products manufactured in Italy. *Made in Italy* is a synonym for quality, reliability and good taste. And let's not forget the fact that eyeglasses, especially for women, are also a matter of aesthetics. A well-designed pair of eyeglasses can be put on as easily as a dress, and be as elegant as a jewel. Before answering your questions, esteemed reporters, I'd like to conclude by stressing that the quality of our products still is a major safeguard, but the cost of labor weighs heavily upon it. Most Italian companies in our sector are small, and therefore are more affected by labor costs than companies in the main industrialized countries of the European Community. In addition to that, these markets are also fiercely competitive due to the presence of lower priced products from Asia. Under these market conditions, we can only succeed by way of the design and flair of our collections, which are recognized worldwide because of their Italian style. Any questions?"

Giorgio is gratified. He loves working in this sector and wishes to know everything about it, just like a carpenter feels about his wood, and a photography shop assistant about the products he sells to customers. He is precise, conscientious, and seriously committed to his work.

The press conference has ended and Giorgio is about to leave, but sees President De Martin approach, and he is also about to exit the hall. Impulsively, Giorgio goes to shake his hand. "Mr. President, I am an optician from Turin. Mido's success is more than a safeguard for us: it means greater selection, quality, and new products we can offer to our clients".

"It was important for Mido to become a registered exhibition company, so Giovanni Marcolin and I went to the notary; this was a crucial step from a legal standpoint, and in terms of our relationship with the Region. Its success was certainly ensured by our organization, but above all by the zeal of companies in our industry".

"Mr. President, I am pleased to see that fashion designers have taken an interest in our industry".

"I am too, openly. They are increasing the visibility of our products, especially sunglasses. And our companies are growing stronger, especially in that market segment".

As they talk, a representative of the Belluno Industrialists' Association, which manages Sipao, the association's eyewear products manufacturing division, participates. His name is Toni Copetin, a prominent figure in the Cadore eyewear industry. "These are great times, Mr. President", he remarks, "Our province has grown exponentially since the end of the 1970's because of the eyewear industry. We are experiencing a true and proper boom, which makes everything easier, as our optician from Turin just said". As soon as Copetin utters the word "Turin", a true Turin native emerges from the group of people greeting De Martin. It's Guido Balocco, the general manager of Persol, who supplied sunglasses for Paolo and Cristina's wedding.

"Guido!", Giorgio exclaims, "You're with the press?".

"I beg your pardon, are you?", he replies.

"You're right... Guido I'd like to thank you again for the mountain of sunglasses you brought for the wedding. It was fun and unique to take group photos with and without sunglasses. Who's ever done anything like that? No one, other than an optician's son! Ha ha ha...".

Guido Balocco warmly thanks Giorgio. "What do you think? Should we go back to my stand? You have to place a big order for Persol 649, you can't run out at your shop in Turin, especially in view of our office headquarters and factory being right there in Lungodora Firenze...and then we can go spy on the competition a little...would

you cover for me? ". They both laugh...

"Of course, we can; I'd do that and more for you".

Valentino, Versace, Lacoste, Laura Biagiotti are among the big names, and some of them can be counted among Giorgio's vendors who trailblazed a path into the eyewear market, fostering the growth of many small eyewear companies who make products for third parties. Giorgio and Guido take a long walk through the aisles of Mido, especially those lined with stands of small companies from Cadore, where true artisanship and craftsmanship still reside. "I have to leave and go back to the Persol stand now", Balocco says. "Stop by tomorrow. We'll have coffee together".

When they part ways, Giorgio is in front of Argosol's stand, a company from Pozzale di Pieve di Cadore owned by Emiliana, the wife of Ennio De Rigo of Charme Lunettes. As it turns out, Giorgio arrived at just the right time. Barbara, De Rigo's daughter, is showing to potential customers the "latest arrival" in the outstandingly successful Police line, a new style of sunglasses named "Sting". Holding a pair in her hand, Barbara tells the story of how the new style got its name. "My father, mother, brother Massimo and I were on our way to see a volleyball match. Lozza, the historic brand we purchased at the end of 1983 sponsors the Belluno series A volleyball team. We had tried to come up with a name for the new style for days. 'It has to be a modern, young, cool name...', my father said. I thought about it and said: "Why not call it Sting?" but my mother remarked that it was a last name, that it would not work, and yet, in the end, everyone agreed. In Italian the word means stinger. People liked it immediately. So, let me present to you our 'Sting' 44 style".

# Sunny days

*Milan, 9-12 May 1986*

The people crowding the two entrances of Mido 1986 are talking about eyewear (as expected), but also about clothing and fashion (we're in Milan...) that redefines femininity, as stated in the copy of the *Donna* fashion magazine being held by a young girl waiting in line: "Sweet, mysterious, ironic, curvy, welcome back femininity". And obviously people are also talking about business, orders and customers, where to go for dinner tonight, of the girl they hope to see again or hook up with next. And amid all this talk there is also concern about the noxious cloud that has been looming over Europe since 29 April as a result of the accident at the Soviet Chernobyl nuclear plant in the Ukraine. In Italy, as in other countries, people are being warned not to consume milk or fresh vegetables. These are hard times for the mothers of newborns, and children... Will there be fewer visitors from Eastern Europe? And from America? Last month the US initiated hostilities against Libya, holding it responsible for fostering international terrorism; will they travel less? Will they feel threatened? And there is uncertainty about depreciation of the dollar....

Giorgio finally walks into Mido. Paolo is with him. Cristina is pregnant and opted to stay at home. So, father and son start roaming the grounds together, all 20,000 m<sup>2</sup> of exhibition space (there is a new hall on the third floor of Pavilion 30) which this year has been invaded by an inconceivable number of exhibitors: 681 as opposed to 595 last year, which basically evens out the number of Italian and foreign exhibitors.

That evening, in a cozy restaurant in the center of Milan, father and son, tired but satisfied, speak about what they saw; there were a lot of new things to feast their eyes on.

"There truly are all sorts of things there," Giorgio says, "small, round, light frames, next to bold and heftier-looking frames, multitudes of round, oval, rectangular, drop-shaped, pantoscopic eyewear. And the materials are a whole other story..."

"Plastic seems to be all the rage. I heard that manufacturers prefer it because of its flexibility and impact resistance. And it works well as a

substitute for or in combination with other materials. You know, sometimes it was hard for me to tell if they were made of plastic or natural materials like tortoise shell, mother of pearl, horn, wood...".

"Paolo, you're really starting to be an expert...way to go! Let's drink to that!"

"Thanks Dad, but I learned from you. Cheers!"

The waiter starts to bring their courses. At Mido Paolo was impressed by the new materials being used for eyewear: resins, titanium, carbon fiber and gold. "Have you seen the plastic frames with fabric or metal, and even cork and gold inside of them? Unbelievable".

"And also, the bonded overlays", Giorgio adds, "which can be changed to differentiate and personalize the frames. Did you see the styles with hand-painted zebra and leopard patterns? And the ones with mirrored lenses or four lenses that also cover the space between the eye and the temple... And tinting processes have reached unprecedented levels. Not to mention the lenses; polarized lenses that make it easier to type and read text on computer screens, further improved progressive lenses, electronic eye testing instruments... Ok, Paolo, let's tie up the loose ends and figure out what to get on this trip. I think we should...".

Father and son decided to stay for one more day: "Maria, we're spending one more day at Mido. We have to clear our minds".

"Go ahead. I'll take care of our little mother-to-be. Don't worry. Do what you have to do".

There are so many choices... Kador has a "pocketable" style that folds in half to fit in a pocket. Po-Le Optik has large, elegant metal frames. Sover's winning ticket are white eyeglasses with dark lenses, designed by singer-songwriter Enrico Ruggeri, sure to be a smash hit. Safilo also has large metal frames, advertised by a girl with an incredibly beautiful face; the Cadore-based company has chosen to focus on femininity. Paolo is drawn to the stand exhibiting eyewear by Gianni Versace. "Hey Dad, look at Versace's...". The iconic designer's wrap-around styles are advertised by three stunning models, slender girls, two with high cut black bodysuits and black stockings, and the other with a small black shirt, a black miniskirt, and black stockings. The photo is by Helmut Newton, and absolutely amazing... And the men's eyewear ads show six ultra-elegant young men wearing the same style, with four lenses. Designer Laura Biagiotti's collection also features oversized eyewear.

“Dad”, he adds, “I also saw a new brand. It’s called Derapage. It’s owned by Alberto Vitaloni, he’s from Turin, like us. They are tear-drop-shaped with dark lenses and a brow bar. They look great. I talked about them with the owner’s son, Giovanni. He’s 19 years old. We talked for a long time, and I might go see him in Turin. I’d like to show you these Derapage”. “All right, let’s go”.

Giorgio also meets Giovanni Vitaloni, who is very excited about the vibe at Mido: “I have never seen so many foreigners in my life... people come in, listen attentively, even applaud. It’s incredible. My father was right in insisting I should come. Have you seen our eyewear? They were inspired by the automotive industry, which is my father’s field”.

“How did you come up with that name?”.

“Well, Mr. Giorgio, our slogan says it all: Derapage is the look for those who dare to take calculated risks in order to succeed. What do you think of them?”.

On their way back from the Vitaloni stand, Giorgio and Paolo find themselves in a crowd of people walking toward Marcolin’s stand, which is also in Pavilion 30. The big brand from Vallesella di Cadore, now with a factory in Longarone, is celebrating its 25th anniversary in the industry this year. Maurizio Coffen Marcolin and his brother Cirillo are speaking to an audience of journalists and many curious Mido visitors. The Cadore-based company has gone global in a very short time: “We have subsidiaries in France, Switzerland, Germany and the United States”, stress Maurizio and Cirillo, sons of the founder, Giovanni. “Our strategy is to grow in those markets through the direct efforts of our company, in partnership with local entrepreneurs”. In 1983 the group partnered with the American distribution company Marchon, and within one year, thanks to this initiative, the company workforce increased from 80 to 200 employees, while production output reached one million frames per year.

Giorgio and Paolo make eye contact: “We’ve done enough, right?”.

“I’d say so, Dad. Let’s catch the next train for Turin. I can’t wait to see Cristina”.

“And I your Mom”.

## A couple among the stands

*Milan, 8-11 May 1987*

Giorgio and Maria became grandparents. Cristina delivered Emanuela – a completely bald baby girl, with snow white skin and rosebud lips – on a cold, but happy day. It's Carnival. Friends showed up in their room at Saint Ann's hospital in Turin with party horns, hats and masks, even big black eyeglasses with huge noses... Paolo and Cristina's friends are pranksters. The nurses scolded them, as expected. Fortunately for everyone involved, they did not bring any confetti.

And who is going to Mido 1987? Paolo, of course, wanted to stay home with his wife and daughter, so the young grandparents decided to take advantage of the opportunity to go together, take care of business, and hopefully have some time to relax and celebrate their 30th wedding anniversary. In Milan, at Mido, everyone can have a great time. "We've been together for thirty years", Giorgio thinks out loud, almost sighing, behind the wheel of his beautiful, brand-new Fiat Croma. He's driving down the familiar expressway almost automatically, and for an instant gives his wife an appreciative look. Maria promptly returns it with a smile.

Giorgio's heart is filled with joy. A child-like delight. He has seldom felt this happy. It's the utter joy a man feels when his woman is at his side. He glances at her from time to time, taking in her doll-like face, thick medium-length hair, knees and shapely thighs revealed by the slightly bunched-up miniskirt, and her overall figure. It's the ordinary, everyday beauty he met along his path. By a rather inexplicable effect, Carla resurfaces in Giorgio's mind, and he thinks to himself: "Thank you Carla...". "Maria, once we get to Mido we'll do our rounds, but afterwards I'd like to take some time for ourselves, ok?". "Of course, Giorgio. We have to take care of business. Otherwise instead of coming here we could have gone to the beach, right?".

Once again this year, Mido is full of amazing surprises: a third hall in Pavilion 30 is open, and there are nearly 700 exhibitors, nearly half of whom from foreign countries. For the first time, there's even an eyewear manufacturer from the People's Republic of China. Many

people at the stands are talking about the innovation of materials, production processes, and increasingly high quality standards, as Asian competition is taking a toll, and an issue that is fast becoming crucial: the fine-tuning of distribution systems and strategies. Having the best-looking eyewear in the world won't matter if you don't know how to sell it. That is a problem for big brands as well as for medium and small companies. And while this is going on, herds of fashion houses are galloping into the prairies of the eyewear industry, and fast conquering it. "Look Giorgio, even Borbonese has an eyewear collection now". The fashion house's eyewear line is produced by Astor, a company from Caviago, in Emilia Romagna.

"I don't know if you noticed, but Benetton is here too... Their eyewear is made by Anser in Pieve di Cadore", Giorgio adds.

"Of course, I noticed, I'm not stupid!", Maria replies, slightly peeved.

The couple confidently roams through the aisles and stands of the expo. He meets Giorgio Sichel, who brought to Mido the latest collections from Viennaline and Christian Dior, crafted by Optyl in Munich. She instead stops to admire Lancetti eyewear, made by Emmepivi in Belluno, and, naturally, visits the stand of Laura Biagiotti, who continues to partner with Oxsol, from Precenico, in the province of Udine. Wide temples are in style this year, especially for women's eyewear...

Maria does not miss a beat; she goes to Krizia, which partners with Theo Mohwinkel's Thema, (good thing Giorgio wasn't there, Theo would have been embarrassed...), sees the new Sophia Loren style produced by the Zyloware corporation in New York, goes to Allison, which crafts Trussardi's collection, and cannot resist the temptation of spending a half hour in the boutique-stand of Mikli, the Parisian designer who now has stores all over the world, spanning from New York to Tokyo, Dusseldorf to London, Brussels to Helsinki.

Giorgio stops at Gatto Astucci, which invited customers and visitors to its 50th anniversary celebration. He then meets Cirillo Marcolin: the Vallesella di Cadore company is flourishing, and had enough funds to make heavy investments in technology, production and product innovations. Thereafter Giorgio takes the time to stop by his usual vendors, like his friend Guido Balocco, from Persol. The company from Turin just came out with a brand-new style named "Andrea".

Giorgio also visits Lozza. With De Rigo at the helm, the company is exhibiting at Mido new versions of the Zilo and a new Sting style,



which is round, with a built-in clip-on.

The couple had agreed to meet at the Polaroid Italia stand in Hall 2, on the first floor of Pavilion 30, where the American company's large posters tout its sponsorship of Vasco Rossi's 1987 tour, showcasing a photo of the singer wearing sunglasses. Polaroid is celebrating its 50th anniversary at Mido.

"Have you had enough?", Giorgio asks, laughing wholeheartedly.

"I'm dead tired Giorgio".

"Should we go to the hotel?".

"Yes, and tomorrow let's take a long stroll downtown. I'd like to take a good look at the cathedral first".

"Agreed".

Giorgio and Maria leave their car in the parking lot near the expo, and take the metro to their hotel. It's evening by now, and the sky over Milan is filled with stars. The weather was nice all day long, a blessing for Mido's exhibitors, who flock to the Navigli canals in the center of the city, to eat, drink, flirt, and crack jokes. At other editions, the weather was bad, and it rained so hard that some Mido exhibitors had to resort to buckets and rags to mop up the water leaking in... Tonight Giorgio and Maria opt to have dinner at the hotel's restaurant rather than go out again in search of a place to eat. This time they had decided not to worry about money and had booked a room in one of the nicest hotels in Milan. Once back in their room, they took a refreshing shower and went right to bed. Giorgio kisses her face and, after an infinite series of kisses, she sweetly surrenders to his ardor. He carefully unbuttons her pajama top and keeps on kissing her. Those who know what happens once a man and a woman decide to give themselves to one another, can well imagine what happened next...

# An entire family at the Show

*Milan, 6-9 May 1988*

This is Emanuela's first time at Mido. She's not even 18 months old yet, but her parents, Paolo and Cristina, her paternal grandparents, Giorgio and Maria, and her maternal grandparents, Umberto and Anna, are taking her through the pavilions and aisles of the Show, sometimes holding her hand, carrying her on their shoulders, holding her in their arms, and most often pushing her stroller, where she sits, happily swinging her legs, excited by all the people, lights, sounds and general commotion around her. The happy family, six adults and a toddler, rented a Fiat 128 900 to comfortably fit everyone in, and found rooms in a small hotel near the red line metro station close to the Milan fairgrounds.

It's Sunday, 8 May 1988. They decided to come to Mido on Sunday and stay through Monday, as tomorrow optical shops are customarily closed. The men and women split up, to go see what interests them most. Cristina, with her mother and mother-in-law, set their battle plan using the schedule published every year in the first few pages of Mido's official catalog. They want to see (and try on) eyewear by fashion designer brands. The men, Paolo, his father and father-in-law, are tasked with checking out the latest products by historic manufacturers and less famous ones.

"Look, Vogue Florence Line, Paolo Seminara's company, is down there". Cristina gets behind the stroller with her baby in it, and starts pushing it toward stand F38 in Hall 2, on the first floor of Pavilion 30. As luck would have it, once the women get there, Paolo Seminara, the widely acclaimed optician and designer, is talking to a group of people, probably journalists. "We are celebrating our first 15 years in business at Mido. It all started with the discovery that Vogue was never registered as a fashion brand. So, I did it... Since we've been in business, our annual production has increased to 300,000 pairs of eyeglasses, and we established a young and dynamic distribution network that can service 1,800 highly qualified retailers, among the best in Italy". "In short", Seminara remarks, "creativity, the ability to interpret the current demand for our products, strict quality control measures and keen selection of materials

and components, are continuously and effectively supported by truly strategic marketing, which comes into play at the conceptual stage of our products' design. And now, ladies and gentlemen, if you wish, I'll go over our prescription eyewear and sunglasses collection”.

Cristina would like to keep listening, but she can't, because Emanuela is starting to fuss... So, they leave, in need of a change of air. On the ground floor of Pavilion 31 is the stand of Italo Cremona, the maker of Armani's collections! A pretty stand hostess approaches the stroller, looks at Emanuela, raises her eyes up to the three women, and starts her presentation. “We brought to Mido 1988 a preview of our brand-new prescription eyewear collection designed by Gianni Versace, which comes in several bold colors: black, sand and ultra-exclusive styles with green-blue, mustard-black, and black-white patterns. The key strength of this collection is the perfect fusion of classic frames and precious, elegant metal embellishments also used in high-end leather goods”. Cristina's mother and mother-in-law step away to give the baby some water. Maria has some doubts: “Will we be able to sell these frames to our customers in Turin?”.

The men planned a totally different route: at first, they were drawn by the eyewear designed for Ferrari and Alfa Romeo 56 (this latter style is made by Liven International), then reached an eyewear newcomer: Fila. Giorgio is holding an extremely creative advertisement, and reads it out loud to his son and co-father-in-law: “Attention: in the sports attire market, Fila has become a leader in casual fashion that appeals to international celebrities as well as regular consumers. What was missing from the Fila line-up is finally here: a modern, sporty collection of eyewear frames bearing the Fila brand. Italian-inspired design and superior quality construction: Nigura quality. Fila, the famous Italian brand and the acclaimed German manufacturer, Nigura, have partnered to create a new eyewear concept destined to succeed”. “Let's go see it”, Paolo says. Then, it is time to visit the most famous brands.

In Hall 2 of Pavilion 30, at stands F2 through F16, Giuseppe Ratti's company from Turin celebrates the 70th anniversary of the Persol brand. It's a huge milestone. As expected, among the series of stands Giorgio finds his old friend Guido Balocco, who has since become the company's Ceo. Guido is addressing several people visiting the stand: “The best materials, completely automated manufacturing processes, the hand finishing of every product, strict quality control measures by

which even slightly flawed eyewear is discarded, are the hallmarks of our production, and ensure the high quality of our products. Worn by famous actors like Marcello Mastroianni, Mickey Rourke, Tom Cruise, Don Johnson, Ornella Muti and others, Persol eyewear is also used by iconic designers like Armani, Moschino and Hermès as accessories in their advertisements. Persol exports 60% of its products worldwide, including the USA, Canada, Europe, the Middle-East, and Australia. In Italy alone Persol is sold by over 3,500 optical stores. Persol 649 has been our best-seller for several years. It's on display here at our stand". Guido recognizes Paolo, his wife Cristina and their baby girl, Emanuela: "Your wedding was amazing".

It's Monday, May 9th. The group from Turin has just returned to the Mido pavilions in Fiera Milano. Emanuela is bursting with energy and running all over the place. As her father and mother chase after her in Pavilion 30, the three end up near Luxottica's stand. Paolo and Cristina grab their little girl, start looking around in the huge space occupied by the Agordo-based company between aisles D and E, and are greeted by great news: Luxottica and designer Giugiaro reached an agreement for a new product line which, the young stand assistant explains, marries creativity, technology-focused precision engineering and industrial logistics, with product functionality and convenience.

Luxottica's figures are mind-blowing: In 1987 it scored 370 billion liras in net overall sales, and net profit of 30 billion liras. And the company is only 27 years old! Luxottica eyewear is sold around the world by direct subsidiaries in the United States, Canada, leading European countries as well as through more than 320 exclusive distributors with 80,000 points of sale. No-one even comes close to it.

Safilo's strategy relies on its own house brands, displayed at stands between aisles D, E and F on the ground floor of Pavilion 31, in the ex-sports center. This year the Padua company brought to Mido their Linea 5536 and Linea 389 styles. The stand assistants explain that the former "is a no-frills style that goes well with slightly masculine suits". The latter "is the style for socially active women; it pairs well with sophisticated accessories as well as the wave of miniskirts featured in forthcoming spring-summer 1989 fashion collections". The men look at each other: "Oh well, in that case, we're all set!" Paolo remarks. And all three burst out laughing.

# Record

*Turin, Milan, 5-8 May 1989*

Giorgio is sitting at the table in his optical store. He's traveling to Milan in a few hours, to attend the 19th edition of Mido. He has missed very few editions, just one or two, as he recalls. He opens a nice notebook and starts writing in it. In front of him is a copy of *Vedere*, one of the leading optical trade magazines. A few years ago, Giorgio met the magazine's Editor-in-Chief, Claudio Morpurgo. He's an interesting man; friendly, down to earth, and a true eyewear expert. Giorgio is reading the magazine and writing down the company stands and collections he'd like to see.

- *Luxottica strikes again: since last year it started making eyewear for Giorgio Armani. Stop by.*

- *Robert La Roche presents "a new and exciting line of sunglasses. All styles follow the latest European fashion trend of smaller eyewear".*

- *French companies: Drop by the stand of Francois Pinton, "the 'look' from Paris".*

- *"Known by youths across the world, Robe di Kappa has decided to put its famous brand on the frames of an eyewear line of its own" (produced by Lux Color). Check out Kappa's super sunglasses product line.*

- *Stop by Mazzucchelli. Features "tomorrow's colors and patterns".*

- *Barberini (Silvi, Teramo) will be at Mido again this year; one of the leading European suppliers of sunglass lenses participates in Mido... "The most noteworthy are the new ophthalmic lenses with multi-layer coatings. The product line includes four fashion colors: blue, pink, orange and green lenses with different reflection levels, up to fully mirrored lenses...". I'm really curious to see those...*

- *Stop by Salice: 70 years in business and Giuseppe Salice's 70th birthday.*

- *Go see Gianni Versace's new 'Look' intellectual sunglasses and prescription eyewear line. The shape of this eyewear is also small and rounded.*

*"Paolo, are you ready to leave?"*

*"Sure, Dad. I'll grab my travel bag and wait for you outside. I'm driving. And let's remember to fasten our seat-belts: it's been mandatory since April".*

Giorgio and Paolo completed their “homework”. Paolo, like his father, wrote down the names of Italian and foreign manufacturing companies, new eyewear styles as well as entire collections on a notepad. There is one style he is particularly interested to see: Sting 95, the new version of Sting 92, with metal frames and blue mirrored lenses.

Today is May 8th, the last day of the show. Like everyone else, they have made it through to the end of the iconic event: happy, but exhausted. This year Mido gained yet another Pavilion, number 35, and further differentiated the exhibitors’ stands by merchandise type. “Paolo, Morpurgo invited me to his magazine’s stand. I’m going to go see him, and catch my breath for a while. If you wish to visit a few more stands...”

“Go ahead, Dad, there are things I have to see yet. Should we meet in the parking lot? I’ll bring your bag with me, and lighten up your load”.

“Thank you, son. See you later”.

Claudio Morpurgo is sitting inside his magazine’s stand. He’s looking through papers, photos, preparing the post-Mido articles. Raising his head, he sees Giorgio approaching. He goes to meet him, and invites him to take a seat in his office area. The two immediately start sharing their thoughts about the Show.

“What did you think of it, Claudio?”.

“In my opinion, this was the largest, most lavish and best-attended edition in the history of Mido. Even according to the figures I received a little while ago: it had over 24,000 m2 of exhibition space, 736 exhibitors, of whom 407 Italian, and 329 from 24 foreign countries. And it drew 28,607 visitors, of whom 18,136 Italian and 10,471 from foreign countries. Compared to last year, Mido 1989 had 19.26% more net exhibition space, 5.6% more exhibitors, and 19.27% more visitors. It can’t be any clearer than that... Don’t you think so?”.

“Without a doubt, a lot of business deals are made right here...”.

“You know, Giorgio, some exhibitors told me that the potential buyers they saw were highly qualified, serious buyers who came prepared to negotiate deals based on very specific terms and conditions”.

“I’m going home a bit confused; I didn’t see any definite trends...”.

“The quality level is outstanding but, as happens with fashion clothing, many different trends coexist, and round shapes seem slightly more prevalent across the board, not merely in youth eyewear. The retro

1950's styles for women and classic, symmetrical and understated designs for men seem to be holding their own. Sunglasses-wise, big fronts and high-set temples..."

"As well as smaller eyeglasses..."

"Yes indeed, there's a wide variety. However, the trend for materials is clear. Metal of every possible color has made a huge comeback: lacquered, painted, enameled, chrome, and especially gold-plated. At one time it seemed to stifle the designer's creativity, but at Mido this year it proved to be a source of inspiration. And it's not by chance that the leading fashion houses and designers are using it. Stylists and designers, as you might have noticed yourself, indisputably play a key role across the entire eyewear industry".

"Claudio, I was amazed by some of the machinery I saw in the new Pavilion, number 35..."

"You're right. The advent of electronics and automation in the eyewear manufacturing industry seems to harbor great changes both in technology and marketing policies. And let's not forget about the new machinery for lenses, components and raw materials".

"I have to leave now..."

"Should we go to the bar for some coffee?"

The two sit at the bar counter. They are discussing the news disclosed today at Mido: Bausch & Lomb signed an agreement with Alain Mikli for a new line of Ray-Bans. And, as they sip their coffee, Giorgio has a hunch: the blonde lady seated at the far table looks a lot like Carla... She's wearing a pair of round, dark sunglasses. It has to be her. His hunch is confirmed when she also notices him from afar, and stands up. She's coming toward him now, and Giorgio's hands are shaking... Carla!

Claudio is in a hurry to get back to his stand: "It was a pleasure to see you. Stop by our newsroom in Milan when you can. I look forward to seeing you".

Giorgio is mesmerized. Carla is approaching, and he takes in her elegant stride, long legs, blonde hair that is even longer and wavier than the last time he saw her. There is nothing vulgar or ordinarily sexy about her approaching figure: she is beautiful and attractive; it's as simple as that. She's wearing a dark knit cotton tunic that emphasizes her figure and a matching miniskirt...

“Carla, what are you doing here? Are you working at the stands again? Your outfit seems to say otherwise...” Giorgio says as soon as she’s in front of him, smiling. She has taken off her dark sunglasses, and the blue of her eyes envelops Giorgio, relieving the trepidation he felt when he first ‘spotted’ her.

“I’m working for an optician in Milan. And I’ve got my optician’s license. This profession has gotten into my blood after working for so long as a hostess at Mido. So, I am here as a visitor, just like you, writing orders left and right for the entire year. Mido was fantastic this year”.

“It truly was”, Giorgio replies. “So, listen, you’ll be here next year, right?”.

“Of course, Giorgio. If you wish we can spend some time together after working hours”.

“Sounds good. We’ll find each other somehow. Bye Carla”.

Giorgio quickly retraces his steps, and heads toward the exit. He has to find their parking space again, but inside of him he feels the void of one last, unfulfilled wish: to kiss that radiant face...



# THE LIGHT-HEARTED 1990'S

## The 20<sup>th</sup> edition

*Milan, 11-14 May 1990*

Tens of models walk down the runway wearing different styles of eyewear, from the past and present, while the music and spotlights emphasize their pace. The crowd lining the catwalk keeps applauding, astonished. Images from 'The Leopard' movie serve as background for the presentation of 1800's eyewear; the face, sultry voice and sexy body of Marlene Dietrich portray the 1930's, and clips from the movie '8 1/2' and 'The Easy Life' elicit memories of eyewear from the 1960's and 1970's. Today's styles are showcased by male and female models wearing sporty, high-tech, evening, rock star, neo-romantic, business, and children's styles. The 20th Mido event starts this morning at Fiera Milano, as usual, but this year the show has an extra Hall, which brings the net overall exhibition space up to more than 26,000 m<sup>2</sup>, and the number of exhibitors up to 818. There is also a long waiting list of exhibitors who could not be accommodated this year. Giorgio and his son Paolo were able to find a parking space near the Pavilion where the catwalk is located, and are enjoying the fashion show. Maria, Cristina and baby Emanuela stayed at home, in Turin.

"Paolo perhaps you don't realize it, but our world has changed drastically".

"Dad, if you're referring to the changes in attitude and behavior toward glasses, I believe that Mido has played a fundamental role in making people understand that eyewear is a necessity, but can also be a privilege. Do you like my definition?"

"I'd say it's perfect. When you were a child, I used to sing you a song: 'Let's toast with eyeglasses' ....".

"I remember Dad, you used to sing it all the time..."

"Good, that means it stayed in your head.... ha ha...it was about people who had to wear eyeglasses and felt unattractive because of it, and their longing for acceptance. That's no longer an issue now that eyeglasses have become a popular fashion accessory. Designers

like them, and people wear them with confidence, as a true form of self-expression. An epic change, just since the 1970's... Hey, Paolo did you see that beautiful girl?"

Paolo gives his Dad a sidelong glance, exclaiming: "Dad, just stop talking and admire these pretty girls!"

"All right, I'll shut up now".

The following day's newspapers are filled with news and feature articles about the start of the 20th edition of Mido. And indeed, yesterday's press conference – chaired by Giuliano Tabacchi, who is once again serving as President of Anfao and Mido – was attended by 400 reporters from business, eyewear trade magazines and other mass-media publications. The press conference brought to light some troubling issues for the industry, such as brand counterfeiting and European health and safety standards.

The runway show and the newly rearranged layout of the exhibition were big hits, as were the new methods of communication adopted by the expo, such as Mido news, a news program broadcast on television screens, to keep exhibitors and visitors up to date with regard to the Show's daily attendance figures, events taking place in the pavilions, available services, cultural attractions in Milan, and national news stories, including breaking news. A true innovation!

Economic observers could not help but notice that Mido has become a true driving force for the market, a gathering place where eyewear professionals can evaluate the industry's entire range of products, come in contact with global market offerings, and select the best supplier for their needs. Myriad companies worldwide make eyewear, and Mido is an unrivaled, all-encompassing showcase for them. Nonetheless, the future proliferation of small or small-medium companies, and longevity of historic medium-sized companies have become questionable. The European market is changing. There is an increasing number of mergers, acquisitions, expansions, reorganizations and changes in ownership being reported, and sweeping changes loom on the horizon, driven by the fall of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe, the reunification of Germany, and the European market integration, due to take effect soon, in 1993.....

These topics increasingly weigh on the minds of people at the Show. Paolo and his father are seated at the bar in Hall 2 of Pavilion 30, wait-

ing for their coffees to be served. Someone left, or perhaps forgot, a copy of *Vedere International* on the table they are sitting at. Paolo thumbs through it, and stops to read an interview with Maurizio Marcolin, Marketing Manager and Vice President of the company. Paolo starts to read it out loud, for his father's sake, as the waiter just handed him the tray with their coffees. "The eyewear market is undergoing a process of consolidation, a phenomenon typical of mature markets, which has already occurred in other industries. Marcolin enters this process through an internal and external growth policy that will lead it to acquire additional market shares; because Marcolin takes a global approach toward consumers, and instead of favoring one type over another, offers a selection capable of satisfying everyone's needs and budgets. This policy can only be enacted by large companies, and Marcolin has both the qualifications and experience required to do it".

"Did you get that Dad?"

"I believe that the next few years will be hard for small eyewear manufacturers...where, among other things..." Giorgio does not have time to finish the sentence before his voice is drowned out by the sound of a commotion coming from nearby stands. Right outside the bar, someone yells: "Ornella Muti is here! Ornella Muti is here!". Those words trigger a frenzied rush: everyone hurries toward the stand of Giuseppe Ratti Industria Ottica, the company from Turin that makes Persol eyewear. Ornella Muti is the 1990's ambassador of the brand. Her favorite style? Number 830, the one she's often photographed wearing.

But the public seems to hardly care about her eyewear. Right now, they want to take a close look at Ornella herself, the actress, the ultimate sex symbol of today's Italian cinema. And in fact, no words can possibly describe the massive crowds in front of and around Ratti's stand. Giorgio Basso, Ratti's Marketing and Communications Manager, is explaining to reporters – amid the crowd – what made the company from Turin go full speed ahead with brand ambassadors. Paolo has managed to squeeze through the crowd, and can clearly hear the manager's words: "Ornella Muti was not merely chosen because of her stunning eyes, but also because, as the star of an international ad campaign in carefully selected media, she will be recognized in all markets (United States, Europe, Japan, Australia) targeted by the campaign. This exceptional brand ambassador is the most sensational element in an integrated communication system that looks at publicity as well as the product,

packaging, and information in general, as integral components of our overall message”.

Paolo extricates himself from the crowd and rejoins his father, who is standing nearby. “Twenty years ago, none of this could have happened, right Dad?”.

“Absolutely not. Nor, as I’ve seen, did companies print flyers or issue press releases and catalogs to raise awareness of their brand. Yes, times have truly changed”.

Giorgio and Paolo conclude their rounds. As usual, their bags are filled with orders. They start walking toward their parking spot. As they are about to exit, Giorgio hears someone calling him. He turns and sees it’s her, Carla. At the last edition of Mido they had said: “Next year, let’s look for each other and spend some time together”. Giorgio forgot all about it...

Paolo looks at him, intrigued: “Who’s that Dad?”.

“A friend...and old friend, she’s also an optician, in Milan”, he replies. Giorgio approaches her. Paolo sees his father exchanging a couple of hasty words with the beautiful woman standing before him, but can’t make out what they are saying. Giorgio then bids her goodbye, shaking her hand.

Giorgio remains silent for the entire trip back home, and Paolo does not dare to ask him any questions. And then again, between men, there’s no need for a lot of words. Hence, as he drives, Paolo’s thoughts focus on the beautiful collection of eyewear he has seen and ordered for their optical center, on Cristina and little Emanuela, who he shall see again soon.

# Formidable

*Milan-Cadore, 10-13 May 1991*

Giorgio and Maria are on a three-day holiday. They accompanied Paolo to Mido, at Fiera Milano, entrusting him with the responsibility of buying the latest styles by eyewear manufacturers and fashion brands. Now 33 years old, Paolo demonstrated long ago that he knows what to do just as well as his father, if not better. His parents trust him implicitly. Cristina stayed in Turin to mind the shop.

Giorgio and Maria instead drove up to Cadore. Their first stop is the eyewear museum that opened last year in the small town of Tai, thanks to the steadfast initiative of Vittorio Tabacchi from Safilo. Their second stop is in Agordo, at Luxottica! They brought with them one of the first cell phones on the market, a Nokia PT612, so they can be reached even while they travel. Hopefully there will be enough coverage to get a signal in Cadore; if not, there will be a phone in their room at the Hotel Ferrovia in Calalzo, where Gino Mondin greets them with open arms, remembering their visit from twenty years ago.

Vittorio Tabacchi himself, the President of the Museum, welcomes Giorgio and Maria in front of the museum at number 39 in via degli Alpini. It's a modern building that recalls its mountainous surroundings by way of large wooden elements on its façade, which stand out from the geometric shapes created by the load-bearing cement structures, and the window glass.

It's a sunny day, and the mountains sparkle against the deep blue sky.

"We opened a few months ago", Tabacchi says, "and I must tell you that the true and foremost reason why I gave this project my all is that I wanted to give this land something by which to remember what our fathers and grandfathers did for the eyewear industry here in Cadore, and make sure that future generations know the dire sacrifices and desire for growth by which their predecessors made the name of Cadore, and its products, famous around the world. It's the same wish, if not the dream, that in 1956 drove the iconic Enrico De Lotto to write the very first book on the history of eyewear in Cadore".

“You see”, Tabacchi continues as he accompanies the couple to see the collections on exhibit, “My bond with the museum preceded its creation, and was driven by my infinite and historic passion for collecting, but above all by my strong sense of belonging to this land, which has become the foremost stage for a quintessential story of made in Italy. Come this way...”.

There is a binder on the table, containing all the newspaper articles published with regard to the opening of the museum. *Il Gazzettino* talks about “Two thousand pairs of eyeglasses to admire” and another article, again from *Il Gazzettino*, states “museum-worthy eyewear”. *Il mattino dell’Alto Adige* article headline reads: “The Italian museum of eyewear is born”, and another, *L’Eco di Bergamo*: “The first Italian eyewear museum opens in Cadore”.

“The museum”, Tabacchi adds while Giorgio and Maria stand wide-eyed in front of the artifacts, “has organized the various collections over several floors, including mine and Safilo’s, De Lotto’s, and above all, the core of the exhibition, which consists of 1,600 articles, including eyewear, frame chains, monocles, fans, theater binoculars, telescopes, and many other items originally collected by Madame Alfred Heymann, of Paris. The museum bought the collection about three years ago. And, for our part, we are ready to purchase other items, as the museum certainly needs to expand its collections. And there’s a lot more out there”.

Giorgio and Maria get back into their car, and are now headed for Agordo. They receive the call they have been waiting for, about the possibility of visiting the Luxottica factory. Giorgio has longed to do that for twenty years now, and as it happens, Leonardo Del Vecchio’s company is celebrating its 30th anniversary. Upon being welcomed at the main manufacturing facility, on the right bank of the Cordevole torrent, they ask to see Del Vecchio, but learn that he’s not there. He is being interviewed by journalist Luca Goldoni with regard to a book to be released this fall, which will immortalize in black and white 30 years of adventures and business entrepreneurship. On the wall there is a picture of the very first building to house the factory, constructed in 1961, with light blue rooftops, a color that has since become a fixture in nearly all of Luxottica’s manufacturing facilities. The entrance to the factory is spectacular, with artistic details that include sculptures

by Augusto Murer. And then it was time for the very best part; Giorgio and Maria look around, as they listen to the words of their guide, with eyes and ears wide open, as if they were children. Before them, the large factory is filled with high-tech machinery, as well as hundreds of workers... At the end of the day, with hearts filled with wonder by everything they've seen, they go back to their hotel. "We just visited the leading Italian eyewear company, one of the main players in the global eyewear industry. I have never, ever seen anything like it before", Giorgio remarks.

Later, in bed by now, Giorgio thumbs through the press kit that summarizes the company's global operations. Luxottica is present in the United States with Avant Garde Optics, has subsidiaries in Canada, Germany, France, the UK, Spain, Sweden, Portugal, Belgium, Greece, and also does business in Tokyo, with Mirari Japan. "This is amazing Maria", Giorgio says, turning toward his wife. "Are you happy with our day?"

"How couldn't I be... Thank you Giorgio". And then turns the light off, and cuddles with her man.

Giorgio and Maria are on their way to Milan. When they get close to the fairgrounds, they call Paolo, who also has a Nokia PT612.

"How did it go?", is the first thing Giorgio asks his son, who is now sitting next to him in the car. "Dad, it was formidable. A lot more space for one thing, they even opened the third floor of Pavilion 31, and attendance by foreigners... I saw a lot of people from Germany and Eastern Europe, many South Americans and a remarkable number of people from Africa. And numerous visitors from countries affected by the Gulf War. It's a good sign...I read on the video screens that the number of exhibitors this year rose to 855, and 49.48% of them were from foreign countries. Outstanding".

"And...any news on the trends for this year?"

"Well, Dad, most eyeglasses are small and medium-sized. A lot have horizontal silhouettes, and geometric shapes seem to be prevailing, especially hexagons and octagons. There still are 1950's style cat-eye eyeglasses for women, but round frames or slightly curved wrap-around styles typical of the 1960's are clearly making a comeback. There was also no lack of mask and wrap-around styles with a bolder look".

“And what about materials?” , Giorgio asks, now on the expressway heading to Turin. “A lot of metals Dad, and acetates, as well as titanium and a wide variety of tortoiseshell styles”. After a 30-minute drive, they reach Vercelli. Everyone in the car is silent. Maria and Paolo have fallen asleep. Only Giorgio, behind the wheel, is awake. Fortunately...



## Was it bound to happen?

*Milan, 8-11 May 1992*

While taking his first steps toward the 1992 edition of Mido, after the train ride from Turin, and two metro rides one after the other, switching from the green to the red line, Giorgio has only one thing on his mind: finding Carla. He came by himself. The rest of the family stayed home, and will mind the shop. As happened in the past, it's his turn to "bring hay into the barn" for the entire year. This evening he will go to the hotel he booked downtown, in Milan.

Giorgio will be 57 years old in a few months. It's been 16 years since he first met Carla. The "girl" as he's always called her in his mind, is about ten years younger than he is. And she's no longer a girl... He's dying to see her. It's been way too long since he heard her voice, laid his eyes on her, or had a moment to wholeheartedly admire her, like that time... He does not have her cell number; all he knows is that she lives in Rho, became an optician, like him, and works in Milan. "Who knows if I'll be able to see her", he says to himself, as if imploring someone...

He enters the Show through the reception hall, which has black awnings and white banners with rows of 'MIDO' written in small print across them. As usual, the ground floor is occupied by manufacturers of prescription lenses, contact lenses, accessories for contact lenses, prescription lenses and sunglasses, optometry and ophthalmology instruments, equipment and tools for optical workshops. Could she be here? "No", he thinks, "I don't think so..."

"Giorgio!"

And instead...

"Carla!"

Carla is more beautiful than ever, she exudes freshness in a dress that exalts her figure to the max, and her face is radiant. "What are you doing in this Pavilion?", Giorgio asks, to break the awkwardness of the sudden (and much desired) encounter.

"I wanted to see the new equipment on behalf of our optical center. The owner specifically asked me to come here and let him know if there is anything new, and how much it might cost".

"Sure, I understand...but are you done with your rounds and appointments?"

"Yes, I'm done". "Would you like to go see the rest of the expo with me?"

"Sure, I'd love to..."

Giorgio and Carla go up to the second Hall of Pavilion 30; afterwards they plan to visit Hall 3 and then go through Hall 1, 2 and 3 of Pavilion 31; in short, everywhere they can find new frames for prescription eyewear and sunglasses.

"I'd like to see you try on a few of the new styles. They all look good on you".

It truly is what Giorgio thinks, not a joke.

"Come on, don't exaggerate. But I'll do it if you wish".

So, here they are at Francois Pinton's stand. "For the forthcoming season, Pinton offers eyewear designed for women who are dynamic, trendy, and unwilling to forgo elegance", says a young girl from the Parisian fashion house. "These eyeglasses have a classic and elegant style, although some are more daring and creative shape-wise, while others have bold, bright colors, like these. Would you like to try them on Madam?". Carla does not hesitate. "Gorgeous!", Giorgio admiringly exclaims.

They have reached the Safilo stand. The company from Padua this year is launching "Safilo 2000", "an unprecedented idea in the world of sunglasses", says the company catalog. It's "multifunctional eyewear that can be changed to fit the different needs of the wearer". It consists of a light, wrap-style extremely simple top piece connected to a single central lens and two side-lenses that provide a wide and uninterrupted view. The eyeglasses come in two styles, one is squared and bold, while the other has a rounder, softer silhouette.

"Can I try on this pair?", Carla asks a stand attendant.

"Certainly, Madam".

She puts it on. "How do I look Giorgio?"

"Stunning".

Next Giorgio brings Carla to the stand featuring Ralph Lauren products. A hostess is explaining to potential clients that: "Our line of light, metal eyewear, with a sober, refined look, has been joined by a collection of acetate eyewear that features the same simple design, and comes in a wide variety of warm colors, from Havana to honey, chestnut

brown to almost black". "Try these", Giorgio says, taking a pair out of the window display.

"How do I look Giorgio?"

"Stunning".

"Come on, Giorgio..."

"I repeat: stunning!"

The couple is now at Carrera, the Austrian company that makes Christian Dior eyewear. Giorgio is quite familiar with it. "Take a look at this style, it's the New Look 2604 made with Optyl, with a metal embellishment on the front and Christian Dior's monogram. I think they'd look good on you".

Carla knows the game by now, and plays along. She tries them on: "How do they look?"

"Stunning!"

And their fashion-house tour would not be complete without a visit to Robert La Roche. La Roche himself hands Carla a pair of sunglasses with a 1970's look, like those worn by Jackie Kennedy or Audrey Hepburn, for her to try on. "Sunglasses to hide behind but without going unnoticed", the designer says, smiling. Carla puts them on and asks, once again: "How do they look on me?"

"Stunning", Giorgio replies.

Guccio Gucci is at Mido again, with a 1992 spring/summer collection inspired by the 1960's. A tall, elegant young man hands Carla the 2151/S style. It's a bold style, with a narrow, daring silhouette, with a prominently curved front. "These come in a wide and diverse range of colors", the young man explains, "but the white ones are the most striking and contemporary. Please, go ahead Madam, try them on".

Carla puts them on, looks at herself in a mirror, and asks the usual question: "How do you think I look in these eyeglasses?"

"Stunning".

Carla makes a face, as if to say "of course..." but deep down, she's happy to hear it.

"And now I'd like to take you to Laura Biagiotti". A big poster advertises the P 42/s style, "an unmistakable Biagiotti style with a large, squared shape, straight top piece, large metal trim, and colors with a mother-of-pearl effect".

Carla looks at Giorgio: "Did you want me to try on those too?"

"If you had, they would have looked..."

“Stunning!”, Carla whispers, locking eyes with her friend and smiling.

“What should we do now?”, she adds.

“You tell me, whatever you prefer...”.

“I’m a little tired and have another three days to look for eyewear for our optical center. I’d like to go home. If you wish to spend the night at my house, I’d be glad to have you...”.

Giorgio did his duty. This morning, after spending the night in Carla’s arms, he finished a portion of the rounds he planned for his optical shop, and now has a nice stack of orders. He also went back to some of the stands he had visited with Carla, and selected eyewear to display in his shop. Carla did the same thing, following the instructions received beforehand from the owner of the optical shop she works for in Milan. Both also worked hard on Sunday, even amid the afternoon’s commotion, mostly caused by Italians, or rather, by some people from Milan. The Milan soccer team managed to win its 12th championship one day early, and too many toasts drove some people at the bar to taunt their Inter fan “cousins”, visitors and fans of other teams, but especially those of the black and white team...

It’s late afternoon on Monday, 11 May. Giorgio is on the train, on his way back to Turin. He heard people say that the Mayor of Milan and his entire Council stepped down after the political shake-up caused by the so-called bribes scandal. Last February, in Milan, the Prosecutor’s office launched an investigation that quickly earned the nickname “clean hands”. The political system has been rocked like never before... and at the 5-6 April elections, all the major parties lost votes except for Lega Lombarda, which was unexpectedly successful.

# News from Cadore

*Milan, 7-10 May 1993*

At Fiera Milano, the 1993 edition of Mido has conquered yet another space, Pavilion 29, which will host, for the first time, companies in the eyewear frames, sunglasses, eyewear cases and accessories sector. This “extra” space will allow the Show to satisfy the ever-increasing number of requests for participation. Father and son have once again joined forces this year, to scout and “bring home” the latest new entries. They start out in the new Pavilion, where they find manufacturers they have never, or barely heard of before.

They carefully look at the eyewear displays of manufacturers from the United States, Canada, Japan, Hong Kong, and European companies, many French, German, Belgian, and numerous brands from the entire Italian peninsula, including Belluno, a “terrifying” range of offerings, meaning an overwhelmingly impressive, dumbfounding, huge variety of products. Upon concluding their first tour of Pavilion 29, Paolo makes a suggestion: “Dad, how about some lunch?”; it’s a lifeline, and Giorgio immediately answers: “Let’s go, my son. It’s just past noon, and in Piedmont many people’s legs are already under the table!”.

After lunch, having planned the route while eating, and jotted down notes at the bottom of the official catalog, they finish their coffee and resume the tour. “You go there, I’ll go here and then to Pavilion..., and Hall...We’ll meet by the tobacco and newspaper shop in Pavilion 30 at 5 pm, Ok? The Show will close at 6 as usual”, Paolo says. “It’s a deal!”, his father replies.

And it’s true that men are not that good at staying on track... What actually happened? Father and son found themselves at a certain time, at the very same time, with their noses stuck to Lozza’s window displays – Giorgio’s lifelong beloved brand which, over the years, as if by osmosis, has also captured Paolo’s heart. In Hall 1 of Pavilion 31.

“Hey, what are you doing here? Wasn’t this one of my stops?”, his son blurts out, annoyed. “Come on, Paolo, did you really think I could miss out on these?”.

In the ten years since it became part of the Cadore company Charme Lunettes, Lozza has undergone a revival, and is keeping pace with the times: metal made a huge comeback and has won the battle with plastic frames by way of its light weight, high strength, and minimalistic look. Giorgio and Paolo were fascinated by the Old Italy sunglasses collection... Both looked for Argosol and Charme Lunettes, but the two companies no longer exist. Last year they merged and established a new company, currently named Dierre, headquartered in the industrial area known as Zona Industriale Villanova, in Longarone. The same area that flooded thirty years prior when water escaped the Vajont dam, causing many deaths and widespread destruction... “Dierre”, Giorgio explains to Paolo after consulting a Lozza stand assistant, “is the new company of Emiliana and her spouse, Ennio De Rigo”. Father and son know them well; the couple created incredibly successful styles like Police and Sting eyewear in the last few years. And sure enough, there they are, at the Dierre stand: marvelous Police with blue lenses, conceived by the creative mind of Bruno Palmegiani, and the entire line of small Sting eyewear, styles 198, 4050, 4051 and 4052...

Father and son have decided to forgo their written plan to split visits, and are now roaming the exhibition stands together. They meet the newly elected President of Anfao and Mido, Francesco Caporossi, also President of Galileo Industrie Ottiche, who is surrounded by local authorities and a few entrepreneurs from the Veneto Region, as well as many of Giorgio’s old friends. Coming to Mido is still like going to a party.

That evening, in his hotel room in the center of Milan, Giorgio feels a sudden void in his stomach, gripped by nostalgia. He looks at his cell phone, longing to call her.... she too, has a cell phone. But it’s late. “She might be asleep...Get some rest Carla, perhaps our paths will cross tomorrow”.

Mido 1993 is over. Giorgio and Paolo are on their way home. There was no trace of Carla.

The only good thing about not being able to see her, is that once Giorgio is over the momentary disappointment, he can always regain his serenity by getting to the bottom of the strange thing that happened to him. It wasn’t a fling, or mere instinct, but something more real that always brings back to his mind those enigmatic, yet reassuring words she

left him with: “When we experience beauty, we have to accept a path of renewal and growth, trying to find small fragments of it in all aspects of our lives, in things, in people, in what we do. And in the beauty of ordinary, everyday life..., which is not any less real than the dazzling beauty you claim to have seen in me. Don’t live in the past. Move forward, confident in what you have”.

Those were the words he wrote down and committed to memory.

They arrived at their home in Turin. “Maria, we’re back!” Giorgio exclaims, as he enters their house. They hug immediately, warmly and tenderly.

## A little girl with eyeglasses

*Milan, 6-9 May 1994*

Emanuela, who is now 7 years old, has always been especially fond of Grandpa Giorgio. Often, he's the one who takes her to school – she's in first grade – and treats her like a young lady. He is loving, gentle, likes to help her get dressed and choose what to wear, combs her beautiful blonde hair, and often lets her sit on his lap and know how much he truly loves her. Emanuela is creative, and has an artistic soul; that's why he likes her so much. She also has a great voice and loves to sing. For Christmas, Grandpa gave her sheet music for Laura Pausini's songs, which she listens to over and over again. She is also extremely fond of photography, and Grandpa taught her the basic settings for taking a good photo in portrait or panoramic mode.

Emanuela is also adorable; she had her ears pierced to wear earrings, and when you meet her, the first thing you notice are her kind, deep blue eyes. However, for a long while now, the effect of her eyes has been dampened somewhat by her having to wear glasses to correct her hyperopia. Ironically enough for an optician, who should be somewhat accustomed to that kind of thing, and approve of it, Giorgio was totally dismayed when he found out that his granddaughter would have to wear eyeglasses. “And what will happen to those beautiful blue eyes?”, he asked himself for days. In the end, he got over it, and showed his professional mettle by choosing a beautiful pair of large, gold metal-framed eyeglasses for his granddaughter. They made her face look really cute.

Emanuela loves to spend hours and hours at her grandparents' optical shop, where her father and mother also work. She identifies with Grandma Maria, and stays by her side when customers come in, but above all she attentively observes her father, mother or even more her Grandpa, whenever she sees them take measurements of people's eyes, trying to find the right lenses for them. When it comes to frames, Grandma Maria is the one who does the most. She has good taste, and gained a lot of experience working side-by-side with her husband at their optical center.

“Grandpa, will you take me to Mido?”.



"Of course, I'll take you to Mido. We'll leave this Sunday".

"Grandpa!", she squealed, and ran to hug him, with that gap-baring smile of hers (her front baby teeth are gone).

When Giorgio enters the Mido reception area with his granddaughter – only the two of them came to the expo this time, as Paolo and Cristina had to attend the wedding of a couple of friends – his first impression is the same as always: it's a window onto the world. It's always been that way for Giorgio, every single time he comes here (although he should be used to it, or at least expect it by now...), and he can only imagine how the little girl might feel looking at it, now that she can actually understand it for the first time. The very first time they brought her, she was too young to remember anything about it.

In the last few years many companies have started making eyewear for children, and Emanuela is trying on all sorts of styles, with the help of her experienced grandfather, who knows a lot of people. Emanuela never seems to get tired of trying on, taking off and putting back on women's eyeglasses and sunglasses.

"How do I look Grandpa?"

"Stunning".

"And with these?"

"Stunning".

"But Grandpa...do all of them truly look good on me?"

"Of course, all of them look good on that little face of yours".

Then, for a moment, Giorgio's heart sinks: the scene with him and Carla trying on eyeglasses flashed across his mind. And he's deeply moved.

"Come here Emanuela, let me give you a hug and a kiss..."

"Yes, Grandpa..."

"Today I want to bring you to see the Safilo stand, you know that name, you have seen many of their eyeglasses in our store. Just think, the company celebrates its 60th anniversary this year".

"Sixty years? That's nearly your age, Grandpa..."

"Exactly, good thinking Emanuela. It's a company that wrote the history of eyewear... And then I want to take you to the Persol stand. That company is from Turin, and very famous worldwide. A few years ago, they decided to boost their visibility with advertising campaigns that feature brand ambassadors; that's what they call famous people in show

business and sports stars who talk about their eyewear and let themselves be seen wearing it. Four years ago, they brought in an actress, Ornella Muti...”.

“I don’t know her, Grandpa...”.

“Well, darling, she’s a beautiful lady. They made a style just for her, and they did the same thing for another actress by the name of Carol Alt...”.

“I don’t know her, Grandpa...”.

“I understand. Well, she is a very beautiful lady... And they made sunglasses for her too; they even bear her name, Carol, and a number, Persol 853. And they also made sunglasses for a famous skier, Alberto Tomba...”.

“Oh, yes, I know him, he always wins ski races”.

“Just think darling, when Tomba came to Mido, it seemed like all the visitors were swarming around Persol’s stand. I know that Persol’s managers for a moment truly feared that the stand might collapse because of all the people crowding it, trying to get Tomba’s autograph. Then again, a few months before that he had won the silver medal in slalom at the Winter Olympics in Norway, and in those days his fame truly skyrocketed. Anyway... Look, Emanuela, we’re really close to the Persol stand and I see someone I know down there... His name is Giorgio Basso; he’s the Sales and Marketing Manager of the company. Come on, let’s go chat with him for a while, and perhaps he’ll give us a few more details about the time that Tomba and Carol Alt came to Mido...”.

Giorgio and his granddaughter – holding the super-heavy official catalog, which also came with a floppy disk for pc – spend the entire day at Mido. In the afternoon, Giorgio chooses to visit the stand of an American company he had heard much about, which is exhibiting at Mido for the first time this year. It’s called Marchon International, and it’s headquartered in Melville, USA. “These eyeglasses are beautiful Grandpa, they are American! Perhaps I can try them on...”. “Let’s ask, but I’m sure they’ll say yes!”.

Lastly, Grandpa takes his granddaughter to see the Fedon stand, which makes eyewear, but first and foremost, has always made eyewear cases. “Grandpa...look at all these cases, they are fantastic!”.

“Would you like to have one?”. Grandpa did not say that; it’s a distinguished-looking man who has noticed and approached Giorgio and his

granddaughter. He introduces himself: "My name is Callisto Fedon, and I'm a descendant of the company's founder, whose name was Giorgio..."

Giorgio looks at him... It only takes a moment for him to realize that standing before him is a man whose family has written more than a few pages in the extraordinary history of eyewear. It has been 75 years since Callisto Fedon's grandfather began producing eyeglass cases in a small workshop in Vallesella, in Cadore...

"That's right... Mr. President, I am so sorry, I did not recognize you. I had heard about your taking over as President of Anfao and Mido. Congratulations. I am truly happy for you. I am an optician, also named Giorgio...and I'm from Turin".

"Thank you, Mr. Giorgio, but...I'd like to tell your granddaughter something: choose a case; you keep it, but only if you have a pair of eyeglasses..."

"Yes, I have them, here", Emanuela says showing him the eyeglasses she had taken off and temporarily put in her purse.

"Well, now you surely have a safer place to store them".

It's late afternoon; time to go home. Giorgio was unable to attend a conference he was very interested in, dedicated to Certottica, an optical products certification institution of particular importance to Anfao, of which the trade association is a majority shareholder. Oh well, so be it. Giorgio will get the details some other way... His granddaughter comes first.

Giorgio and Emanuela are in the car. Her grandfather just bought a nice Fiat utility vehicle, a Punto, the heir of the extremely popular Uno. "I've seen so many foreign people...and so many people that make eyeglasses!", the little girl exclaims at one point.

"I'm going to tell you two numbers to help you understand what we saw today: there were 907 exhibitors at Mido. Do you understand? Almost one thousand! And more than 30,000 people came to see the Show today, people from all countries, and every language on earth. And you were one of them".

Emanuela smiles, gratified.

And then she lies down...and falls asleep in the back seat.

## Shocking news

*Milan, 28 April-1 May 1995*

Have you heard the news about Persol?”.

“No, Cristina... What did they say?”.

“Some people I met near the Persol stand told me that it’s official now: Luxottica bought out the company”.

Giorgio is shocked by the news. He’s not far from the stand of the company from Turin, the only one outside of Cadore in the pioneering era of the Italian eyewear industry, together with Lozza, Safilo, and a few others who are still in business; he has to confirm if it’s true. He runs to the Persol stand, in aisle F of Hall 2 in Pavilion 30. The stand basically looks the same as it did last year, and the way people are acting does not indicate that there has been any sort of upheaval. But the truth comes out as soon as Giorgio starts talking with his friends Guido Balocco and Giorgio Basso. “It’s true”, Guido says, “my minority shareholding partner and I sold our shares to Del Vecchio. We knew it was the right time for us to make that kind of move, and having Persol become part of a giant like Luxottica could do nothing but benefit the brand. Do you understand, Giorgio?”.

“Yes, I sure do...Oh well. All I can do is wish you good luck. Let’s hope it works out. Your brand is legendary”.

Giorgio is back at the bar, where he had told Cristina and Paolo to wait for him: “I received confirmation from reliable sources”, he says, building the suspense. It’s business as usual at the stand here at Mido, but they told me the transaction occurred about a month ago. It’s a done deal. Luxottica has published in Mido’s official catalog a list indicating the incredible number of brands “gobbled-up” by the multinational from Agordo: Giorgio Armani eyewear, Emporio Armani eyewear, Yves Saint Laurent, Sergio Tacchini, Giugiaro eyewear, Florence Vogue, Valentino Les Lunettes, Genny, Byblos, Sferoflex, Brooks Brothers Eyewear, Mirari, Avant-Garde, BerDel, Oliver, Web, Briko. And from now on, the iconic brand of Persol will also be on that list.

And next to this list of prestigious brands, there is that of seventeen

subsidiaries and three production facilities, including the main headquarters in Agordo.

So, Cadore is in great shape. This is also shown by all of the new products Safilo spawned for 1995 with its brands, ranging from Ferrè to T-Force, Daytona, Blue Bay, up to Polo Ralph Lauren. And also demonstrated by De Rigo, who is fast gaining ground with its new, truly fascinating, but most of all high-tech collections. The "fleet of brands" of Ennio De Rigo and his family, with a new factory in Longarone, now in fact includes innovative heavy hitters like Charme, Fendi, Vogart, Police, Rolling and Lozza in addition to De Rigo's direct distribution network, which encompasses Austria, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain and the UK.

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the Show in Milan. Once again Callisto Fedon serves as President of the new edition. It addresses a major concern: the growing problem of counterfeiting. Mido's answer is an anti-counterfeiting service. The Show is among the very first to ever offer this type of service.

After her first tour of the stands, Cristina stops at the bar for some coffee. She's by herself, as her husband and father-in-law are doing their own rounds. She opens and starts reading the copy of *Vedere International* she brought with her:

*Mido celebrates its 25th anniversary. During that time period, the industry that gave it life transformed itself from a handful of family-owned, artisanal businesses into a strong, autonomous industry, without losing any of the characteristics that made it and still make it unique. Huge factories and advanced technologies did not affect the nature of the product, which continues to be unique, exclusive, hand-crafted or "fait main", as the French would say. The quality certainly has improved, and the iconic fashion designers brought a wave of innovation, but what has changed the most is the relationship between manufacturers and products, which remains direct, if not downright "affectionate", I might say. Eyewear is made in a different way than other things, like a chair for example: eyewear becomes part of the wearer's own face. But the world of eyewear did not change solely for eyewear manufacturers; its evolution also affected its distribution channels (where most operate directly through subsidiaries and exclusive representatives), the way eyewear is launched, offered at points of sale, and advertised. The media have come to play a greater role, and the importance of the designers' role has gained the recognition it deserves...*

Her husband has joined her at the bar: "It's a good thing that we

never miss a Mido event, not only in terms of buying products, but also to know what is happening in our industry”.

Paolo nods. And thinks: “She’s truly become one of us, and loves this industry as much as we do”.

“You’ve heard the news, right? About Persol being sold to Luxottica?”.

“Yes, Dad told me. Look, I believe that the emergence of giants like Luxottica or large companies like the De Rigo Group or Safilo is a typical driving factor of mature industrial markets and advanced technologies. And let’s not forget about the implementation of distribution logistics, and business strategies that were foreign to the eyewear industry until a few years ago.

“So, I think the trend is clear, Paolo: the market is bound to be dominated by a few, large companies capable of producing massive quantities of high-quality eyewear, and a group of strong and dynamic smaller companies who are able to fulfill demand in a large number of niche markets. So, basically, large and small companies will coexist and share an increasingly international identity”. And then she adds: “Do you know what your father is up to?”.

“Frankly, no. I lost him. Let me try to get a hold of him on his cell. Hang on ...how weird ...it says it’s disconnected. All right. Let’s go visit a few more stands, he’s bound to call us sooner or later”.

# Brands galore

*Milan, 3-6 May 1996*

“But Dad where did you end up last year when we kept calling your cell phone to no avail? At first, we didn’t worry, but ultimately you really gave us a big scare. Please, don’t put us through that this year! Let us know where you’re going”.

Giorgio had left the expo to visit Carla at her optical shop. Or rather, the optical shop she works at. He wanted to see her, he had to. He wanted to see her in action, doing his own job, the way she so carefully and tactfully deals with people... If he could only visit her shop as a customer, be greeted by her and have her help him find the right frames...

Just spending half an hour with her brought serenity back into his heart. And learning from her how to treat his own customers...

Carla works in a stunning optical shop, at the very center of Milan. It took only a few minutes to reach it by metro. He did not realize that his cell phone battery was dead, and did not worry about it. When he got back to the Show, his family members were as white-faced as corpses. Out of respect, they did not berate him... but today Paolo made sure to remind him of the “stunt” he pulled last year!

This time, the entire family is at Mido 1996. Even Maria, who usually stays at home and minds the shop. Giorgio is happy about it... giddy! He is not in the least embarrassed at the thought – which already occurred to him – of encountering Carla’s beauty, his ray of sunshine, every time he comes to Mido! “Far from being a betrayal”, he finds himself thinking...

And so, the entire happy family, sixty-year-old Giorgio, the slightly younger Maria, forty-something Paolo and Cristina, and nine-year-old Emanuela are now roaming the stands at Mido. This year Paolo Cannicci is President of Mido, while the President of Anfao is Leonardo Del Vecchio.

The official Show catalog has an intimidating number of pages, and this year the organizers added another thing: a supplement listing all the brands of frames and eyewear, which often differ from the name of the company that makes them. Paolo is thumbing through it, enthralled,

while the other members of his family try to come to terms with the new nomenclature of the pavilions occupied by the expo, which have not changed from prior years, but now bear different numbers. Pavilion 30 has become number 4, 35 is number 1, 33 is 2, 31 is 3, 29 is Pavilion 5, and 31 number 3. Disorientation also fuels their adrenaline...

Paolo is entertained by the list of brands. Everything and everyone is here, familiar brands, little-known and unknown brands.

"Listen, Cristina, there's something for every taste, from Aston Martin to Belushi, Benetton Formula 1, Brigitte Bardot, Catherine Deneuve, Chagall, Christie's..." Paolo flips the pages and stops when he finds particularly striking names on the long alphabetical list of attendees...

"Look, there's Ciao, Converse, Cote D'Azur, Cotton Club, Da Vinci, Diablo... oh, even the iconic Dolce & Gabbana finally got into eyewear, and, let me see... Disney eyewear, Elton John (you know he's famous for bringing his entire eyewear collection with him to his concerts)..."

"Wow, Cristina listen to this: Far West, Fellini, Femina, Flintstones... Emanuela, there's even the Flintstones brand! And Garfield... And then, there's... Harley Davidson, Jaguar, Lamborghini, Maserati... Look at this, there's even eyewear brands named Hollywood, IceCream, Ipanema, John Lennon Collection, Louvre, Marc O' Polo, ha ha ha... Monet, Mortadelo Y Filemon, hmmm..."

"Paolo don't be silly..."

"And there's even Mozart..., Naj-Oleari, Nazareno Gabrielli, Pepsi... oh-oh... even Playboy... And then... Emanueeeela, there's Snoopy eyeglasses! Oh my, we have to see them... right?"

"Yes, Daddy, let's go..."

"They are made by the American company Marine Optical, which has stand 17 in Pavilion 2. Let's go, let's go see..."

After spending the entire day looking at collections and buying eyewear, with only a brief stop at the bar, all five of them find themselves at the Porta VI Febbraio main exit, completely exhausted. Coming to Mido sometimes feels like you're climbing a mountain. This year there are 887 exhibitors, and 35,000 registered visitors, around 15,000 of whom from foreign countries. What a smash hit!

"The big ones keep getting bigger", Giorgio says to his family members. Emanuela is leaning against her father as if he were an upright bed: "Luxottica can gloat over Persol, and has added Moschino to its long list of brands, but Safilo, Marcolin and De Rigo aren't



pulling any punches either... And then there's all the rest; small and small-medium companies, but very dynamic. But Italians, like us, are still the main driving force". And yes, the Italians... strong people, although nearly always on unstable ground. Giorgio recalls that Mido events have quite often coincided with a government crisis. This year Dini's government dissolved, and the elections were just held on 21 April. In 1994 Ciampi's government dissolved, and the elections took place on 27-28 March. Government dissolutions in the early months of 1988, 1987... Mido has been held many times without a central government in charge. But the industry still keeps going.. Driven by its own people's will to strive, and thrive.

Then Giorgio looks at each member of his family, all dead tired and ready to go home, and thinks: "Here is my daily source of beauty... but Carla, I looked for you among so many faces, so many blonde heads, feminine silhouettes, and did not see you... I miss you...".

## A global crossroads

*Milan, 9-12 May 1997*

Giorgio had hoped it would happen, he likes new things: the eyewear expo needed additional space, and there had long been talk of transferring it to the ex-Alfa Romeo factory in the Portello district, but ultimately, with time running out, Mido organizers had to resort to hosting the Show at the old fairgrounds. Hence Giorgio once again enters the historic “temple” of eyewear from the beloved entrance of Porta VI Febbraio. Deep down, Giorgio was not overly fond of the idea of relocating the Show: he has spent many memorable and delightful days within these walls, and here is where he met Carla...

“Giorgio! Turn around....”.

“It’s her!”, he thinks for a split second, and turns: “Carla!”. She’s as beautiful as ever, a stunning 50-year-old woman, seemingly immune to the effects of aging. Her elegant outfit does not seem like something a visitor would wear.

“The Press Office was looking for an experienced hostess, so I applied. People at the optical store said it would be ok, so here I am. You know, in a few minutes there’s the kickoff press conference with the current President of Anfao, Del Vecchio, and the President of Mido, Paolo Cannicci, from Sover. Would you like to come with me? Even though you’re not a reporter, I can surely bring you in; you might find it interesting”.

“Of course, I’d like to, I’ve snuck into the press conference several times before. I want to know how things are going... But, listen... oh well, let’s go to the press conference first, and then perhaps we’ll have time to talk. I’m here at Mido by myself. The rest of the family stayed home. I’ll be here until tomorrow...”.

“1996 was a year of consolidation of last year’s brilliant performance results; truly exceptional results that allowed manufacturers to build enough inventory to completely fill up their warehouses, and deplete it all”, Del Vecchio says at the press conference, getting right to the heart of the industry’s economic situation. “Last year’s consolidation

was accompanied by a few signs of growth.... The industry did grow. And the trend for this year shows remarkable recovery in consumption”.

Giorgio gets closer to Carla and whispers in her ear: “Will this be another record-breaking year for Mido?”.

“Just wait, as soon as he’s done, I’ll go get the participation and attendance figures”. I took a peek, and they look great”.

Carla is very professional, and confidently walks into the conference room. Her figure is noticed with blatant admiration by the men. Giorgio doesn’t even begin to feel jealous; his friend is indisputably stunning. And besides, she’s “his” friend...

The press conference comes to an end. Everyone is gathered around the two Presidents of Anfao and Mido. Carla is free to go; other female colleagues are near the presidents, introducing them to the reporters waiting to interview them.

“Look at the data, Giorgio: this year there are 906 exhibitors, 2.15% more than last year. There are 464 Italian exhibitors and 442 foreign companies. So, the numbers of Italian and foreign exhibitors are just about even, which shows that Mido truly is an international expo, and that the high concentration of manufacturers in Italy in itself attracts visitors, thereby also ensuring the internationality of the event. Do you follow?”. “Yes, of course I do...”

“With regard to registered visitors, dear Giorgio”, Carla adds, putting one hand on her friend’s shoulders and pushing back a lock of hair, while holding in her other hand the sheet with the data she’s about to read, “nearly 37,000 are expected to be here, which is a 5.16% increase. There is supposed to be a much greater number of European visitors, from Germany in particular, but also from the Americas, especially from the United States, Brazil, Argentina, and Canada. There will also be a greater number of visitors from Asia, especially from China and India, as well as from Lebanon, where war was still raging not too long ago. There will also be a small number of people from Africa. We expect two visitors from Albania; as you know, that country is in shambles, and on the brink of civil war. It means a lot to us in terms of the will to fight, continue to work, and survive. The figures for Eastern Europe are topsy-turvy: there is a decrease in visitors from Belarus, Bosnia, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Georgia, Lithuania, Poland, Serbia-Montenegro, Slovakia, and Hungary, but we expect more visitors from Croatia, Latvia, Russia, Slovenia and the Ukraine. The numbers

for Romania stayed the same, and for Macedonia increased. What do you think? You get the picture, right?”.

“You’re fantastic!”.

Carla has some time to roam around, so she is accompanying Giorgio on the customary general tour for his optical center.

“Right now,” Carla says, slipping her hand in the crook of his arm, “we are in the midst of a conflict between the industry’s giants. The competition between big companies has increasingly focused on big brands. Valentino and Luxottica parted ways. And Safilo finalized an agreement with the designer for the Valentino and Oliver eyewear lines, immediately after signing an agreement with Max Mara for the eponymous collection of prescription eyewear and sunglasses. Today Safilo, with Vittorio Tabacchi as its President, has twenty brands in its fleet: Polo Ralph Lauren, Ferrè, Gucci, Diesel, Burberry, Smith, Terri Brogan, Biagiotti, Back-to-Basic, Dior, Valentino, Oliver, Oxydo, Max Mara, Viennaline, Sunjet, BlueBay, T-Force, Pierre Cardin, and Carrera! High-fashion brands are obviously beneficial; just think about the Armani hype, or the 30% increase in sales Marcolin achieved by its agreement with Dolce & Gabbana, or the positive impact Versace had on Italocremona’s results”.

“So, what will happen to the small manufacturers?”, Giorgio asks.

“The experts say there’s room for them, too, and I’m sure there is, because our optical center is satisfied with the products made by many of these ‘small’ manufacturers. They have good arrows in their quivers: their designers. All of the innovations, even in technology, ergonomics and aesthetics are generated by the work of designers.

“So, you’re telling me that the driving force of the entire industry consists of stylists, designers, and obviously tenacious entrepreneurs, especially in small and medium-sized companies?”.

“Yes, exactly”.

“Do you realize how wonderful you are? You can slide into any role with impressive ease. Where do you find that kind of strength?”.

“Look at me...”.

Giorgio locks eyes with her, then closes and covers his eyes with his hands: “Okay, I understand. It’s you. It’s what you are... May I caress your cheek?”.

# Grief and jubilation

*Milan, 8-11 May 1998*

Mixed feelings of grief and jubilation pervade the hearts of Giorgio and his son Paolo as they travel toward Milan once again this year, to attend the inauguration of the 29th edition of Mido. They grieve over the news they heard on the radio about the floods and landslides that hit the municipalities of Sarno and Quindici a few days ago, as well as other cities across the area between the provinces of Salerno, Avellino and Caserta. After 250 hours of relentless rain, on 5 and 6 May a hellish deluge of water and landslides resulted in the death of about 160 people.

Giorgio, at the wheel, with Paolo next to him, is utterly dismayed, and almost feels like taking the next exit off the expressway, turning around, and going back home. But... he's on his way to the merriest annual event for opticians like him, the epitome of possibilities, innovations, beauty, craftsmanship and of the industry that also knows how to be artisanal: Mido, the place where fashion reaches the eyes.

Ultimately, he does not turn around. "Dad, I understand, but we are going because we have a job to do, and have to do it well". "Paolo is right", Giorgio thinks to himself, "He's wise. That's what Carla would say". Right... Carla. Will she still be working for the Press Office?

What appears before their eyes as they cross the threshold of Porta Scarampo is utterly new. Mido this year has finally managed to move into the new exhibition space within the ex-Alfa Romeo factory in Portello; a moment all industry professionals had eagerly awaited. There are three pavilions, numbers 14, 15 and 16; a total of six halls on the ground and first floor host the exhibitors and company representatives' stands, which have been broken down by merchandise type: frames and sunglasses in one area, machines in another, and so on. Once again, the world gathers at Mido; there are over 1,000 exhibitors from 28 different countries. This year the Show features a *Mido Trend* area in Pavilion 14, which gathers 34 companies that bet everything on design and avant-garde trends. "We'll go later", Giorgio says. He's chomping at the bit, dying to stick his head in to the Press Office and see if she's there...

“Paolo, I’m going to stop by the Press Office for a moment. Perhaps I’ll get invited to the kickoff press conference like I did last year”.

“Go ahead; I really want to see *Mido Trend* first. I’ll tell you all about it later, and we brought our cell phones, so we can talk if need be”.

“All right, that works”.

Giorgio had a hard time finding the Press Office, but when he finally approaches it, he spots the beloved figure he had been searching for. Now he strategically positions himself along her path, and waits to surprise her. The ambush fails when he loses sight of her, and suddenly hears her voice behind him: “Giorgio...”.

Giorgio understood, but makes believe he hadn’t heard her, and steps back until he bumps into her: “Well, excuse me...”. When he turns around, he finds that their faces are extremely close to each other. Giorgio’s heart is racing, as if he were 20 years old....

Carla, just like last year, took him to the press conference. This year Paolo Cannicci is still President of Mido, but Anfao has a new President, Paolo Baiocchi, from Intercast Europe, a company that makes optical filters for sunglasses and sports eyewear. Baiocchi does not try to conceal the rather precarious situation of the eyewear industry. Standing in front of the press, he speaks about a phase of sluggish growth, induced by the financial crisis affecting the Far East and their currencies, and from an internal affairs standpoint, by the uncertain standards and fiscal pressure which, in his opinion, have hindered the companies’ production capacity. “The Italian eyewear industry’s growth trend”, he says, “seems slower than in the last five years”. “The key to facing a continuously evolving, increasingly competitive market”, he adds, lies with finding new business dynamics, and establishing joint ventures with foreign companies to vertically integrate competencies, and entice new investments by eliminating the respective organizational gaps”.

Carla gets closer to Giorgio: “Tonight the inaugural gala is taking place at the Ragno D’Oro hotel; Renzo Arbore and his band will be performing. Would you like to come with me?”.

Clearly, he could not decline that sort of invitation. He calls Paolo: “A friend invited me to the Mido gala. I’d like to go. It’s bound to be a late night for me”.

"I just got invited to celebrate the inauguration of Hoya Lens Italia's new headquarters at the Grand Hotel Ramada in Milan. Katia Ricciarelli and Ivana Spagna will be there. I want to go. Let's split up. Besides, we booked separate rooms this time, so we won't disturb each other".

"Perfect. I'll see you in the morning".

Giorgio made sure to be on time for his appointment with Carla. He didn't know any better, so he dressed like a typical Mido visitor. On the contrary, Carla wore an amazing short dress that looked absolutely great on her.

"Sorry, I didn't think to dress up".

"Don't worry about it; tonight is all about having fun, singing and dancing. That's why I'm wearing low-heeled shoes".

And sure enough, Arbore mesmerizes everyone by putting a pop, folk, world and country music spin on Neapolitan songs... what a blast! The audience sings, dances, and so do Carla and Giorgio, together with everyone else. Around midnight, seated at a table, Carla admits that she's tired.

"Giorgio, where's your hotel?"

"Not far from here. I'll call a cab".

"Giorgio, don't bother, come and sleep at my house, in Rho".

The evening with Arbore was great; Giorgio finally feels as if he can breathe freely, especially now that he can stay with Carla. When they arrive at her house, Carla quickly jumps in the shower, while Giorgio awaits his turn. He's embarrassed not to have a change of clothing, but within, he's utterly delighted. Once she gets out of the shower, wrapped in a large towel, she gets close to him and Giorgio's thoughts for an instant go back to that May evening of eighteen years ago, when she suddenly stood naked in front of him, letting his eyes feast on all of her graceful beauty.

Giorgio closes his eyes, and when he reopens them, he sees her as he did back then, naked in front of him. Time has passed for her too, and left its mark, but Giorgio is just as breathless. And then his mouth utters the same words he had said back then: "Oh my God, Carla... How can I deserve to see you like this, now? Who graced me with this immeasurable gift?"

# The last show of the millennium

*Milan, May 7-10 1999*

The electric guitar pounds out a rock song: “Every time I feel the rain / I don’t know why / I’ll never get the pain / You make me feel loved / you make me feel all loved...”. The words and music of “You make me feel loved” replay in Giorgio’s mind as he recalls Zucchero’s performance last night at the Mido inaugural party at the Castello Sforzesco in Milan. And he can’t get them out of his head.

Keeping the beat (feeling a little foolish) as he walks amid the stands, he also recalls the poignant blues rhythm of “Blu”: “Still lost in you / I walk the streets / where, I do not know, babe / I feel you, my love / Already, I feel the stirring/ of a blue night/ there’s a feeling in the air/ that rises up/ I remember/ we’re kids/ we’re always ourselves up there...”. Thinking of her...

It’s the morning of May 9. Giorgio wanders, amazed, through the halls of Mido. Never before has he seen such an immense – or, at least, that’s how it seems to him – edition of the Show, because the new Portello fair district looks huge. Indeed, this year’s Mido, the last edition of the millennium, spreads out over five halls, two more than last year – pavilions 13, 14, 15, 16 and 19 – and three of these also include the first floor, based on the arrangement of exhibitors by product type. Although in his 60s, Giorgio has never lost the ability to be amazed... To tell the truth: staying out late last night has left him slightly dazed. He spent the entire evening at the inaugural party, hosted by showgirl, Afef, alongside Carla, who had invited him. Among the 1,500 seats available, she managed to find a ticket for him...

On a “mission” to Mido for his optical shop in Turin, and alone, once again, Giorgio walks around the stands. As usual, he mapped out his own itinerary of stand visits, consulting the official Show catalog – thicker and heavier than ever and, for the first time, with a CD included, instead of the floppy disk in previous catalogs. While looking around, he thinks back to the advice Carla gave him last evening: “In the past, I’ve seen long lines of visitors at the stands that had the biggest collections and a lot of gadgets to give away. The small and medium-sized



manufacturers don't hand out gifts, but their style, technology and technical expertise *are* the gifts. In our optical shop, alongside the signature eyewear and collections by the major manufacturers, we also offer products from the lesser-known manufacturers. Our investment has been repaid through increased sales and greater loyalty, because customers know they can find more variety in our shop".

Carla invited Giorgio to attend the traditional Mido opening press conference on Friday – something she has done as long as she has been a staff member in the Press Office. She knows he is keen to attend...

In addressing the press, Mido President Paolo Cannicci stated that "Mido '99 has achieved one of its key aims: with 43,000 m2 of net surface area, it has become the elite platform from which to launch the new year-2000 sun and optical collections, with a record-setting 140,000 unique styles that will be showcased before an audience of international buyers and opticians. This year, there is a significant increase in the number of overseas visitors and, for the first time in 29 editions of the Show, the non-Italian exhibitors outnumber the ones from Italy. Overall, there are 1,085 exhibitors at Mido 1999, from 34 countries (10% more than last year). Equally exciting, this year we will also have more overseas visitors, with a share that for the last ten years has hovered around a 7% increase for each edition. In all, we expect around 37,700 visitors from about 130 countries".

Curiosity inexorably draws Giorgio toward Mido Tech, full of innovative machines for the production of lenses and eyewear, and this also leads to a return visit to the Mido Trend space. Then he makes the rounds of the major manufacturers. Luxottica has already closed out the century with a show of fireworks, having acquired Ray-Ban and signed a license agreement with Chanel! It also featured the Vogue collection of eyewear, and the endorsement by Alessia Marcuzzi, whose popularity skyrocketed after her nude 1998 Max magazine calendar appearance. But it also played the sports card, re-launching the Persol 2542S series with the face of Alessandro Del Piero (and the glasses with the timeless arrow on the temples). Not to be outdone, Marcolin hit back by going public and putting the pedal to the metal with its in-house Fantasy, Kids, Village and Turn & Flex brands and with its third-party brands – from Chloé to Dolce & Gabbana, Fendissime to Replay Eyes. De Rigo also "shook up the standings" by acquiring British "Dollond & Aitchison", the world's oldest optical chain, and

fueling the Police brand's visibility with a phenomenal ambassador: Bruce Willis.

But Giorgio did not forget Carla's advice: "Patronize the industry 'giants', but don't forget the medium and small-sized businesses... your clients will be happier!". After nearly 30 years attending Mido, he already knows many of them... He stopped by Ioves of Lozzo di Cadore; lingered at Robert La Roche; met the owners of Gravedona-based Salice; Alberto Vitaloni of Turin-based Nico; and, talented long-time friends and business owners like Valter Da Rin, Gianni Vetrini, Mario Postizzi, Cesare Massaccesi ... so many memories... At times, Giorgio feels the nostalgia (of people of a certain age) for the good times well-lived...

"Well, maybe it's time to go home. I've done my duty. Last night I hung out with the embodiment of beauty... Now, I can go home happy. To my family", he mused as he walked to the parking lot to get the car.

# STARTING OVER IN 2000

## Thirty

*Milan, 5-8 May 2000*

Giorgio and his thirteen-year-old granddaughter enter the Portello area of the fairgrounds through the Carlo Magno gate. With the official catalog and the brand catalog in hand – there's a big 30 printed on the cover in tribute to "Mido's 30-year anniversary – 1970-2000" and the same photo from the 1999 edition portraying a girl gazing into the distance. This is the third year in a row that the international eyewear show has been held here.

Emanuela is pleased to spend time with her grandfather; he treats her like a grown-up. Which is why she responded to his invitation to join him on his visit to Mido with an enthusiastic 'Yes!'. They're going to spend the day there, but not stay overnight.

The Carlo Magno gate opens directly into Pavilion 19, one of the five halls that make up the 45,000 m<sup>2</sup> exhibition area. Inside are located a thousand businesses and/or their representatives including eyewear manufacturers and retailers and manufacturers of the machines required to make the finished product. Pavilion 19 is dedicated to machinery, small parts and raw materials. Emanuela has stopped in front of a machine that cuts lenses, one of many machines displayed by the German company, Haug. From the largest machines down to the smallest components – Emanuela stops again, at the Visottica Industrie stand, enchanted by the many tiny parts that go into making eyewear. "It's a well-known company from Susegana, in the province of Treviso", explains Giorgio, "and it is run by Rinaldo Montalban, the son of its founder".

"Wonderful", says Emanuela, "but now can we go see the eyewear frames and sunglasses?". Emanuela wears glasses to correct her hyperopia, but now she has become a bit myopic and would like a new pair of glasses....

"Yes, of course; there are five whole exhibit areas dedicated to eyewear. Let's go. We'll walk through Mido Trend, with the latest fash-

ion ideas, and then continue on to Pavilions 14, 15 and 16. Believe me, you will see so many things that, by the end, you'll be worn out..."

"Oh, no, grandfather, I won't get tired. You might get tired following me around... Listen to what the President of Mido, Cirillo Marcolin, said in his opening remarks... what a strange name; do you know him?"

"Yes, he's an exemplary human being. He's the Ceo of Marcolin, which I'm sure you've heard of. If I see him, I'll introduce you".

"All right, now, listen to what he said: 'The 2000 edition will be an exclusive preview showcasing all of the latest trends through an eminently appealing aesthetic and design itinerary that defines the new Fall-Winter 2001 collections'. I have to see them!!!"

Emanuela has artistic sensibilities: in addition to singing well, she can also paint and is interested in everything that has to do with style, design and fashion. As a child, she loved to design clothes for imaginary fashion models...

Giorgio was right. Half-way through the afternoon, Emanuela was already fairly tired, despite the stop they made for a snack and something to drink. They have already visited 15 – yes, 15 – companies and she has scrutinized and tried on myriad frames. The many digital information kiosks located throughout the pavilions were a big timesaver, quickly indicating the most direct route to the stands they were seeking. "You win, Grandfather. I'm worn out. Can we get an ice cream?"

"Approved. Let's find a cafe".

At the cafe on the ground floor of Pavilion 14, they see a tall, sophisticated-looking man approaching. It's Mr. Marcolin. He is smiling as he notices Giorgio, who immediately steps forward: "Hi, I'm Giorgio. I'm an optician in Turin. I wanted to introduce you to my granddaughter Emanuela... I think she's considering becoming an optician, too".

"That's wonderful; pleased to meet you, Emanuela..."

Giorgio interrupts, asking, "Is being the President of Mido a difficult job?"

"Look, Giorgio, Mido's strategy has always been bold and defined through concerted efforts, although inspired by the ideas of the various presidents who follow in one another's footsteps. If you want to know what I set out to do; I think Mido must reflect the same fashion and de-

sign elements that characterize today's eyewear production. Then, the exhibition must continue to raise the bar as a tangible place of business for exhibitors and trade professionals, where the quality of supply and demand are the true magnet for everyone in the industry..."

"After all, President Marcolin, if it were any different, I wouldn't be back here for the 30th year (except for a few absences that I can count on one hand) to explore the stands and even bring my granddaughter with me!"

"So true. Enjoy Mido, Giorgio and Emanuela".

Giorgio had decided to devote himself entirely to his granddaughter today and did not try to contact Carla. He wanted Emanuela to be able to remember this as a special occasion she enjoyed with her grandfather. Which also explains why he only placed a few purchase orders. He'll finish placing his orders by phone, once he gets back to Turin.

On the return drive, Emanuela fell asleep in the car. A phone call came in on Giorgio's brand-new Nokia 3310. The mellifluous, but clearly tired, voice of a woman said: "Giorgio, it's me..."

"Carla... I'm driving.. I'm on my way home".

"I thought I would see you at Mido..."

"No, I'm already on the expressway. My granddaughter is with me and I need to be at home this evening. I'll call you back as soon as I've dropped Emanuela off at her house".

"Thanks, Giorgio, I need to talk to you".

Later, after having wished his granddaughter goodnight with a big hug, Giorgio calls Carla back: "It's me. I'm back in Turin. Your voice sounded sad earlier... what happened?"

"Giorgio... I found out I have a tumor. A quite aggressive form of breast cancer".

## Three terrible years

*Turin-Milan, May 2003*

The unthinkable has occurred. All hopes for growth, peaceful co-existence and economic recovery seem to have been swept away in the first years of the 2000s. Here are the milestones on a journey that shattered those illusions, even in Italy: Islamic terrorism struck America on September 11, 2001, with the destruction of the Twin Towers in New York and the attack on the Pentagon in Washington, DC. The entire Western world has been weakened and is now more vulnerable to attack.

Other major news events are also in the air: on January 1, 2002, in Italy and eleven other European countries, the Euro – the single currency for the eleven member-countries of the European Union – came into effect. And, on March 19th, with the murder in Bologna of Marco Biagi, professor of labor law, Italy once again experiences the nightmare of the Red Brigades.

Exactly a year later, on March 19, the United States, under President George W. Bush, invades Iraq. Italy lent its political and strategic support to the war against Saddam Hussein while maintaining a non-aggressive stance. In mid-April the regime of Saddam Hussein fell and Italy sent 3,000 soldiers to Iraq on a humanitarian mission. And then, the SARS virus erupted with such serious outbreaks in China, Hong Kong and Hanoi that, between March 12th and 15th, for the first time in its history, the World Health Organization issued a global alert.

“Truly, three years of inferno”, thinks Giorgio to himself, “and, despite it all, Italy, Europe and the Western world managed to keep the economy on an even keel, as arduous a task as that was”.

It has been three years since Giorgio attended Mido, after that terrible phone call from Carla telling him: “I have a tumor”. His enthusiasm for life and his work dwindled. He calls her often, secretly, from his cell phone, but not from the optical shop, which is more and more being run by his son Paolo and daughter-in-law Cristina. After all, Giorgio is almost 70 and can afford to step back. “Now, it’s their

turn”, he says more frequently and, again now, as an endless stream of thoughts and reflections runs through his mind. Not having attended Mido, he has not seen Carla, either, and the only way to stay in touch is by phone...

Any news he’s had of Mido and what’s happening inside the Portello pavilions has come second-hand from the visits made by Paolo and Cristina and from the official catalog and brand supplement his son and daughter-in-law brought back for him. “Once again, Mido was up to the task; it has been through tough times but has survived”. Three years managed by Cirillo Marcolin as President of Mido and two years with Vittorio Tabacchi in the role of President of Anfao.

Giorgio decides not to go into the store today. Instead, he picks up the official catalogs from 2001, 2002 and 2003 and begins reading them, page by page, from Marcolin’s welcome message, all the way to the end.

“At Mido, business is in fashion” is the title of the welcome message from the 2001 edition, held May 4th to 7th, followed by the claim “The future is here”:

*Over the years, we have focused on services and on the fashion and design previews, with the aim of making our Show the most reputable and exclusive showcase of trends. Here, indeed, trade professionals from all over the world have the opportunity to exhibit and view countless products of verified quality and value – from optical frames to sunglasses, from eyeglass cases to lenses, up to and including components, contact lenses, raw materials, fittings and machinery.*

*A truly exceptional opportunity to discover the most daring expressions of an eclectic and experimentation-oriented fashion system and, at the same time, compare and contrast the products developed by the international eyewear industry. To miss out on Mido means being out of the loop, being on the ‘outside looking in’ at the creative inspirations and trend-setting fashion shows. Unlike other eyewear trade shows, Mido is a downright marketplace, especially for the small and medium-sized companies that, in just four days, have the opportunity to showcase their new collections to buyers from all over the world...*

“What have I missed...”, murmurs Giorgio.

He gets out of his chair and goes into the kitchen for a glass of water, adding some mint-flavored syrup to it; it’s sweet and, for a moment, fills him with energy...

Giorgio then sinks back into his armchair. He looks at the first page of the catalog from Mido 2002, held May 3rd to 6th, titled: “Mido 2002: A look at the world”.

*A lot has changed since the almost heroic era of the show's early days: Mido has grown and flourished, always finding ways to better itself. Even in the last few years, marked by globalization and internationalization, its ability to improve brought undreamed-of results, driven by innovation, in both the good years and those less favorable to the global economy.*

*And, again today, the quest is for a new driving force for the 2002 edition, crucial in many ways. This is a year of compromise between a traumatic crisis in terms of world balance and expectations for an economic recovery that may pave the way for further progress.*

*Together, we have anxiously followed the developments reported on international news following that tragic September 11, asking ourselves if, and how, we would be able to manage the crisis that was impacting the entire trade show industry and the eyewear sector. I observed the proud response of the "eyewear system" which – having endured the inevitable backlash brought on by a widespread climate of tension and bewilderment – is now getting its stride back, showing encouraging signs, which I hope will turn into tangible evidence of trust. There were 1,300 exhibitors occupying more than 48,000 m<sup>2</sup> of space at Mido 2001, and 40,000 visitors from all corners of the world. Therefore, let's confidently address the job at hand...*

*"Yes, Mr. Marcolin, I, too, need to regain some trust..."*

*In the meantime, Maria has come into the room: "Giorgio, what's wrong? For days you have seemed sad and distant..."*

*"Yes, I know, I am sad and distant; please, accept me the way I am..."*

*Maria quickly steps closer and hugs him from behind the armchair. Then she leaves him to his thoughts and his sadness...*

*Giorgio picks up this year's catalog. Anfao is being managed by Vittorio Tabacchi while, for the third year in a row, Marcolin is President of Mido. The exhibition took place from May 2nd to 5th. Once again, it is President Marcolin who welcomes the visitors and exhibitors to the Show:*

*We are currently experiencing a period of extreme uncertainty, precariously poised between a dramatic shift in the global balance and the hopes for a recovery that could arise from a positive resolution of the international crisis. Last year we witnessed the "eyewear system's" proud response, which originated right here at Mido... Today, we are once again faced with a state of general anxiety but I believe the number of confirmed participants in the Show is the most meaningful expression of the will to maintain an attitude of confidence in a scenario of greater stability that we think might soon re-establish itself...*



Some exhibitors, especially from China and East Asia, have withdrawn from the 2003 edition due to the SARS alert. And there are also fewer, but more discerning, visitors. Trust has won out over fear: only a few people are wearing protective masks...

“Yes, trust, Giorgio, it’s all a matter of having faith in yourself”, he says to himself; “trust, also, in Carla’s future. Next year, I swear, I’m going back to Mido. And I will see Carla again”.

# Resilience and revitalization

*Milan, May 7-9 2004*

Marcolin's "remedy" for Mido – previously presided over by presidents of the eyewear manufacturers' association, first Paolo Cannicci, and then Vittorio Tabacchi – brought encouraging results. Not to mention betting on the regular participation of Asian manufacturers and businesses. Since 2004 (and once fears over the SARS epidemic had waned), the group-stand space occupied by foreign trade delegations (also open to companies from South Korea, Hong Kong, Japan and China), has returned to normal levels. Without misgivings and with a respectful attitude toward the progress made by Asian competitors in eyewear manufacturing.

Marcolin thus 'steered' Mido toward the 2004 edition, allowing it the flexibility to bounce back from the turmoil that had shaken the world and the global economy. On the strength of its numbers, the Show now seems ready to revitalize the industry and relaunch itself. In 2002, there were 1,000 exhibitors in five pavilions divided into eight halls; in 2003, the same number of exhibitors in four pavilions and nine halls; and a jump up to 1,200 exhibitors this year, located in ten halls across six pavilions. Numbers that validate a growth trend.

By now, Giorgio knows he simply can't miss the 2004 Mido which, for the first time in its history, has been scaled back to three days – Friday to Sunday. He convinced his family to let him go to Milan by himself, as in the old days, and for the entire duration of the Show. After all, he's only 69 and not so decrepit that he can't hold up under the strain of a few days at Mido. And, if he gets tired, he can stop and rest when he wants to. His family understands that Giorgio needs to shake off the strange listless apathy and feeling of detachment that have been hanging over him for several years now, without really understanding why. Unless they imagine him as a man who has reached the last stage of his career...

But no, that's not it. This goes much deeper.

So, just like in the good old days, Giorgio caught the train to Milan, then took the Metro red line and got off at Lotto, took bus no. 91 to Porta Scarampo where, after completing his registration, he en-

tered Mido. He immediately purchased a copy of the official catalog – the title reads: “Mido, the added-value event” – it lists head-spinning numbers for the 2004 edition, with 1,500 brands and about 2 million products on display!

Giorgio quickly made his way to Mido’s opening press conference where President Marcolin was explaining the Show’s innovations to the journalists.

There is no doubt that the core objective of Mido’s organizers is the best possible presentation of the magnitude of global eyewear production. In other words, although it takes place in Italy, Mido is not Italian, it’s global. So, changes in the 2004 edition range from the proven popularity of Mido Trend, in Pavilion 16, “a dedicated space where the values that define the A-list designer brands are on view”; to the new Mido Tech, in Pavilion 19: “the world’s largest showcase of eyewear industry technologies”. And, on to Mido Education, located in Pavilion 17: “60 courses, each one lasting four hours, cater to the growing needs of opticians and their staffs for professional-level updating”. And, of course, Mido Sport, a space in Pavilion 13 envisioned as “a special selection of professional eyewear and lenses suited to various sports activities”.

But... Giorgio looks around. Carla isn’t here; she hasn’t called him and he hasn’t dared to call her. They have spoken often on the phone in the last few months and Carla told him all about her scare: she’d had chemotherapy to reduce the size of the tumor and then had undergone surgery. She called him right before going into the operating room. And now she’s doing another round of “chemo” to reduce the risks of a recurrence. At the optical shop where she works, they were very generous and kind, allowing her to come back to work as soon as she was ready. “Will she come to Mido?”, he wonders...

“Giorgio, do you recognize me?”. And, once again, out of nowhere, she appears behind him.

He turns and sees her cherished face, but her beautiful, wavy, long blonde hair is gone... it’s now so short he can see the round outline of her head and the finely carved hollow of the nape of her neck. Oddly enough, Carla is even more beautiful than he remembers, because the tenderness of her face, her smile and the depth of her blue-eyed gaze stand out even more...

“Carla... finally... Of course, I recognize you, and...”, he hastens to say, “you’re always beautiful”.

For long minutes, as seeming never-ending seconds tick past, the two – standing just inches apart – gaze at one another, smile, then grow serious, and then start smiling again. She’s wearing a short red dress, narrowed at the waist, that shows off her lovely legs and, over the dress, a fitted pastel-colored jacket. It has been three years since they’ve seen each other. Despite her illness, Carla is still a beautiful 59-year-old woman.

“Aren’t you shocked to see me, without my long hair, looking like a fuzzy little chick? I don’t want to wear a wig or a head-scarf; I want to be myself”, she first asks and then declares, almost apologizing for that image of herself.

“No, my dear, I always like the way you look...”.

Carla and Giorgio spent the entire day together visiting the stands at the Show. She, trying on glasses (“How do these look?”, she asked over and over, making carefree and, sometimes, funny faces); and he, placing orders for his optical shop. Especially from the smaller manufacturers, on the cutting edge in terms of design, and even from the Asian companies. For once, completely and deliberately overlooking the big-name eyewear manufacturers, the A-list brands, while discovering an unexpected world of artisan craftsmanship and high-tech industry... All this, while the leading Italian manufacturers, from Saffilo to Luxottica, from De Rigo to Marcolin, continue to climb to ever-higher global positions. While, from the US, powerhouse Marchon Eyewear flexes its muscles.

The big companies capitalize on celebrity endorsements to increase their sales, and they can afford to do that. As in the past, De Rigo has continued to promote its Police eyewear with big-name endorsers like George Clooney and Gabriel Batistuta and, this year, with David Beckham and Michael Schumacher... Big-time influencers for corporate advertising...

Every so often, Carla stops to catch her breath. She, too, has made some purchases for the optical shop where she works. They have complete trust in her, in her taste and in her knowledge of their customers.

They had stopped for a snack and drink at the coffee bar and, then, as evening approached, headed toward the exit.

"Giorgio, where are you staying?"

"I didn't reserve a room anywhere...". Giorgio bluffs; he has a hotel reservation, to be sure...

"What, you didn't book a room?"

"I was hoping for an invitation..."

Carla pushed her glasses with gradient lenses to the top of her head and looked him right in the eye: "Come to my house. There's always room".

They got her car, a nice white Ypsilon 10, from the parking garage and quickly headed to Rho. Carla's small and well-appointed house is inviting; just as Giorgio remembers it from the previous times he's been there. It's filled with books and bookcases and there is wonderful art work on the walls: paintings and photographs of landscapes, people at work, female nudes and the expressive faces of women and men. Carla took a dish of baked pasta from the refrigerator. She made it herself, she's also a good cook. They drank some prosecco and talked about themselves, their strange friendship... and then about work and her disease... how difficult it was.

Several hours later, they are getting ready for bed. Carla is undressing, with her back turned, putting on her pajamas when, suddenly, she unfastens her bra, stands up and walks toward Giorgio.

The sight of her surgically disfigured breast hurts and frightens him, but Carla, with tears running down her face, speaks, before he can say a word: "But, is this still beauty, Giorgio? Where is the beauty that you say you have seen in me and that has energized you for all these years?"

Giorgio stepped closer and bent forward slightly; he kissed the scar on her now-empty breast, while at the same time caressing her face: "I learned from you to love the fragments of that explosive, magnificent beauty that I had seen in you. You helped me to love it and to look for it in my everyday life, in the faces of my loved ones, in my work and now you ask me if I can still call this wounded beauty of yours: beauty? Of course, I can. And I cherish it".

Carla fell asleep peacefully, with her head resting on Giorgio's chest.

## Endorser time

*Milan, 5-8 May 2006*

Paolo and Cristina are amazingly talented. They have completely revamped their optical shop in Turin. In fact, at 48 and 47 years respectively, thanks to their inheritance from Giorgio and Maria, they now own and manage it themselves. Their daughter Emanuela, who recently turned 19, also feels the pull of her parents' career choice and is attending a prestigious school for optometrists and opticians in Italy, in order to become licensed. The third generation is preparing to take up the work started by Giorgio almost 40 years ago...

And, what about Giorgio and Maria? They have retired. Almost, but not quite; because, although they're both in their 70s, they still enjoy lending a hand in the shop. Indeed, many long-standing customers are overjoyed when they find them there. It's good for the business and also for Maria and Giorgio, who continue to feel active and useful. They are delighted to be able to maintain the relationships (some of them turned into friendships) they built with many of their clients during their long business career.

Now fully immersed in the business, Paolo and Cristina have already left their own mark, completely renovating the shop and its equipment, as well as the selection of optical frames and sunglasses. Not to mention expanding the contact lens application services. Since they'll be at Mido from Friday May 5th to Monday May 8th, they couldn't pass up the opportunity to gain a better understanding of where the eyewear industry is headed and, at the same time, make purchases for their optical shop and indulge in a bit of professional updating. So, they asked Giorgio and Maria to cover for them at the shop. "Gladly. Go ahead. You're the ones directly involved. We're not entirely incompetent yet...", was their reply.

Once there, just like last year, Paolo and Cristina, couldn't resist getting caught up in an all-out endorser binge... First, though, they attended (as Giorgio always did) the opening press conference for the new edition, with Cirillo Marcolin once again center stage as President of Anfao and Mido: "It is with great satisfaction and emotion

that I inaugurate the 36th edition of Mido. This year, the Show validates its mission to be an industry leader, with 1,200 exhibitors, 42,000 registered visitors (up 6.3% over last year) and with a net prevalence of international participants over Italians – more than 26,000 (9.9% more, compared to 2005 edition)”.

“Mr. Marcolin said that the number of Italian opticians and optometrists in attendance at Mido had dropped over the last few years, but this year brought a change”, Cristina points out, smiling as she looks Paolo in the eyes: “Of course, because we’re here, right?”.

She’s holding a copy of *Midodaily*, the daily supplement of the Federotica monthly magazine, *Ottica Italiana*, designed to facilitate participation in the events, presentations at the stands, and to orient visitors among the nine halls and five pavilions Mido occupies at Fiera Milano’s Portello fairgrounds. And, there she goes, hunting down endorsers in the pavilions dedicated to exhibitors displaying frames and sunglasses. They caught them all! Or, almost... That’s how they met stylist, Anna Molinari, at the Visibilia stand in Pavilion 16, endorsing eyewear for the Blumarine line. Then, Milan soccer forward, Alberto Gilardino, at the Marchon stand in Pavilion 14. Paolo is a fan of the red and black team...

There’s truly room for everyone at Mido. Paolo and Cristina, especially Paolo, rush to the stand of French company, L’Amy, to see Vera Santagata, Miss Cinema 2005. At the Silhouette stand, the type of celebrity has changed completely – NASA astronaut, Jim Wetherbee, and NASA ophthalmologist, Keith Manuel, were busy signing autographs and showing off a new line of eyewear that weighs just 1.8 grams. Not far from there, in the same pavilion, feminine beauty is once again the attraction, with model and actress, Ludmilla Radchenko, posing with Playboy eyewear for the Florentine company, Espresioni di Moda. Not to be outdone, Marchon entrusted its brand to showgirls Alessia Ventura and Francesca Lodo who were modeling the latest CK Calvin Klein styles. Paolo and Cristina didn’t miss a beat: in Pavilion 15, where Japanese manufacturer Charmant had the honor of displaying award-winning eyewear from the International Design Competition, they asked for autographs from designers Vadim Kibardin from Russia and Yenwen Tseng from Taiwan.

Exhausted, in their hotel room later that evening, after a great dinner on the Navigli, they looked at one other: “Did you buy anything?”.

“Not much”.

“You?”.

“Same here”.

“Well, perhaps tomorrow we should spend a bit less time on exhibition tourism...”

So, by conserving their energy and paying closer attention, they were able to do their shopping and also have fun checking out more endorsers. Sichel & Sichel went all-out at their stand, rotating many reality TV stars, from Simon Falsaperla to Laura Torrisi, Isabella Iaquinta to Giulia Montanarini, Eva Henger to Ainette Stephens and Karina Cascella...

Nor did they miss out on the male sports stars, either. Serginho, Brazilian footballer for Milan, surrounded by throngs of Milan fans, made an appearance at the Oftalmica Galileo stand; while motorcycle racer Marco Melandri, fresh off the podium of the Turkish motorcycle Grand Prix, modeled Seychelles style sunglasses for Emilia-based Vidivici.

And, striking while the iron was hot, on Sunday and Monday, Vidivici brought in more beauties, like TV hosts, Elena Santarelli and Melissa Satta, the latter engaged to mark the launch of the new Sweet Years eyewear collection, making its debut right here at Mido.

Outside of Mido, the industry big-names ramped up their growth strategies: Vittorio Tabacchi relisted Safilo on the Stock Exchange; Luxottica signed key license agreements with Dolce & Gabbana and Burberry; Marcolin responded by acquiring the Tom Ford and Timberland licenses, and establishing a Marcolin branch in Japan.

“It was just like last year, wasn’t it, Paolo?”. On the train ride home, Cristina curled up next to Paolo, with her lovely chestnut-color hair falling across her husband’s chest, tired after having run for four days from one pavilion to another, having tried on glasses, negotiated prices, made purchases... and chased down some endorsers...

“Yes, the same”, laughed Paolo. “Do you remember? Maybe even more so than this year. A lot of soccer players and sports stars – listen, I can remember almost all of them: Pirlo, Dovizioso, Gattuso, Ambrosini, Giuseppe and Franco Baresi, and then... so many beautiful...”

“Girls, eh! I’ll remind you of some of them: Federica Felini, Aida Jespica, Paola Barale, and then, wait, wait, Martina Stella... and many more, there you go!”.



“Stop teasing me, Cristina. I was thinking of something different, ...: next year, Mido will be held at the Rho-Pero fairgrounds! I wonder how that will be! We’re going, right?”.

## An unforgettable year

*3 May, in flight from New York to Milan,  
Fieramilano Rho, 4-7 May 2007*

Carla has a strong constitution and, after several rounds of chemotherapy and breast reconstruction surgery, she has completely recovered, physically and in spirit. Her flowing long blonde hair has grown back in, the oval of her face is softer and rounder and her gaze is once again serene, marked by a perpetual hint of a smile.

Even her body has regained muscle tone and it is difficult to read 60 years into her tall and attractive silhouette as she walks through the cabin of an Airbus A319. On board Italy's Eurofly airlines in flight from New York to Milan, a sky-high runway show with fashion models is taking place. They're previewing eyewear from 41 Italian companies for a select audience of top-ranked American fashion journalists – eyewear chosen from the 2008 collections that tomorrow will be on display at Mido, in the new Fieramilano Rho fairgrounds.

Carla moves confidently while the fashion show organized by Anfao (represented by Vice President, Dan Emanuel Levi) and the Italian Trade Agency, in partnership with the Ministry of Foreign Trade takes place. Carla can definitely hold her own alongside the event's host, the much younger radio personality and former model, Kristen Grove...

For this flight, Anfao had sought out people with experience as hostesses at Mido, and Carla was chosen, along with several others. Carla had the courage to accept, as if it was a test that would put the disease behind her for good...

While Maria and her granddaughter Emanuela stayed home to run the shop, Cristina and Paolo have just entered the new "container" for Mido. They're not entirely in the dark about the new location because, a few days ago, the Mido preview magazine *Ottica Italiana* arrived at the store with lots of information about the layout of the stands in the seven pavilions, numbered from 1 to 7, opening off the main concourse, Corso Italia, and on the entrances to the Show and

how to find your way among the stands. But being here, in person, is entirely different.

"I didn't imagine it would be this big", admits Cristina admiringly. "Come on, let's walk around the entire show, that way we can get an idea of how it's laid out, then we can look for the specific stands we have decided to visit".

They begin their reconnaissance tour in Pavilion 1, dedicated to frames (in all, there are four large areas dedicated to eyewear), where eyewear giant Luxottica is located. (This year it expanded its brand portfolio to include Oliver Peoples and Paul Smith Spectacles and signed a license agreement with Ralph Lauren.) But other names also stand out, like Marcolin, Alain Mikli International, Visibilia and smaller, legendary companies like Salice, Sordelli, Gatto Astucci...

"Come on; now, let's go to Pavilion 3...". Cristina is in a frenzy and can't wait to get a first impression of everything.

So, in Pavilion 3, more frames. Some of the other big-names have their exhibits here, from Safilo to De Rigo (who has also launched a small line of leather items under the name Police Leather Goods), and on to historic companies like Trenti and Demenego and, with them, many others still... At this point – and it's already well past 1 pm – Cristina drags her husband into Pavilion 2, the one dedicated entirely to lenses. A quick overview: located here are the leaders in the lens sector, from Barberini to Rodenstock, Optovista to Essilor...

"And now, let's head to Pavilion 4, it's connected to Pavilion 2": Cristina is unstoppable. Paolo struggles to keep up. In Pavilion 4 is another multitude of stands belonging to companies showcasing their new collections of optical frames and sunglasses, including many international exhibitors, especially manufacturers from Asia, from Hong Kong to China, Japan to Korea.

Still not satisfied, and eager to finish the grand 'fly-over' tour, Cristina takes Paolo by the hand and pulls him along: "Now, we're going to Pavilion 5". Paolo can only nod yes; what else can he say? Although, the rumble of hunger is rising within... Mido has assembled the manufacturers of eyeglass frames and accessories, like cases, in Pavilion 5. Illustrious producers "hold court" here, like Fedon, L'Amy, Morel, Silhouette, Allison, along with several Asian and overseas manufacturers, and the distinguished US company, Marchon.

"From Pavilion 5", says Cristina, consulting pages 24 and 25 of the

official Show catalog – which, as always, weighs a ton with more than 500 pages of coated paper – “we go through to Pavilion 7, called Mido Design Lab, where the small, progressive design innovators are located”. Cristina and Paolo recognize names they’re very familiar with, like L.A. Eyeworks from the US, and Imago, Modo, Etnia Barcelona, J.F. Rey, Florence Design, Pilgrim, Pinton, Lindberg....

“Look, there’s Nico-design”, remarks Paolo, “they’re from Turin. Not long ago, I visited their new offices in via Collegno...”. “Will you take me with you the next time you go?”, asks Cristina.

“Here we are; I would skip Pavilion 6, Mido Tech, with the machines and the latest technologies... we’re not in the business of manufacturing eyewear, right?”. Paolo, however, sees his chance for revenge:

“I’m curious to see if they have come up with any original techniques for processing lenses and frames...”.

“You are so bad, Paolo, I can see it in your eyes”, warns Cristina, pointing her finger at him, “you’re just saying that...”.

Paolo grabs her around the waist, pulls her close and kisses her on the cheek: “Yes, I was teasing you. Listen, I’m famished. Shall we stop and eat?”.

Paolo and Cristina have completed their lap, at times literally pushing their way through an unbelievable crowd of people, most of them from other countries: “I can hear so many different languages”, notes Paolo, “there are more foreigners than Italians!”. Outside, it’s pouring rain, a driving rain that isn’t letting up. Such a massive influx of international visitors is even more impressive because yesterday there was a strike that impacted Alitalia flights and there’s another one today – this time Milan’s public transportation. And yet, this place is packed...

The two have reached the end of Pavilion 7 and, in front of the Press Village, they see a cluster of people around the tall figure of Cirillo Marcolin, President of Mido. “I hear this is his last term in office”, says Paolo, “come on, let’s get closer”.

Marcolin is talking with a group of journalists – tape recorders, notepads and TV cameras in hand: “We are extremely pleased with the Show”, says Marcolin, “Mido’s international appeal is clear, even in the number of exhibitors; just think, 72% of them are foreign, compared to 69% in 2006, when we were still at the Portello site. We have 43 countries represented here, 13% more than at the 2006 edition,

and we are expecting about 46,000 pre-registered visitors. That will be about 9% more than last year. The new Mido, continues Marcolin, under the rapid-fire questioning of the journalists, is the result of ongoing hard work over the last few years and I am glad that the epilogue to my presidency is being written with this edition. Even before Mido 2006 had closed its doors, we had finalized our efforts to make the change and worked toward ensuring that our advertising claim – the New Mido – would become the reality that you see before you today”.

“Who will be your successor?”.

“All I can say is that the new Mido, which I confidently hand over to whomever will be my successor, marks a point of arrival but, I have no doubt that it is also a point of departure, the cornerstone of a show that had to reinvent itself to successfully face the market challenges posed by the new millennium”.

“Listen, hungry husband, before we fill up on sandwiches, let’s get ourselves enrolled in the Federottica professional updating courses. We need them...”.

“Yes, dear. Let’s go; but then, that’s all. Ok? Oh, remind me that I have to call my dad. He managed to get a ticket for the gala evening tonight. I don’t know how he does it; he’s got his friends. We’re going to check out the center of Milan; are you up for that?”.

Giorgio did, indeed, have a ticket for the gala party – organized by Mido, in partnership with *Vogue Italia* magazine – an evening celebrating its new location and Mido’s nearly four decades of history. Giorgio meets Carla at the entrance to the Grand Hall of the Service Center where the gala, presented by American actress and former model, Andie MacDowell and by Luca Barbareschi, will take place. Carla is the one who got him a ticket to attend the gala, among the more than 1,000 invited guests: a privilege and a gift...

Upon seeing Carla again, emotions well up in Giorgio and all the admiration, attraction and awe he feels at being in her presence once again come flooding back. He had thought about this moment on the train from Turin to Milan, but the impact of reality goes well beyond his imagination... “You are gorgeous, my friend. No one would guess what you’ve been through...”. Carla, however, does not reply; she simply looks into his eyes for a long instant and then, taking his hand, says: “Come on, let’s go in”.

Inside, between the spectacular setting of the Fieramilano Rho hall, the Big Band orchestra playing music from the 70s, 80s, 90s and early 2000s, and the staging, for Giorgio, it all has an air of magnificence. “Nearly 40 years”, he thinks, “and I was here for almost all of them”. Not far from him and Carla are the Minister for Foreign Trade, Emma Bonino, and ITA Director, Massimo Mamberti.

And then comes the high point of the evening, with music playing, large screens showing images of historic Mido moments and laser lights designing the outline of an airplane taking off into the future: it’s time for the fashion show, with live models. The ladies take their places on two escalators. They’re wearing vintage and modern eyeglasses, portraying the long history of eyewear.

As they appear, the presenters announce the names of the brands the models are wearing. There are 37 in all, reflecting the number of Mido editions to date: “American Rim Eyewear, André Courrèges, Francois and Pinton”, begins Andie MacDowell, amid the applause of the audience, “followed by Persol 649, Cutler & Gross, Emilio Pucci, Serge Kirchhofer, Wallis Simpson, Ken Scott, Christian Dior, Ray-Ban Aviator, Guy Laroche, Zilo Sport, Safilo Design, Versace, Frame, Silhouette, Valentino”. “And still more”, adds Luca Barbare-schi, “Starck Eyes, Roberto Cavalli, Swatch, Alain Mikli, Oliver Peoples, Giorgio Armani, Calvin Klein, Romeo Gigli, Police, Web, Fendi, Bulgari...”. “And in conclusion”, continues the American actress, “Christian Roth, Alviero Martini Point of View, Trussardi, Gucci, Celine, Daniel Swarovski, Gianfranco Ferrè”. Then, silence: the music accompanies the models as they descend onto the stage, wearing the history of eyewear on their faces...

Giorgio and Carla were seated close to one another; a few times they joined hands, but not for long, as if the wonder of the evening prevailed over the desire for physical contact. Sitting side by side, he had marveled at her tranquil face, her hair, her lovely legs exposed where her skirt had ridden up slightly, her chest... “So much suffering”, thought Giorgio, “and now, here she is...”.

They bid each other good night like two long-time friends. Paolo had come to pick up his father at the South Gate exit of the Fiera to take him back to their hotel, in the center of Milan:

“How was it, Dad?”.

“Magnificent”.

“How did you manage to get an invitation? You told me once, but I’ve already forgotten...”.

“Old friends, Paolo, old friends... It was an unforgettable evening. Now, I’ll tell you about it... Look what they gave us: a wonderful book titled ‘For your eyes, only?, Eyewear from A to Z’, by Alessandra Albarello and Francesca Joppolo. Take it, for Cristina”.

# Transformation

*Fieramilano Rho, 6-9 March 2009*

*Rome 4-6 September 2009*

The transformation of Mido occurred after its first year in the new Fieramilano Rho exhibition pavilions. The 2008 edition, last May, met and exceeded the results of the previous year, with nearly 55,000 m<sup>2</sup> of net surface area occupied, 1,246 exhibitors and about 46,000 visitors, a 1% increase over 2007. But last fall the “global crisis” hit, caused by the bankruptcy of financial giant, Lehman Brothers, and the ensuing crash of the Wall Street stock exchange. And everyone had to scramble to stay afloat...

“For the first time ever, Mido is being held in March, a change that coincides with Milan’s 15 days of fashion – a series of fashion events that offer a more compact calendar for Milan Fashion Week, which opens with Milano Vende Moda and continues with Milano Moda Donna, Cloudnine, Micam, Mipel, Mifur and, of course, Mido”. Paolo reads from the daily paper he bought just before he and Cristina boarded the train to Milan. They’re on their way to the Fieramilano Rho exhibition district to participate in the 39th edition of the Show.

Those words had been spoken yesterday during the inaugural press conference held at the Westin Palace Hotel in Milan by Vittorio Tabacchi who, last year, was named the new President of Anfao and Mido. “Yes, it is a transformation”, thinks Paolo as he inwardly revels in watching Cristina, seated across from him, finish putting on her makeup. She got a new pair of glasses, just for Mido. She looks fabulous in them...

“Cristina, what do you think about this change in the Mido dates?”.

“It forces a change in habits and new timelines in the manufacture and sale of eyewear; but I think it makes perfect sense to tie the debut of the new eyewear collections to those of fashion in general”.

“You’re absolutely right, you know.... And I feel the same way...”.

While Cristina enhances the shape of her lips with a nice red lipstick and fixes her hair, Paolo continues to read President Tabacchi’s speech: “We decided to forge a culture of cooperation with the other shows in Milan, in order to offer a strategic resource for the



fashion buyers and allow them to experience, in person, the global innovations our industry has to offer. Undeniably, all of this required an enormous effort by the exhibitors – I’m well aware of it – but I am honored to say that this challenge was tackled with enthusiasm by everyone involved, mindful of the amazing opportunity implicit in the new calendar dates. Exhibitor participation is in line with the 2008 edition and confirms Mido’s position as a touchstone for the industry which, although still reeling from the financial crisis, made it a point to be here. Although some of them were forced to cut back on the usual size of their exhibit space”. This year, there are six pavilions, one less than last year.

Paolo puts aside his reading for a moment and looks out the window. The countryside seems to flash by. Then he picks up the newspaper again: “As I had occasion to remark last year, Mido’s success springs from its enormous ability to listen to the needs and demands of those who have participated in the past and those who are here for the first time. As a result, we aimed to lend standout visibility to new and interesting areas, with a view to maximizing the potential of the various types of production”.

Having finished reading, with a start, Paolo exclaims: “Did we miss the stop for Fieramilano Rho?”.

“No, don’t worry”, answers a traveler, “it’s the next stop; we just left the Magenta station. I’m also getting off at the fairgrounds”.

“Cristina, we need to get off soon. Did you hear: the train already left Magenta”.

“Relax, Paolo. Did you think I hadn’t noticed? You’re the one who was absorbed in reading the newspaper... Come on, let’s get ready: will you take our bag down from the luggage rack?”.

Cristina and Paolo have also accomplished a “transformation” of sorts at their optical shop and are thinking about offering their clients some striking new eyewear styles. From now on, they’re going to stock just a few signature frames and sunglasses from the most prominent brands. They want to focus on the lesser-known names and innovative design companies that use the latest technologies and raw materials.

“Mido Design Lab, in Pavilion 24, has to be our main focus this year”, says Cristina.

"I agree", replies Paolo, as he helps her off the train, "in fact, we'll have more time this year, since tomorrow that pavilion, and *only* that one, will stay open late – until 10 pm. It's the first time they have done such a thing and they say it was the companies themselves that asked to extend the hours".

"And then, Paolo, no, wait... let's do it right now. Let's go enroll in at least two continuing education courses. If we wait to take them in Turin, we'll end up getting caught up in our work routine and never actually do it. Instead, we really need to do this".

Husband and wife are now on the long moving sidewalk that takes them to the East Gate of the fairgrounds. Around them is an enormous crowd of people who are arriving from the train station and from the Metro "red line".

"You know what?", says Paolo at a certain point, "I found out that Mido is participating in an interesting conference in Rome this fall. It's called 'Vision Business Forum' and will be held September 4th to 6th. I wouldn't mind attending it".

"I know, your father mentioned it at dinner the other day".

"Oh, yes, that's right. He said he'd like to go. They invited him and he'd love to be there. Well, if that's how it is, we'll let the 'old man' go".

Several months ago, Carla had called the "old man".

"Hi Giorgio, how's everything? Everything good at home? And at the shop?"

"Everything's fine, Carla, I hope that's true for you, as well".

"I've never felt better. I feel like I've been miraculously healed. I wanted to tell you something: there's going to be an interesting conference in Rome; have you heard about it?"

"Actually, no; I know nothing about it".

"Listen: I'm going, on behalf of my shop. Why don't you take a couple days off and come, too? We can spend some time together... I miss you. I feel good when I see you".

"Hmmm", nods Giorgio turning his gaze to the sky... "That's a wonderful idea. Let me see if I can work it out. Thanks for bringing it up, Carla!".

Cristina and Paolo were true to their word. They spent most of their time in Pavilion 24, the "Mido Design Lab": ten intensive stand visits a

day, for four days in a row, and on Saturday until 10 pm, as planned. And in what an incredible setting, with everything arrayed around the Design Lab Plaza... Trying on eyeglasses, engaging in heated price negotiations with Cazal, Fleye, Imago, Pinton, Nico-design, Oliver Peoples, Lindberg, Rey, Robert La Roche, Beausoleil, Modo, Iyoko Inyakè, Polaris, Francis Klein, Theo... And then, among the industry's big-names, they decided to go with the American, Marchon. They talked, wrangled and negotiated with the company's managers, led by the newly-elected President, Italian Claudio Gottardi. Inspired by the idea of three optometrists, it started with 12 employees and 12 agents; in 2008 Marchon probably has sales of about 500 million dollars and 2,500 employees around the world! About a year ago it was acquired by the multinational VSP, global leader in vision insurance.

Paolo and Cristina are faced with 100 new styles: 80 optical and 20 sunglasses. Displayed, in all their splendor, are high-end licensed brands: from Calvin Klein to Nike, Flexon to Fendi, Michael Kors to Emilio Pucci...

By now, Marchon is the number-three eyewear company, worldwide. Meanwhile, in Italy, the big-names continue to grow by scooping up licenses and by expanding their direct sales networks. Marcolin renewed its license agreement with Roberto Cavalli and Just Cavalli, as well as Montblanc Simplo and Swarovski. Last year, Luxottica signed a contract with Tiffany and this year with fashion designer, Tory Burch. De Rigo, for its part, merged Dollond & Aitchison with Boots Opticians, forming the second-largest optical chain in the UK.

"Paolo, have you seen these Calvin Klein sunglasses? There's a USB key embedded in the right temple that can store data, images, videos and music files. They come in two styles and three colors, have the CK logo on a metal strip and the USB key is instantly accessible by removing the temple tip... fantastic, can you believe it?"

But the surprises don't end there. At a certain point in their wanderings through Mido, Cristina and Paolo notice a big commotion around a stand where the outline of a large camper can be seen. "Paolo, come on, let's go see", says Cristina, intrigued, as she approaches the stand. It belongs to Italia Independent, the fashion company launched by Lapo Elkann a couple years ago; he had introduced his collections of sunglasses and optical frames at previous editions of Mido. But this year the stand's design is more striking than ever.

Cristina and Paolo can now clearly see Lapo as he goes in and out of the camouflage Iveco motor home parked inside the stand. It is furnished in a style that blends tradition and innovation, elements that have consistently been the hallmarks of Elkann's brand. Everywhere, antique furniture and crystal alongside modern glass tables with feet made out of Formula 1 tires and diffused lighting from carbon fiber candelabras. Opening a wardrobe, Lapo pulls out some suits belonging to his grandfather. The clothing of Gianni Agnelli.

Spring and summer have come and gone and Giorgio has anxiously awaited the arrival of September: he will attend the Vision Business Forum in Rome, where he'll see Carla... It has been two years since Giorgio has been outside Turin and the Piedmont Region. On August 9, 2007 he went to Pieve di Cadore for the inauguration of the Eyewear Museum, welcomed as a friend by Vittorio Tabacchi, the visionary behind this unique museum in Italy – home to 4,000 pieces of eyewear history, from the 15th century to the present. It took the patience and tenacity of Tabacchi and Curator, Laura Zandonella, to ensure the expansion of the museum building, located just steps from the birthplace of Titian, renaissance artist and eminent citizen of Pieve di Cadore.

In the middle of a summer heatwave, on the heels of a day of pounding rain, Giorgio and Maria had visited the steel and glass building, accompanied from one room to the next by the proudly passionate Tabacchi. "My dear Giorgio", please understand that this is the symbol of the identity of the entire Italian eyewear industry. It came into being here and here it continues to grow, making its voice heard around the world, paying tribute to its international calling".

Now, Giorgio is on the train, on his way to Rome. He booked a room in a nice hotel in the capital, near the conference venue, and he's already dreaming of the moment when he'll see Carla again.

He's well aware that time and his age will gradually take him further and further from her. And this is perhaps why he has decided to commit to memory everything about her that he possibly can – as if he might never see her again. He will memorize her face, the extraordinary beauty of her body – although no longer young and, for a time, weakened by disease – and then, her words, the sound of her voice, her wisdom, the light in her eyes that managed to illuminate every detail, every fragment,

of the simple life of an optician, who was once a carpenter and former shop assistant in a photography store, transplanted from southern Italy to a city of royal palaces and modern commerce...

At the conference, they sat close, interested for hours and hours, intently taking notes as if they were fledgling opticians and on the front lines, working every day. They also made time to see Rome, even a visit to Villa Borghese. With the unrivaled beauty of Canova's statues before him, Giorgio drew Carla close: "See this, this is what you have been, and are, for me".

# Forty

*Fieramilano Rho, 5-7 March 2010*

“Run, run, they’re cutting the cake for Mido’s 40th anniversary”.

It’s Saturday evening on March 6th, the second day of Mido. Emanuela is at the eyewear show this year, along with her mom and dad. “Manu”, as her family calls her, is now a licensed optician and optometrist and a fully-fledged team member in the family’s optical shop. She enjoys it; she’s technically skilled and has a desire to learn... all very positive traits.

Emanuela wanted to attend this major new edition of Mido to broaden her knowledge. In fact, during the three days of the Show (this year, Mido takes place over three days and has optimized the space available, using one less pavilion), she intends to take as many training courses as possible. She has also steered her parents toward taking a closer look at the latest innovations in lenses and they – taking their newly-licensed daughter’s advice – have decided to spend more time this year browsing the stands of the manufacturers of lenses and machines for the preparation and mounting of lenses in frames.

Although Mido is known for its fun, festive atmosphere, a hub for opticians and optometrists and for Italian and international buyers, this year it has another reason to celebrate: its 40th anniversary as an eyewear show. President Vittorio Tabacchi thought a photo exhibit, titled “Mido, the first 40 years”, and a party in the area next to the Press Village and VIP Club in Pavilion 24, would be a good way to celebrate the anniversary. This is the same area that hosts the Mido Design Lab, an entire pavilion dedicated to the most innovative companies, in terms of creativity, design and technical content.

President Tabacchi has just uncorked the bottles of sparkling wine and is preparing to cut the first slice of the rectangular cake – all-white, decorated with a ‘40’ in the shape of eyeglasses, the temples inscribed with “Mido”. Emanuela is urging her parents to come quickly. You can’t miss out on an opportunity to taste the 40th anniversary cake! After all, it is kind of a family party, given the number of times her grandfather and her parents have participated in this amazing event. “It’s too bad

Grandpa Giorgio isn't here", the thought immediately crosses Emanuela's mind, certain he would have enjoyed it. A musical group, all in red T-shirts, and the singer dressed in black, is playing disco music and some girls have already started dancing in front of them. Giant photographs are hung all around, many of them in black and white, documenting 40 years of history. From the first stands (called 'stalls', which were nothing other than small shops, all alike, with eyeglasses arranged in a display case, lit from above), set up in the halls of Fieramilano, to those in the former sports arena, and on to the larger, more comfortable spaces in the former Portello factory, and then to the imaginative modern architecture of Fieramilano Rho. Among the photos, on loan from the Fieramilano and Fondazione Fiera Milano archives, is something that attracts Emanuela's attention:

"Mom, Dad, come look at this photo: Grandpa is in it".

Paolo and Cristina come closer and can only agree that she's right. Giorgio is right there, in one of the first photos in the Show; he's looking around in one of the 'stalls'. No doubt, he was negotiating the price for some eyewear for his optical shop.

"Oh, this is so amazing! We have to tell Grandpa", exclaims Cristina: "Call your dad on his beloved Blackberry and tell him; he'll be happy to find out", she urges her husband.

"I'll tell him about it later. Now, leave me alone while I eat another piece of this cake..."

They arrived back at their hotel early that evening, after having walked through the stands in Pavilion 22, dedicated to lenses and machines for opticians. Before going down to the restaurant for dinner, Paolo picked up the Mido catalog and began to read the welcome message from President Tabacchi to the exhibitors and visitors. He read it to himself first, then, he liked it so much, he said to Cristina: "Listen to what Tabacchi says in the catalog: Welcome to Mido 2010, the 40th edition of the Show. A truly important milestone, a landmark along a crucial growth trajectory begun back in 1970 at the inception of this exciting adventure. Since then, the Show has grown immeasurably, evolving from the hundred or so initial exhibitors to more than a thousand in recent years and transforming itself into the leading global eyewear industry trade show. All of this was possible by promoting the nature of a "show on the go", that has the audacity to set new goals for itself, is not afraid of change; on the contrary, the driving

force of our Show is precisely its ability to listen to the needs of businesses and the market. We have grown in scale; in 2007 we changed our venue, we changed the date, repositioning the Show in March just before the other fashion shows, optimizing the entire trade fair system and rewriting the exhibition calendar...".

"Nice job, Tabacchi", says Cristina. "And now? Shall we go?".

Giorgio and Maria had stayed in Turin to mind the store. Saturday, they spent all day in the shop and it was a wonderful opportunity to catch up with long-standing customers, many of whom have become real friends. Greetings, hugs, words of encouragement ("Are you back here again? Why is it that time seems to stand still when it comes to you?") and many more compliments. Maria, too, manages quite well. And that evening they weren't even all that tired. At a certain point, a call came in on Giorgio's Blackberry.

It's Carla! Giorgio goes outside into the residents' garden. "Carla, Carla, how are you?". From the other end of the line, he hears a faint voice, and he has the impression the call is coming from a country far from Italy.

"Hi, Giorgio, I'm calling you from Brazil. I left the optical shop where I worked and came here to live, in São Paulo, with my cousin. I don't know how long I will stay but I flew here on a one-way ticket. I can't really say when I'll be coming back home to Italy. I had a craving to start a new life. I feel like I still have things to do in this life and I really want to learn to build something new. I have some friends who work at a training center for young people. I think I'll give them a hand".

"Carla... so, you're telling me... who knows when we will see each other again...".

"Yes, that's right, Giorgio, I couldn't just not say anything to you".

"I understand... You're amazing, I always discover something beautiful in you, young and fresh. I'm very happy for you. I'll be overwhelmed by a wave of Brazilian 'nostalgia' at the thought of not being able to see you...".

They laugh.

"But I believe it's the right thing to do. Know that I will never forget you. Thank you!".

Giorgio goes back into the house. Maria is cleaning up the kitchen. He comes close and gives her a hug. Maria is pleasantly surprised:



“You’ve always been my one great love. I had to learn that; I learned to enjoy all the fragments of beauty in our life together, from the very first time I saw you... you were still a young girl. I needed to have friends to learn to love you well... I’m not sure I’m making myself clear... but... that’s how it is. I love you!”.

That evening, before going to bed, Giorgio, picked up a notebook and with a fountain pen began to write on the blank page: “Through the looking glass – the story of a love that changed me”, as if it were the title of a book. He then closed the notebook and put it in a drawer. He locked the drawer with a key and then put the key on the ring where he keeps the other keys to the house and garage. And then, relieved, he crawled into bed next to Maria. And fell right to sleep.



# LIVE THE WONDER

## The navel of the world

*Fieramilano Rho, 11-13 March 2012*

“Today, eyeglasses are one of the many expressions of this industry, which is made up of several sectors: lenses, machinery, components and frames. And Mido is at the center of a business that involves companies and industry professionals globally. A resource capable of staying up-to-date and presenting itself – one edition after another – as an exclusive showcase of all the industry’s innovations”.

Cirillo Marcolin has returned to the helm of Mido and, speaking to the journalists at the inaugural press conference for the 2012 edition – flanked by Tabacchi, who has been named President of the Eyecare Commission, and by journalist, Cristina Parodi – he uses the most expressive image possible: Mido “is the navel of the world”.

It makes you want to sing along with Jovanotti, breaking into Latino hip-hop moves, to the pounding rhythm of drums: “This is the navel of the world.../ the navel of the world.../ This is the navel of the world.../ the navel of the world.../ Here you meet strange faces / with a disarming kind of beauty / ebony skin from an indigenous father/ and emerald eyes like a diamond / half-breed faces from new races, like the millennium coming into its own/ this is the navel of the world/ and we’re already dancing...”. Had he been singing for Mido, Jovanotti’s song would not have been far off the mark. His song could easily have become the sound track for the Show... And yet, at Mido 2012, we should also remember Lucio Dalla, who died just ten days ago, and his unforgettable round spectacles...

This year, Mido has once again changed its formula: three show days – from Sunday to Tuesday. This is a first. Mido never stops. Last year, with more than 1,000 exhibitors and 42,000 visitors, 3% more than in 2010 and five pavilions, like the previous year, the entire industry was inspired by a feeling of recovery. Thanks, in part, to some innovations, like the new exhibition layout and the experimental concept of a single space, called the Mido Fashion District, that hosts the industry’s big-

names and the more glamorous companies (which Paolo and Cristina could barely tear themselves away from).

As Paolo, Cristina and Emanuela, too, this year, enter the fairgrounds, they're debating whether it's better to have Mido spread out over the weekend, closing on Monday or, organized as it is this year. "Who knows when they'll find the right formula?", muses Cristina, "since Mido moved from Milan to Rho, it has been in a constant state of flux, of experimentation; first, it was moved from May to March, then from four to three days, this year from the weekend to weekdays".

"Mom, I think I know what's going on here. It's not about finding the right formula, one that's always the same, the way it was for the Mido that Grandpa Giorgio's generation experienced. The world is changing fast. In an era of bytes, iPhones (like the one I have) and wireless networks, it's not possible to just respond to change, you must also anticipate it. Look... I just read it in *Midodaily*, by the publishers of *Ottica Italiana*, that they handed us as we came in. Listen to what it says: 'The decision to open on Sunday the 11th, followed by two weekdays, is the result of some key considerations: on one hand, the preference of foreign buyers to concentrate their visits to the Show during the work week, while still offering the possibility to also come on the weekend; on the other, the desire to give Italian opticians and those in nearby countries, the possibility to visit the Show during the days when their shops are typically closed, on Sunday and Monday. An "experiment" for the 2012 edition, this week is a test run. In any case, those who stand still are lost and a show that fears change, is a no-go!'. Clear, isn't it?"

"What are we going to focus on this year?", asks her mother, changing the subject.

"I would like to take advantage of this Mido initiative called Otticlub to continue my training. Tomorrow, Rodenstock is presenting its new Better Vision system and following that, there is a conference on the topic: "From market analysis to point of sale: unexploited opportunities in progressive lenses". GfK will report on market performance and an expert will speak about progressive lenses: how to identify the most suitable ones for every need and how to recommend them to customers. Then, on Monday, I want to attend the seminar on optometric applications in the field of sports. We need to delve deeper into these issues... Are you two thinking about placing new orders?"

"You're very conscientious, my dear", responds her mother with ad-

miration. “It sounds like an excellent idea. How about this? Think about broadening your knowledge and then you can pass it on to us...”, smiling... “We’ll be browsing the stands!”.

“Oh, well, I’m not going to miss out on that! Once the training sessions are over, I will jump right in, but I would prefer that you do the shopping. We’ll meet up this evening to go back to the hotel. Bye”.

Paolo and Cristina couldn’t pass up the first temptation – to go visit the big-name stands. This year, Safilo is introducing the Dior Croisette collection, while Luxottica is focusing on Burberry Whipstitch and De Rigo on launching Lanvin-branded eyewear. Marcolin renewed its partnership with the established lines, like Roberto Cavalli, Just Cavalli and Tom Ford, all looking very glamorous this year. From Marchon, the new Salvatore Ferragamo collection. Paolo and Cristina then visit the Polaroid and Charmant Europe stands – celebrating 75- and 25-year anniversaries, respectively.

Competition between the big-name global companies is increasingly fierce – in 2011, Marcolin and Luxottica both celebrated their 60th anniversaries. In addition to extending the Tom Ford license and renewing its agreement with Montblanc, it has partnered with investment giant, PAI Partners, which gained a majority shareholding in the company. Marcolin also signed a license agreement with Balenciaga for the Diesel brand. Luxottica is focusing on retail and, since last year, has expanded its sales network in Latin America, is acquiring Tecnol, the leading eyewear company in Brazil, and aims to expand its retail operations in Spain and Portugal, as well.

Meanwhile, what was Emanuela up to? During and after the conference on progressive lenses, she had a pleasant encounter: she met a young Brazilian photographer, accredited for the first time at Mido. He had noticed her and asked if she would be willing to pose for an eyewear photo shoot. “Why not?”, she replied, despite her surprise, but only after asking him to explain in detail who he works for and where the photos will be published.

“They’ll be in one of the leading São Paulo dailies, *Folha de S. Paulo*, and online, too, illustrating articles about the economy of the eyewear sector. Don’t worry... Here’s my business card and, I can assure you, I take my work seriously”, he said courteously.

“All right, Tiago”, replied Emanuela, reading his name on his business card, “take the photos you want, but just be sure to show me the ones you plan to publish”.

# The beauty of a photograph

*Fieramilano Rho, 1-3 March 2014*

Emanuela is back at Mido this year representing her family and their optical shop in Turin. She's here alone, as she was last year, with all the responsibility of placing orders... and with all the pleasure of being free to go wherever and do whatever she wants to do. Tall, chestnut hair, statuesque – she immediately caught the eye of the young Brazilian photographer who asked to shoot some photos of her for the *Folha de S. Paulo* daily newspaper on the subject of Mido. Tiago has been in touch with her several times, via email – sending her the photos that had been published, after getting her permission – and also on Facebook. It's not hard to imagine that he's infatuated with Emanuela.

Only a few hours have passed since Emanuela entered the Show and she is just getting oriented when, there he is. He had returned to Mido once again to take photos for the Brazilian newspaper.

The thing is – finding him there in front of her – is not at all a problem for Emanuela. Tiago, who speaks Italian fairly well and comes from an Italian family, is a good-looking, mixed-race guy; he has a job to do and has little time to spare. This time he didn't dare ask her to pose for him again, putting on and taking off pairs of glasses. "Listen, I'm here alone and I have to do everything myself for our optical shop. I have a ton of things to see and do. How's this for an idea: this evening in Milan – as you probably read in *Midodaily* – there's a party for the young people participating in Mido at the Superstudio Artpoint in via Tortona 27, and the theme, imagine that... is eyewear. Dress code? Eyewear, obviously. If you don't have any, you're out! If you want to come, remember, you have to register at [www.midounvolto.it](http://www.midounvolto.it). I'll be there. Entertainers for the evening are DJ Alex Farolfi, La Pina and Diego from Radio DeeJay and blogger, Silvia Paoli. What do you say?

"Ok, see you there tonight".

Having now read the first and second pages of *Midodaily*, Emanuela's young, entrepreneurial spirit was captivated by the words of Mido's President, Marcolin: "Only by looking ahead are we inspired and energized to experiment. Welcome to Mido 2014! In the last few years – in

undeniably tough economic times – we have consistently had the energy and enthusiasm to plan this Show with foresight, often anticipating the demands of the market itself. A winning strategy that has paid off. Proof of this lies in the fact that, after several years of absence, some companies have returned to Mido as exhibitors and 160 new companies have chosen us as their showcase for the first time ever. Our thanks go to them, and to all of you who, for years, have put your trust in us. Your presence, your suggestions and also your criticisms are a key motivating force in strengthening the prestige of this show. For the 2014 edition we decided to look ahead, to that word – the future – that in the recent past has caused so much fear. But it also possesses great strength, in the form of plans, hopes and lots of ideas. Not a word that offers reassurance, but it is certainly a fascinating one and the driving force behind experimentation and innovation. The future is not ‘betterable’; it is ‘by rights’ better. And, again this year, our staff has worked, not to ‘intercept’ the future but to build it, just the way we would have liked to see it manifest. And – we hope – as you would have wanted it, too”.

Emanuela, multitasking like most women, laid out her appointments in front of her, as if they were all present in that moment and, at the same time, opened the many files tucked away in her mind. Then she began her rounds among the pavilions, this year all unified in one place, but still divided by theme and category. She decided to let herself be guided by *Midodaily*, visiting the innovations she’d read about on the pages of the Fair’s daily paper and registering to participate in many informative conferences and continuing education courses. She wants to go back to De Rigo, which celebrated the 30th anniversary of Police last year, designed by Bruno Palmegiani.

That evening, she left the fair district and headed toward the location of the party. Tiago is already there and has been waiting for a few minutes. “Look, I took these pictures of you earlier, natural – not posed. You’re so beautiful”. Emanuela blushes but she enjoys the compliment. Tiago, tall, thin, smiling, did not bring the ‘tools of his trade’ with him this evening. They are deep in conversation before they even get inside the venue. “Mido is going well, don’t you think?”, asks Tiago.

“It sure looks that way. And, there’s always an incredible number of foreigners. I heard they’re expecting 25,000 foreigners, compared to 20,000 Italians. Even last year, foreign visitors made up 60% of the total. That means that this year there will be at least 45,000 visitors at

Mido, 3,000 more than at the 2013 edition”.

“Yes, there are lots of people, especially foreigners, even from my country. But I saw crowds of Italians arrive by train...”

“That’s true, they chartered a high-speed train between Rome and here just for Mido visitors, gratis. Mainly as an incentive to attract opticians from central and southern Italy to Mido. Coming from Turin, we are a lot closer and the cost of the trip is not so bad”.

“Did you notice that mirrored sunglasses are the latest fashion?”.

“Yes, they’re amazing. Look at me, I bought a pair. How do I look?”.

“Stunning”.

“And these?”.

“Equally stunning”.

“And these?”.

“The same”.

“But there must be one pair that doesn’t look as good on me...”.

“No, not even one; they all look good on you because you’re beautiful. And everything you’re wearing looks great on you... Oh, I’m sorry, I shouldn’t have gone so far...”

“It’s all right, Tiago, your compliments are a pleasure”.

“Tell me, how did you become so fascinated with photography?”.

“It all began just four years ago. You see, my family is poor; we live in a ‘favela’ in São Paulo and for years I attended a community education center that allowed me to study. And I still go there; many of the instructors are my friends. Among them, I recently met an Italian woman, older, but still very beautiful and very kind to me. She has always been interested in photography and, since she arrived in São Paulo, she has been able to pick it up again. Her photographs are amazing. She taught me some little ‘secrets’ and then I added a few of my own; experimenting, studying, taking lots and lots of pictures”.

“And your newspaper? How did you begin working with them?”.

“I offered my services. I went to the editorial staff, showed them some of my photos and they liked them. Now, I do a little bit of everything for them, even crime stories, but most of all, I take photos for my own pleasure. Two years ago, when I asked you to pose for me, I didn’t have a specific assignment but, let’s say, you inspired me, and I offered them the photos. They loved them”.

“So, you don’t just do fashion photography...”

“No, I told you, a little bit of everything. Even landscapes, still life,



portraits, female nudes...”

“Female nudes?”.

“Of course”.

“Not erotica... I hope...”

“Can I tell you something? It all depends on the way a man looks at women. If it’s with admiration and amazement, there’s no mistake: it will be a beautiful photo. It will be like a wonderful painting or the sculptures we see in museums. If not, it will be vulgar and the woman will be portrayed as an object of desire. With a bit of practice, I will help you understand the difference”.

“You know, you’re pretty remarkable. Who is this Italian woman who has helped you so much?”.

“She’s the one who told me about Mido, in Milan, she says she worked here for years...”.

“What’s her name?” .

“Carla”.

## Ongoing evolution

*Fieramilano Rho, 28 February - 1 March 2015*

Once again, Emanuela is alone at Mido, visiting the stands of eyewear and lens manufacturers, companies that make eyeglass cases or machines for optical shops... placing orders, meeting people who, by now, are familiar faces and even friends. By the 45th edition of the eyewear show, Emanuela is now a Mido veteran. Alone, yes, but not entirely... Because Tiago has returned to Milan from São Paulo, once again on assignment as a photographer for *Folha de S. Paulo*. But the deeper reason for this business trip is quite different: it's Emanuela.

The two young people (they're both 28) have been writing to each other, nurturing their relationship with Facebook messages, emails and even snail mail letters sent through the post office, with long days of waiting between Italy and Brazil to finally have the envelope in hand. Or, occasionally, talking face-to-face and blowing kisses on Skype. Indeed, they're now a couple, long distance, separated by an ocean, but joined by two beating hearts.

Today, they had trouble finding each other at the Rho-Fieramilano train stop – crushed, concealed, mistaken identities – thanks to the crowd of Mido visitors spilling off two high-speed trains from Venice and Rome, full of people (700 in all) who had taken advantage of the free ride offered by Mido. By the time they were finally able to hug each other, in the area where the arrivals from the metro “red line” and the Rho-Fiera train station flow together, their embrace couldn't help but be emotionally charged. Including tears of joy. With an ocean between a man and a woman, love is, in fact, complicated and challenging, because it does not allow them to experience day-to-day life together, with the kind of familiarity that helps a relationship to grow. But, during the long wait, the desire to have one another close has been amplified and refined in the fires of expectation and distance.

Yes, they cried, kissing tenderly, and then held hands until they reached the East Gate entrance to Mido.

As usual, since her parents have been sending her to Mido by herself, Emanuela has a full schedule of things to do and see. But she's

not afraid. She's never been afraid of work. Tiago will follow her step by step, not wanting to miss even an instant of the three days they will spend together in Milan. Between work and pleasure.

So, Tiago was at her side the entire time, balancing the needs of his photo assignments with the other essential need: to look at his girlfriend, opening up space in his heart just for her. As the two moved from one stand to another, their amazement over what they saw grew and grew. Tiago, with his photographer's eye, is especially taken with Mido's communication campaign for this year's visitors: an undertaking the organizers termed "revolutionary" compared to past promotions. The spirit of creativity, dream-like visions and elegance in the images chosen by Mido blend with the inevitable references to the world of eyewear, with lenses and frames that pop-up out of images, transporting one's thoughts to other destinations...

The new exhibition layout, the same for all the pavilions, leads visitors on a more linear pathway from the Mido Design Lab to the Fashion District, from the lens area to Mido Tech and all the way to the Fair East Pavilion, the exclusive showcase for Asian products, with the participation of group stands from the most prominent Asian eyewear manufacturers. Alongside Emanuela, Tiago attended meetings, conferences and Otticlub continuing education courses (among the key topics: the application of progressive lenses and new marketing and communication strategies for optical shops in the age of social media), without ever getting tired; on the contrary, always driven by the desire to photograph his friend. Tiago and Emanuela, in fact, not only are in love, but they are developing the kind of understanding and familiarity that, even in love, has a special name: friendship. He has followed her through the entire show, seeking out innovations in the pavilions dedicated to frames and sunglasses, where he wore himself out photographing her with myriad new styles, and on to the futuristic LabAcademy and the entire Design Lab pavilion: an island-incubator of ideas, a very unique space, strictly by invitation, open only to a crew of emerging designers and creative talents. They saw them one by one: 21 interpretations of the future: Vue DC, Michel Henau, Yellow Plus, 8000 Eyewear, Vinylize, B. Barn's, Different, Suzy Glam, Full Spot, Sunpocket, Jean-Philippe Joly, Rigards, Nuiit, Kame ManNen, Dzim-ityry Samal, Raen Optics, Gouverneur Audigier, Dom Vetro and Blake Kuwahara, USH and Masuhiro Maruyama. They also visited the De

Rigo stand, where the Longarone-based company was celebrating the 30th anniversary of the first Sting collection.

Tiago unleashed all of his talent photographing the winners of the Bestand contest, awarded by Mido to the best stand/exhibitor, and the best optical shop layout among the entrants in the Bestore contest. He couldn't resist photographing Emanuela with the winners of the Bestand Award, the Blackfin brand by Pramaor located in Taibon Agordino, (last year the award went to Mena Marano's Naples-based Arav Fashion), and the Bestore Award winners, Leidmann of Munich, Germany.

The three days of the Show flew by like an unexpected blast of wind in the mountains, capable of grabbing everyone's attention. And Tiago's attention has been firmly focused on Emanuela.

"Come on, Tiago, I see the President of Mido over there. Come with me, I'd like to meet him".

As they approach the tall, elegant Cirillo Marcolin, Emanuela suddenly feels timid but she gets past it by stepping forward: "May I say hello?".

The President stops in front of the two young people: "I wanted to thank you for this spectacular edition of Mido...".

"We've had record numbers of visitors... 49,000 participants, more than we've ever had since our first edition in 1970, with a 56% increase in foreigners and a 10% increase in the number of Italians. Like you... but your friend..."

"He's Brazilian; he's a photographer for the São Paulo daily paper".

"Ahhh, my pleasure".

"Well, thanks, President Marcolin, we have to go now. As we say in Turin: We'll get out of your hair!".

Marcolin smiles and waves at the two as they leave.

"Listen, Emanuela, I want to ask you something: I still have two more days in Italy. What if I came to Turin with you?".

"I would love that, Tiago. I especially want you to meet my paternal grandfather. I adore him. You'll like him".

# More!

*New York, Fieramilano Rho, 27-29 February 2016*

Records are made to be broken. This idea is not new to the Mido organizers. In fact, it's their mantra. And, again this year, their hard work paid off, beating the records set in 2015. Which, at the time, were record-setting numbers in themselves.

Thus, between a Saturday and a Monday at the end of February, more than 1,200 exhibitors and 52,000 visitors (a 7% increase over 2015), participated in the 46th adventure of the global eyewear show in Milan.

Last December, while he was in New York speaking to the US press about Mido, President Cirillo Marcolin had a feeling that the past records were going to fall again this year. "After a record-setting 2015", declared Marcolin, "this edition also promises to be exceptional. We had to add more exhibit space because, in addition to confirmations from returning exhibitors, 106 new companies have chosen Mido to introduce themselves to the industry and launch their own collections. An even more meaningful outcome because, when you are a leader, when your market share is close to 100% and when the industry's top players are already on your exhibitor list, gaining new ground is not an easy task".

And, at the close of the 46th edition, in agreement with Vice President Giovanni Vitaloni, he shared his thoughts with the journalists: "These results strengthen our conviction that our ongoing, non-stop dedication to research and scouting out new businesses is the right path for us". Then Vitaloni added: "This Mido growth spurt confirms the positive trend the industry is currently experiencing, among both the large, well-established giants and the smaller, new businesses. We saw it at the Lab Academy, the area dedicated to companies making their debut in the marketplace. This year, there were twice as many participants there, compared to last year, with 40 new businesses that are approaching the world of eyewear for the first time".

No one in Giorgio's family was able to participate in Mido this year. Not through any fault of their own, nor because they registered

too late, not for illness or accident, but for a very happy occasion: Emanuela and Tiago got married! Exactly on the weekend that Mido was taking place...

So, they missed “More!”, the new exhibit space, a satellite of the now-famous Design Lab, designed to draw attention to the manufacturers of artisan-crafted eyewear. A sort of testing ground for ideas, concepts and experimentation influenced by other forms of artistic expression, like music and other performing arts. Popular beyond belief. They also missed the gratis train ride from Turin to Mido and back, added this year to the existing convoys of opticians from Venice and Rome. Nor did they participate in or photograph the Bestand Award (won this year by the British Inspeccs, that crafted its stand like a pub) or the award for the best optical shop in the world. And, above all, for once, no adrenaline-driven expeditions among the Fieramilano Rho halls in search of innovations, and collections to try on and hold in their hands. No price negotiations or orders placed for their optical shop. No forays into the halls of the Fashion District, lenses or Mido Tech, with its machinery, raw materials and components. No Far East Pavilion and no Otticlub with its continuing education classes.

For a year, all forgotten. But not quite. Because Tiago and Emanuela managed to keep up with Mido through social media at #MIDO2016, checking out the 10,000 posts on Instagram, Twitter and Facebook. Adding their “likes” and sharing images and photos...

Speaking of which, for the wedding photos, Tiago turned to the woman who had introduced him to the fascinating world of photography. When Tiago met Grandpa Giorgio, he told him about how he became interested in photography and took out his phone to show him the woman who had set him on that path. Giorgio’s face lit up...

Often, during the wedding, Giorgio and Carla exchanged glances. Without saying a word: surprised and touched by the mysterious intersection of destinies that was taking place before their eyes, and allowing them to meet once again.

# The glasses hype

*Fieramilano Rho, 25 - 27 February 2017*

This time it was Paolo and Cristina's turn to attend Mido. Out of duty (to re-stock their optical shop in Turin with the latest innovations) but, above all, for pleasure: three days of celebration, feasting their eyes on fabulous eyewear, the joy of seeing things of beauty, of imagination and creativity, of attention to detail, of fine craftsmanship and of an industry that also has the skills and techniques to hand-craft eyewear. Filling their eyes, like a breath of fresh air, a day in the mountains or at the seaside... Oddly enough, that's how it feels.

Emanuela and Tiago are in the midst of moving to a new house and had to pass on Mido this year. "We regret not being able to go to Mido. But we'll try to follow it on social media at #MIDO2017 and #LivetheWonder. Have a good trip", they wished Paolo and Cristina. This year, they're driving their car to the Show so they can have the freedom to return home once they have completed the rounds of all the stands they want to visit.

"Shall we go see the history of eyewear advertising exhibit? It covers ads from the early 1900's to the present. What do you say?"

"Perfect", replies Paolo: "it's in the "More!" area of Mido Design Lab. Pavilion 4. Let's go". It was curated by Francesco Pagliariccio, the scenographer whose work has transformed the look of Mido for the last few years.

The exhibit is installed in a darkened room which shows off the large photo reproductions of posters and ad campaigns from a vast number of eyewear manufacturers from around the world... from the early days in Cadore: Fedon, Baruffaldi, Safilo, Foca, Lozza, Salice, and foreign producers like Rodenstock, Zeiss, Régé Lunettes..., images of companies that extend from the distant past to the here and now. It is a sequence of names, stories, faces and eyewear that lead the mind from one era to another, assembling images by theme, but where eyewear are always the star players. Spectacles and technology, eyeglasses and men, eyeglasses and women, eyeglasses and children and so forth, by all means: seduction, sex, social standing; eyewear and celebrities, eyewear and sports, eyewear and lenses... "I like these, best of all", points Cristina. "Look at them, they're so extravagant yet extremely authentic in the message they send.

They were done by L.A. Eyeworks in 2000. Outrageous faces, almost like clowns, aren't they? All wrapped up in a blend of photos and graphic art with a phrase I would love to write on a wall in our optical shop: A face is like a work of art. It should be in a beautiful frame. Don't you agree?".

"Really, Cristina... if Vittorio Sgarbi could hear you, he'd think you're an art critic!"

"Go on, don't be silly! Have you seen these Lozza ads? They really make you want to buy eyewear, this truly is 'glasses hype'. They really knew how to build expectations around an identity-defining product like glasses. I'm going to buy the book about all these ads. It was produced by Nicola di Lernia and Ugo Bianco. I've heard of them... Ok?"

"Ok".

"Now, shall we get started on our usual rounds of the stands?"

"I'm ready!"

Paolo and Cristina have got it down to a science: first, the big-names; then, here and there looking for innovators, as always, among some of the lesser-known designers and manufacturers. One year, that's what they did: they purchased only hand-crafted frames and sunglasses by smaller, artisan manufacturers. But now they feel the need to take home some signature brands, too...

So, here they are at the Luxottica stand in the Fashion District. Paolo immediately spotted them: "Beautiful...". He tried them on. They're the Generals by Ray-Ban, squared shape, all-metal, with the new ultra-thin flat temples. "Frames and lenses", explains the stand assistant, "come in several colors".

Further along, they see Marchon: "Look, Paolo, these sunglasses are so cute; these oversized frames are open on the sides and have a geometric shape. Am I saying that right?"

Here's Safilo, also in Pavilion 1, in the Fashion District. Showcasing a teardrop-shaped optical frame in acetate; it's the Carrera 137/V, "a contemporary design but with a vintage vibe", a very tall brunette says to Paolo...

Cristina, instead, has made her way into the Marcolin stand and is already trying on a pair of round sunglasses by Moncler Lunettes. "A very bold, feminine design", remarks the stand assistant, "and it also comes in a more squared, unisex, version".

And De Rigo? "Paolo, come here, try these on". They're at the Longarone Group stand. It's called Multiplayer by Sting Eyewear and is a two-in-one piece



of eyewear. An easily-attached wrap-around transforms prescription eyewear into sunglasses. “They rock. I want to get them for the shop”, says Paolo.

Then, smartphone in hand, he gives her a brief lesson in eyewear marketing: “The big names in eyewear are in fierce competition on at least four levels: always new styles, acquiring and renewing license agreements, expansion of the brands in their portfolios – in-house and licensed – and penetration of new markets, especially into retail, buying up chains or making partnership agreements. Over the years, Marcolin has strengthened its northern market, extended the Tom Ford license and signed an agreement with Moncler. De Rigo, in turn, scored an array of new license agreements, like those with Zadig&Voltaire, Momodesign, Trussardi, Nina Ricci and dunhill. What about Luxottica? Umm... wait a second...here it is, Luxottica fought back by partnering with Michael Kors... and then struck again, stealing Valentino from Marchon and bringing it in house... not to mention purchasing the Salmoiraghi&Viganò optical chain. Yes, that’s it. At that point, Marchon eased the pain by renewing its license with Lacoste... and replacing its management, with an all-Italian switch from the outgoing Gottardi to the young Nicola Zotta. Meantime, Marcolin signed a joint venture with LVMH, turning it over to Giovanni Zoppas. And De Rigo, you’re wondering? In 2016 it opened new branches in the United States and in Australia... In other words, I’ve given you an overview of the almost all-Italian, competitors, right?”.

“Amazing, Paolo, I didn’t know you were so well-versed on the subject; even though, it’s true, you only read the news here and there, on websites and on line...”.

“You always bring me down”...

The next day Paolo and Cristina made an appointment with Alessandro Spiezia, the prominent optician from Rome, who was celebrating the company’s 50th anniversary. Grandpa Giorgio had asked them to stop by and say hello. They called to arrange the meeting and now, they’re here. Alessandro asks for news of their grandfather: “He’s doing great”, says Paolo, “but, at 82, he’s slowing down and letting us do the work. Lately, he’s also been rather uncommunicative. And, he’s taken up writing. He says he wants to write his memoirs, but I must say that none of us, not even his wife, has read even one page of this phantom life story. He writes, filling page after page, then locks it all away in a drawer. He says we’ll read it after he’s gone”.

“Moments of reflection... as you get older, you want to sum up your life... Please give him my regards”.

# Through the looking glass

*Fieramilano Rho, 24-26 February 2018*

*Cadore, 10-12 December 2018*

This year, they joined the others who were taking advantage of the free trip on the Frecciarossa train to Milan, chartered by Mido to take Italian opticians to the 2018 edition of the Show. Emanuela and Tiago are using the Show as an opportunity to mix business and pleasure. He's still working as a freelance photographer. They each got two cool new pairs of glasses for Mido. He's wearing a round optical '20s and '30s style, designed by Lucio Stramare for the Archivio Moderno collection by Archivio 23. Last year, the Mestre-based company tied with Belluno-based Vista Eyewear as equal merit winners of the Bestand (best stand at Mido) Award. Emanuela, instead is wearing Vista Eyewear's chic Carmen optical frame designed by Claudio Dalla Longa, for the Mad in Italy brand. That's right: Mad, without the final 'e'...

The 2017 edition of Mido was a triumphant success. There were 55,000 visitors, with a 5.5% increase over 2016. More than 1,200 eyewear businesses exhibited their products and showcased their wares in the Fieramilano Rho pavilions: Pavilion 2 (Fashion District), Pavilion 4 (Design Lab and Design Tech), side-by-side and connected by a white tunnel to Pavilion 6 (home of More Design); also side-by-side and directly accessible were Pavilions 1 (Fashion District) and 3 (lens manufacturing area); as were Pavilions 5 (Mido Tech) and 7 (Mido FAiR East Pavilion, dedicated to Asian manufacturers).

But, there's always room to do more. The new Anfao and Mido President, Giovanni Vitaloni, who inherited the passion for innovation from Marcolin, is keenly focused on all things new.

The two young newlyweds – it's only been a year – are already inside the fairgrounds and are browsing today's copy of *Midodaily*. "This edition", reads Tiago out loud, pronouncing the words spoken yesterday by President Vitaloni at the Mido press conference, "will embody the enthusiasm, ideas, projects and driving force behind innovation in a constantly evolving sector, where companies that are *avant-garde* in terms of research and development seek to boldly and creatively reinvent an

item which, for centuries, perched on our faces, has characterized our identity like no other”.

“Well, that last phrase would look good written on the wall of our optical shop, wouldn’t it?”, exclaims Emanuela.

“Why not... Ask your dad!”.

“Keep reading, go on...”

“OK: This year there are 1,305 exhibitors, another absolute record in Mido’s history; a larger space is dedicated to “More!”, the pavilion that hosts the manufacturers of high-tech machinery for the eyewear industry; and it will be the first edition of the prevention-focused Eye Health Awareness drive promoted by Vittorio Tabacchi, President of the Eye Care Commission; and the Bestore Award has been doubled ...”.

“Tiago... I’ll tell you where we should go, right now. To the De Rigo stand; they’re celebrating the 140th anniversary of Lozza eyewear and their company’s 40th”.

But Tiago puts his foot down: “We can go in the afternoon. There’s a big celebration going on at the stand. For now, let’s wander around at random. Actually, you know what? Let’s go check out the Asian manufacturers”.

He was right. The Far East has made great strides in the quality of its eyewear, thanks in part to steadfast participation in Mido. While checking out the stands in the FAiR East Pavilion, Tiago and Emanuela catch sight of President Vitaloni with an Asian guest. “Who is he?”, asked Tiago of one of Vitaloni’s staff: “His name is Benjamin Chau, he’s the Executive Vice Director of a company in Hong Kong called HKTDG that has been participating in Mido for more than 20 years”. “Apparently”, adds Vitaloni, who heard the young man’s question, “they believe Mido is the most prestigious showcase for reaching international buyers”.

Then, off they went to Pavilion 2. At Mido, it’s possible to make the rounds of the Show without having a specific destination, simply following one’s eyes to the most attractive displays and the most interesting people. “My name is Tiziano Tabacchi. I would like to introduce you to this new project we call MiC; it stands for Made in Cadore”, he says, addressing Tiago and Emanuela, who were passing by the stand of Imagine 98, headquartered in Calalzo di Cadore. Tabacchi has worked with Safilo and Marcolin in the past and is the designer of the project that brings together a group of companies from the Cadore area. “The habitat and the colors of the Dolomite mountains are the inspiration

behind the design of our eyewear. MiC comprises 12 styles: eight for prescription eyewear and four sun styles. All of them are an expression of Italy's traditional craftsmanship skills. It's a line that pays homage to our local area and at the same time embodies its values and beauty".

It's now afternoon and Tiago and Emanuela have stopped to check out the Fedon eyeglass cases before heading over to the De Rigo stand. A tall, distinguished man approaches them, in 'ecstasy' over the stunningly beautiful, elegant not-your-usual cases... "These are green cases", he explains, "they represent an eco-revolution in the production process. The company began by studying the life-cycle of the product – to understand, quantify and try to reduce the impact of the resources taken from the environment and the emissions sent back into the environment. This Mido display is the outcome of our insights: a collection of cases dedicated to the environment and to its unique qualities".

"Thanks, they're very lovely", comments Emanuela.

"Thank you. I am Callisto Fedon. We are located in Alpago, in the province of Belluno".

Everyone is on deck at the De Rigo Vision stand, another Cadore-based company – to celebrate the 140th anniversary of Lozza (the Group's house brand since 1983) and the 40th anniversary of the founding of Charme Lunettes by Walter and Ennio De Rigo – including Emiliana, Ennio's wife, and their children, Barbara and Massimo, now on the front line in managing the company. There's quite a crowd around the stand and Tiago and Emanuela work their way inside. Barbara De Rigo, Marketing and Communications Manager, is speaking: "We created this commemorative style for the 140th anniversary of Lozza", holding it in the palm of her hand, "it is a special edition with an all-titanium frame that pays homage to the iconic style of the longest-lived eyewear brand in Italy. We made 140 numbered pieces in each color version". Then, it's the turn of the 40th anniversary of the founding of what has become a giant in global eyewear: "One of the most meaningful insights in the success of De Rigo Vision", emphasizes Barbara, "was knowing how to capitalize on the know-how and skills acquired in the production of eyewear for internationally-known designer and fashion brands to the benefit of our own house brands. The investments in the creation of the Police brand in 1983, and Sting in 1985, and the purchase of Lozza in 1983, proved to be crucial in impart-

ing a hallmark personality to the business, strengthened by innovative, effective marketing and communications strategies. And now, I invite everyone to toast these two anniversaries that are so very meaningful to us". During the toast, Mido honored the De Rigos with a lifetime achievement award.

"Just think how happy Grandpa Giorgio would be if he were here...", says Emanuela, pulling Tiago closer as they toast the honorees.

"He didn't feel up to it..."

"No. He says he wants to stay calm, that he's doing some writing; every so often he comes into the shop... His mood is unpredictable. At times, he's euphoric, others, sad; poor Grandpa..."

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Giorgio is on his way to Cadore. It's December. His gaze, protected by a brand-new pair of limited-edition Zilos his family gave him for his 83rd birthday, is focused on the magnificent but scarred landscape before him. Little by little, as the train climbs, broader glimpses of the environmental disaster begin to appear; landslides and flooding in October caused by high gusts of wind and heavy rainfall leveled entire swaths of forest. At Calalzo he found lodging at his usual hotel and, in complete tranquility, continued writing his story – his strange, very strange story, of his relationship with Carla – begun at Mido, corroborated, fueled, and punctuated by the cadence of a trade show. Unbelievable! But so calming and comforting; 'magical', comes to mind. "It seems like a fairy tale..."

He has almost finished his book 'Through the looking glass: Mido, 50 years a global crossroads'; it's down to the final chapters. Every so often, he goes back, rereading, correcting, clarifying, then he gets emotional over certain pages, overcome by memories... He understands he didn't lose himself with Carla, on the contrary... he rediscovered himself. He lost nothing; he gained everything. For him, Carla was not a home-wrecker. Although, in most cases, that is what happens. Miraculously, for him, it was different, an almost 'spiritual', experience...

Giorgio has also set aside some time to visit several of the local eyewear companies and call on a few old friends. Like Toni Frescura. Giorgio is moved when he drops in to see him in his workshop in Calalzo, where the nimble codger still lives and works with the same passionate energy as always. A whole lot of Italian and global eyewear

history is encapsulated in that one name: Frescura.

Upon seeing each other, the two men embrace warmly.

"I'm here to finish writing a story... begun at Mido".

"You're also a writer?"

"No, I'm just writing about my life... through the lens of Mido. Yours, too, has been deeply influenced by this trade show ...".

Toni tells Giorgio that there have been two major milestones in his professional career: Lozza and Mido. "Listen, Giorgio, I was 15 and a half when I went to work down the road at Lozza, along with my father. I worked there for a year and a half. They made gorgeous eyewear at Lozza... Well, you know what I think? For me, working there was like attending university... And then, what can I say about Mido? Of course, I have been part of it since the beginning. It was a lot smaller then, perhaps a little haphazard. But the opticians came in droves, especially the Italians, who are still my clients here at Kador, and this was crucial. It was worthwhile for us to be there, and still is today..."

That evening, he decided not to go out to eat. Instead, he stayed in his hotel room and continued with his writing; writing and remembering. At this point, the scenes that describe his conversations with Carla are the most recent and the memories more palpable...

The next day, he rented a car and drove beyond Calalzo, past the former Safilo factory, set below him, in a hollow. And, before going further, he stopped to admire the view, recalling the trip there that he, Maria and baby Paolo had made so many years ago.

In the town of Sant'Anna in Lozzo di Cadore, in a modern facility whose architecture reflects the atmosphere of the spectacular mountain setting (the mountains themselves are part of the company's logo), Giorgio is about to visit the Ioves factory. He's heard a lot about them, especially at Mido, and now, he's face to face with Rodolfo Costan, heir to a family business that is nearing its 70th anniversary. Authentic and down-to-earth, Rudy to his friends, he is the President of a company that has always staked its chances on Mido: "You see, Giorgio, thanks to the contacts we made at Mido, we now sell our products in 45 countries around the world. For us, that is phenomenal. What it means is that, now – with the third generation in place here – 90% of our customers are based overseas and exports make up 80% of our overall sales".

A few kilometers further up the road, half way between Lozzo and Calalzo, Giorgio is paying a visit to another historic Cadore business

that today, is known as Thema and is run by Roberto Valmassoi. The Valmassoi family has been in the eyewear industry for decades. Roberto's brother, Renato, heads Trevi Coliseum eyewear, founded by the family in Domegge di Cadore in 1971, and has since opened a manufacturing facility in the industrial area of Longarone. Roberto remained in Domegge to lead a related project.

Giorgio receives a warm welcome. All the doors are open to him, all the way to the company's immense showroom where the state-of-the-art biometric frame system is installed. It allows them to custom-produce biometric frames. A system of cameras scans the customer's face, then uses the scan to produce a 3D image that allows the customer to virtually 'try on' the company's dozens of acetate frames to determine the perfect style and fit. Roberto is extremely proud of it but, reminiscing with Giorgio, the conversation inevitably comes back to Mido, to its pioneering beginnings and the participation of Cadore-based companies in the early days of the Show.

"Do you remember what it was like, Giorgio... it was so exciting to be at Mido. My first time was in 1971. It was a game-changer for those of us from the Cadore area. Many of the medium-sized, small and tiny companies already had foreign clients, with exports that ranged from 20% to 80% of their total sales, but most of our clients never came to our factories! Which is why Mido, almost like magic, allowed us to meet our foreign clients in person, and the many others who followed. My birthday is on May 8th. I can't tell you how many birthdays I spent at Mido, rather than at home, Giorgio..."

"I get it..."

"Back then, the local economy depended heavily on the eyewear industry. On Tuesdays, when we got home from the Show, people in the other industries would ask us: How did it go at Mido? And they explained that if Mido was successful, things would go well for the entire Cadore economy!"

Giorgio is back at home in Turin. The book is in his desk, under lock and key. He finished writing it up there, in the shadow of the Dolomite mountains. He's had dinner; is happy, serene. And, in bed, he embraces his beloved Maria. He's accomplished what he set out to do: write his memoirs. An eternal gesture of thanks to his destiny...





# MIDO X 50

## 2020

*Fieramilano Rho, 29 February 2020*

“Grandpa, do you still have the Mido app on your smartphone, the one I downloaded for you last year?”

“Of course, I have it. And I will use it just like you young people do. I have also learned how to use social media... I’m crazy about Facebook, Instagram (right now, it’s my favorite) and the various functions in WhatsApp”.

“Good for you, Grandpa!”, exclaims Emanuela. “And the hashtags? Do you use them?”.

“I couldn’t live without them...”.

“Ha ha ha”.

“Go on, make fun of me but, on our home computer, I have already watched many of the interviews aired last year on MidoTV and I checked out the posts at #MIDO2019. During the three days of the last edition of Mido, this hashtag scored more than a million Facebook and Instagram impressions”.

“That’s amazing, you’re really on top of things, Grandpa...”.

“I know, I know...”, he laughs.

Giorgio is especially happy this morning. He’s on the high-speed train with his granddaughter and her husband. It will take them from Turin to the Rho Fieramilano station and from there, they will make their way to the East Gate of the expo center.

This is a big moment for all of them: 50 years of Mido is a milestone for thousands of people. The Mido website has already been mobbed with registrations from manufacturers and businesses from around the world. Already in, the ever-present Charmant, Japanese giant that, in 1982, introduced the industry to the use of titanium, a versatile, flexible, hypoallergenic and durable raw material. But, first in line to register was US-based Marchon of the VSP Global Group, with its Italian president, Nicola Zotta, and managed by ophthalmologists who helped the company launch its now-familiar slogan “look

better, see better and feel better”. And, along with them, hundreds and hundreds of other businesses in the supply chain...

Last year, there were 59,500 visitors, another record for the annals of Mido. But in the coming years, say ten years from now, will Mido still be the same?

The other day, Giorgio had the fortitude to pay a visit to Mido President, Vitaloni, at his office in the Nico-design headquarters in Turin. And he asked him, point blank: “You are at the helm of Mido today, what do you think it will be like in the coming years? Will it still exist?”.

“You’re asking me if it will continue to exist? My answer is yes, of course. Will it have a different formula? Without a doubt. In today’s global economy, everything changes in the short period of six months; we will keep pace with the times. But we will need to transform Mido from an international eyewear trade show that takes place over three days each year into a business tool for companies that works for them every day. How? That’s something we’ll have to all figure out together. Perhaps by strengthening our partnership with Silmo Paris. There’s a lot to be said for working with Amelie Morel, President of Silmo Paris. I think the outlook is quite hopeful”.

They parted ways cordially; he, the aging optician from Turin and the young President of the leading global eyewear exhibition.

Giorgio’s focus and instincts were right on this time, too. Indeed, the questions he asked Vitaloni have been a topic of great discussion for months now among the members of Mido’s Managing Board. And, in this perspective, the President of the Milanese show seems intent on building bridges with Silmo Paris. The interest seems to be mutual. Vitaloni recently received a message from Amelie Morel, as owner, with Jerome and Francis, of the Morel brand, with regard to the 50th anniversary celebrations: “Dear Mr. Vitaloni, as a family business, we have participated in Mido since the very first edition and today we are even more proud to have been, in 1970, the only French eyewear manufacturer to have exhibited! We have grown up with Mido; your Show is an appointment we can’t miss, the one where, each year, we can present our Fall-Winter collections”. A high compliment, indeed...

A few days later, over lunch, in a restaurant on Milan’s Corso Sempione, not far from Mido and Anfao headquarters in via Alberto

Riva Villasanta, the members of the Show's Managing Board met to freely exchange their views, and Vitaloni was present. Lorraine Berton, co-owner, with her sister Elena, of Belluno-based Arlecchino Eyewear, is seated opposite the charming Paolo Pettazzoni, of Optovista, Bologna-based lens manufacturer. Seated next to Berton is Nicola Del Din, of Agordo-based Blackfin-Pramaor who, in turn, is seated opposite Renato Sopracolle, the Cadore-based global contract manufacturer. President Vitaloni is on the side of the table facing the only empty seat.

Between a nibbled bread stick and sips of water, the discussions intersect, break off and restart, as they wait for their first course to arrive and Giovanni has trouble following all of them. "Paolo", says Lorraine, addressing Pettazzoni, while also looking at Vitaloni, "we are starting from a point of strength: it's clear to everyone that if you don't participate in Mido it's like saying you don't exist. In recent years, the Show has been invested in serving the needs of producers but we need to continue to look for new formulas...". "Lorraine", says Pettazzoni "bringing the entire supply chain together in three days, in the same location, is a unique accomplishment and remains such. The Show must be attractive and have drawing power; we need to focus more on the visitors, on the opticians...". Meanwhile, their first courses have arrived. "Certainly", interjects Sopracolle, "the trend is to go all-in on digital. But we can't sacrifice the decisive aspect of doing business: meeting in person, discussing, listening to the opinions of others, in a physical location...". "Therein lies the difference", interrupts Lorraine Berton: "it's the relationships that make a difference, the actual face-to-face meetings between people, when they look each other in the eye". "Believe me", says Nicola Del Din, adding his two-cents worth, "if I had not come to Mido, in person, as a visitor, I would not have found the inspiration for our adventure into the world of titanium eyewear. At Mido we found our 'Stargate'... I am a huge fan of technology but only a show like this allows you to experience the emotional aspect that is also essential in business...". "Now, however, let's eat", says the President, ending the discussion, "We'll delve deeper into it back at the office. Ok? Enjoy your meal".

Just then, two faces appear in the restaurant's window: "Here they are", exclaims Vitaloni, "I was expecting them". It's Elena Orsi Mazzucchelli, product manager for the legendary Varese-based company,

in business for 170 years, and Michele Aracri, Ceo of De Rigo. They are both actively involved, as counselors, in shaping Mido's future... "Come in, come in", Vitaloni greets them warmly. "We were expecting you. You need to be part of the discussion we have begun. Let's pull-up another table and, in the meantime think about what you want to order, so we don't waste any time".

\*\*\*

It was very kind of the grandkids to agree to take Grandpa with them to the big Mido 2020 celebration. But Giorgio has come up with his own dramatic surprise... The train is unloading the crowd of people who will soon find themselves wandering through the pavilions of Mido; Giorgio looks around. "You two go on ahead, don't wait for me; I'm moving slowly these days. But I know the way and how to get in".

"Ok, Grandpa. We don't want to miss even a second of the Show. We'll see you inside".

"Ok".

Giorgio's carefully orchestrated plan is about to fall into place. He continues walking confidently toward the East Gate: the designated meeting place. Who is he meeting? Carla, of course! At a certain point, among the lines of people waiting for Security to check their purses, bags and jackets, he sees blonde locks that can only belong to her: "Carla! Carla! I'm here".

Moments later, they're face to face. Carla never returned to Brazil and is once again living in Rho. She is retired and works as a freelance photographer. "Carla, I saw your photos on Instagram. You're phenomenal, in everything you do!".

"You're too kind and generous", she replies, looking at him with her deep blue eyes.

"Carla, I wanted to see you... and you know why; I have always wanted to have you near me, to be able to – may I say – contemplate you. You have been so good for me. Today, I wanted to give you a special gift: over the last two years, I have been writing our story... Yes, our relationship, our friendship. No one would believe us, if we were ever to tell anyone about it, that we have lived our... our mutual affection, in this way. Look, Carla, it's a book, I had it printed by a friend of mine, a professional printer; the whole story is here; I wanted

to put down, in black and white, what you have meant to me. Please, take it. There are no other copies; it's for you and you alone. It's titled 'Through the looking glass'. It's a beautiful journey we've taken together. But now...", he looks at her intensely, wistfully..., "I must say goodbye. I've decided to go back home; I've lost my desire to go to Mido. Mido is for young people. It's for my granddaughter and her husband. I'm maybe done with it. Long live Mido, which allowed our story to unfold".

"Carla... may I give you a hug?"

"Of course, you can. I want you to".

Giorgio and Carla embrace. He lays his head on her chest, she strokes his snow-white hair. They remain like this for some time, while a growing crowd of Mido visitors heading to the East Gate hurries past them. Then, Giorgio pulls away and starts to leave. He has said and done what he needed to do.

"Wait, Giorgio. I also have something I want to tell you. On the nights when we were together, I told you everything about me. About the traumas I experienced, the lack of affection when I was growing up and, as an adult, my inability to commit to one person for the rest of my life. I have never lacked for suitors but I never gave in. You are the only person I have given myself to, and not just my body. I gave you all of me".

Carla steps closer to Giorgio, who looks at her with tears in his eyes... "Every year, I waited for you; I waited for Mido as if it were my moment... You were my comfort, the exquisite tenderness and sensitive affection that I had never known; you were like the early morning sun... And then I let you go, back to your true, forever love for Maria. I'm grateful I didn't break up your marriage but rather, contributed – 'oddly enough' as you say – to making it more real. And, in any case, Giorgio", now the tears run freely down Carla's face, her voice breaking with emotion, "I feel like saying to you and to her: forgive me for having troubled your marriage".

Carla and Giorgio go their separate ways. She walks into the exhibition halls; she's taking photos for a trade magazine. She's good at what she does; no doubt her photos will be excellent. Inside Mido, life is throbbing; and the future of eyewear is here – as last year's slogan clearly stated.

Giorgio sees a train arriving that can take him right back to Turin. He can buy his ticket from the train conductor; it will cost a few euros more... oh, well! So, he takes out his cell phone and calls Emanuela's number: "Manu, Manu, it's me, Grandpa. Listen, I've decided to go back home. I imagine Grandma Maria will be happy to see me. At nearly 85, I still want to spend time with her. She'll be surprised to see me but, no doubt, happy. She still dotes on me!"

"Grandpa, you're incredible! Don't worry about us. Do what you want to do. That will be a wonderful surprise for Grandma. A demonstration of great fondness. Bye, have a great trip. Hey... do you have your sunglasses? It's a bright sunny day".

# THE HISTORY OF MIDO IN PHOTOS

**Photographic record**

1

# OTTICA ITALIANA

ANNO XI  
N. 4  
Federazione Nazionale "Ottici" Società Ottica Spagnuolo e Foto - Ottica  
"FEDEROTTICA" 31  
SEDE: ROMA, VIALE MONTENAPOLEONE, 101  
Roma, Palazzo Spagnuolo, Tel. 06/47.10.101  
Pubblicazione Mensile  
APRILE 1970  
Sottoscrizione: 10.000 Lire  
Vendita: 1.000 Lire

PREVISTE PER IL "MI DO 70" IN FAVOREVOLI RIPCERCUSSIONI

## La grande Mostra di ottica e oftalmologia di Milano destinata al più vivo successo

Si terrà dal 14 al 18 corrente nel quartiere della Fiera

### Primo punto di incontro

La Mostra di ottica e oftalmologia di Milano, che si terrà dal 14 al 18 corrente nel quartiere della Fiera, è la più grande manifestazione del suo genere in Italia. La Mostra è organizzata dalla Federazione Nazionale "Ottici" Società Ottica Spagnuolo e Foto - Ottica "FEDEROTTICA" 31, che ha sede a Roma, Viale Montena-  
napoleone, 101. La Mostra è la prima di una serie di iniziative che la Federazione intende realizzare nel corso dell'anno, al fine di promuovere la cultura ottica e oftalmologica e di favorire l'attività commerciale e professionale degli ottici italiani.

La Mostra è un evento importante per gli ottici italiani, che potranno così confrontarsi con i colleghi di altre città e con i più recenti sviluppi della tecnologia ottica e oftalmologica. La Mostra è anche un'occasione per gli ottici italiani di presentare i loro prodotti e servizi ai visitatori, che potranno così conoscere di persona le innovazioni e le specialità della ottica italiana. La Mostra è un evento che si terrà in un luogo prestigioso, il quartiere della Fiera, e che sarà aperto a tutti, senza alcun costo di ingresso.

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### M.I.D.O. - 1970

14 - 18 MAGGIO  
PAL. DI FIERA DI MILANO

Comitato Organizzativo

Presidente: **Enrico Basso**  
Vice-Presidenti: **Enrico Basso**, **Enrico Basso**  
Relatori: **Enrico Basso**, **Enrico Basso**

Comitato Scientifico  
Presidente: **Enrico Basso**  
Relatori: **Enrico Basso**, **Enrico Basso**

Programma  
14 - 15 MAGGIO: **Enrico Basso**  
16 - 17 MAGGIO: **Enrico Basso**  
18 MAGGIO: **Enrico Basso**

Relatori: **Enrico Basso**, **Enrico Basso**  
Relatori: **Enrico Basso**, **Enrico Basso**

LA TRADIZIONE **Ratti: 53** ANNI AL SERVIZIO ESCLUSIVO DELL'OTTICO

2



3



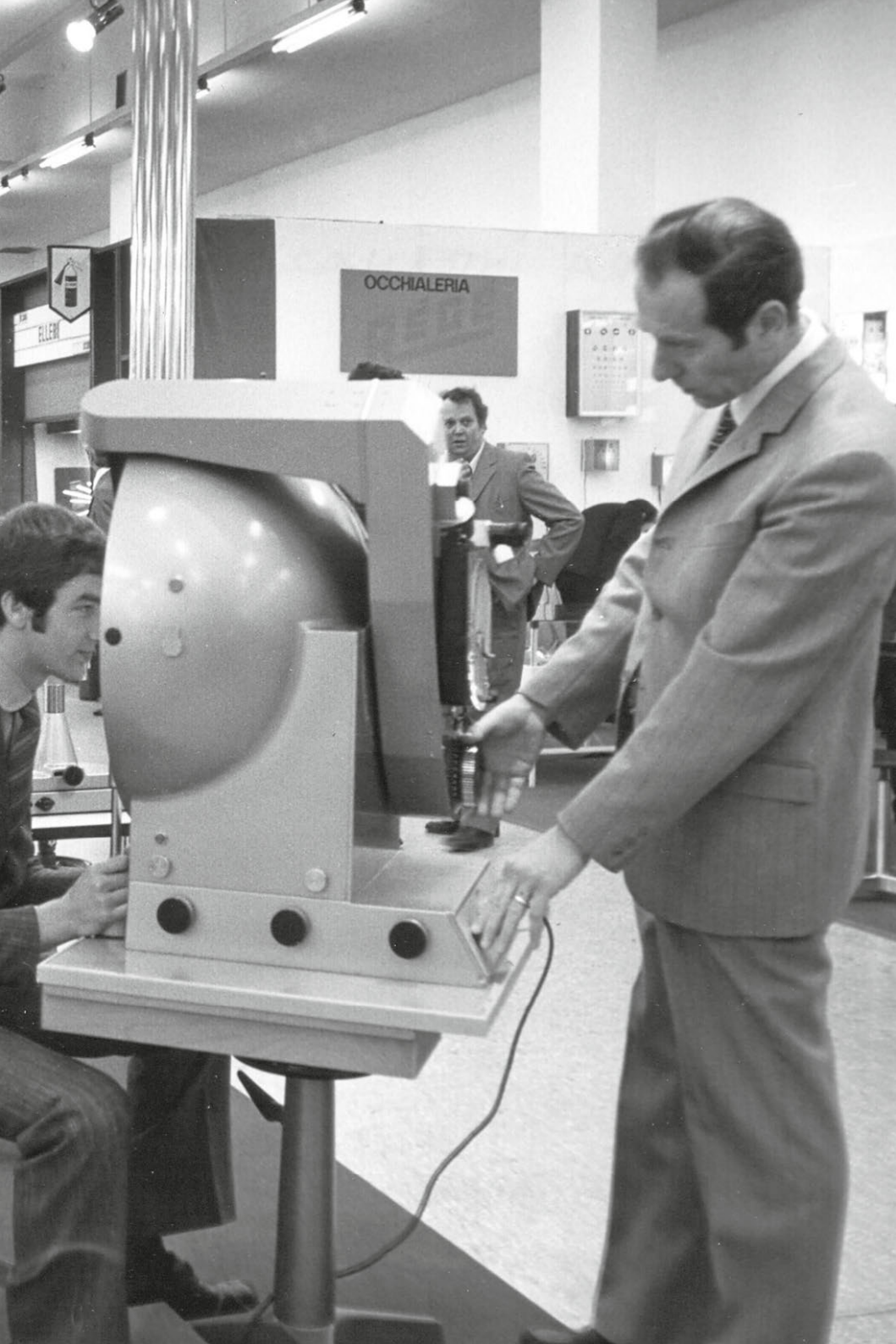


**MIDO 72**  
Mostra internazionale di ottica-optometria  
e oftalmologia  
26 - 30 maggio 1972

April 1970, Ottica italiana (1) the trade magazine for opticians, announces the launch of MI-DO, the "Optics and Ophthalmology Exhibition" that will take place May 14-18, at Milan's fair district (2). "Sure to be a huge success" proclaims the magazine's headline. Fifty years later, it's quite clear that the headline writer got it right. Fifty editions of an Exhibition are time-tested proof of a seamless success. Initially, there was also talk of 'la' Mido, giving the noun for 'show' feminine gender, but the masculine 'il' Mido quickly prevailed. The eyewear exhibition debuts as a biennial event. In fact, in 1971 it was not held, but in 1972, it was 'back by popular demand', one could say, and has been held annually ever since. Initially, the stands were called "stalls" (3), and they looked more like stores than the stands we are accustomed to nowadays. In 1972 (4) Mido gained an "O" for optometry as part of its name; indeed, opticians visiting Mido also find the manufacturers of eye exam equipment (5).







6



7



*The history of Mido in photos*



10

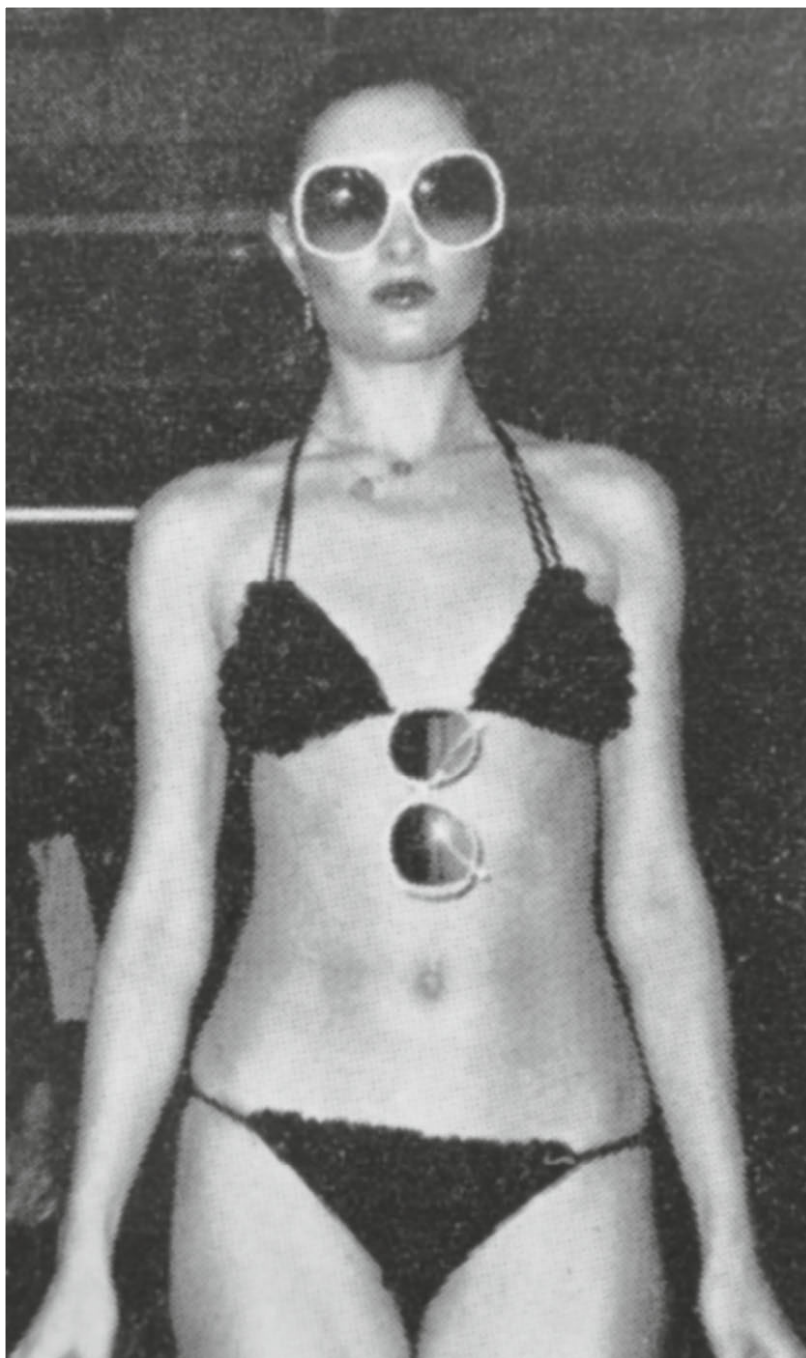


*From the very first editions, Mido draws eyewear professionals from around the world and at Fiera Milano the exhibition expands to occupy several floors. In 1977, the first runway show with fashion models wearing eyewear takes place (10) while, in addition to stands, some exhibitors limited their space to tables “lavishly set” with eyewear and cases (11).*

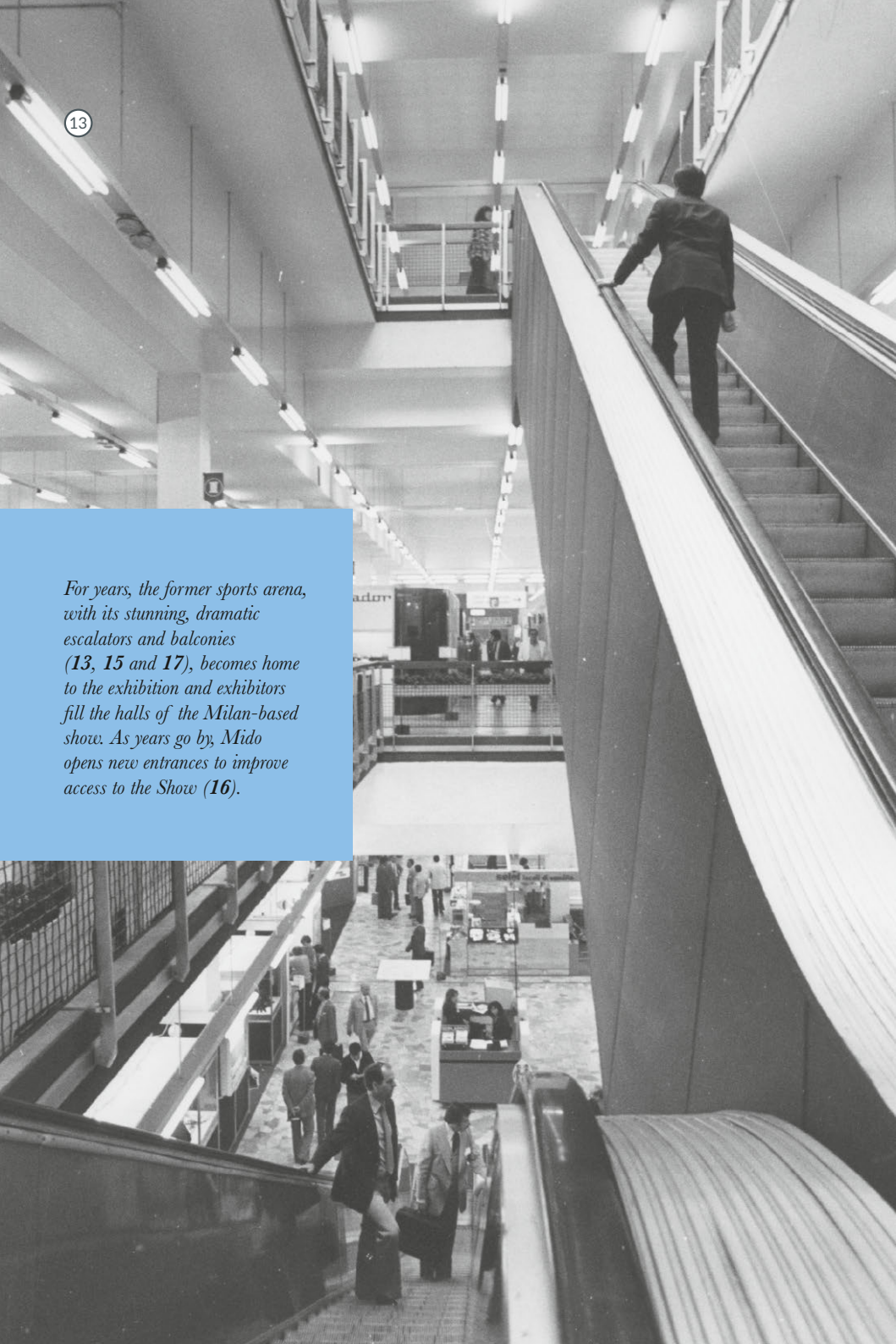


11









*For years, the former sports arena, with its stunning, dramatic escalators and balconies (13, 15 and 17), becomes home to the exhibition and exhibitors fill the halls of the Milan-based show. As years go by, Mido opens new entrances to improve access to the Show (16).*



14



15



16

17



18



*In the '80s, the stands were still fairly unadorned and simple in appearance (18, 19) because, in the end, what really matters is meeting clients, displaying samples and making sales.*

*In 1998, Mido relocates to the former Alfa Romeo factory in Milan's Portello district, where it will remain for nearly 10 years.*







22



*On 7 May, 1999, Mido takes the heart of the city by storm with an unforgettable performance at the Sforzesco Castle (23) and, in the years that follow the Show's image becomes more and more spectacular, and the exhibitors' individual stands follow suit (25).*

23











DESIGNED BY TATIANA  
AND MARK  
MADE IN  
SPAIN 2014



*In 2007, Mido again relocates, this time to Fieramilano Rho (27): much more space, but no longer in the city center (even today, some still lament the change, but there are advantages to the new location). That same year, Mido celebrates its new location with a huge event, a preview showing of the first 40 years of Mido (28). And also brings back the traditional fashion runway with models wearing eyeglasses (26). The impressive Eyewear Museum in Pieve di Cadore (30) also opened in 2007. At Fieramilano, once again, the halls of Mido are packed with visitors (29).*





27



28



29



30



31



32



33



34





35



In 2010, a massive photo exhibit (31) celebrates Mido's 40th anniversary (32) and, not long after, the installations in the pavilions also blossom with boldly inventive scenographic installations (34). The Show is in an ongoing state of renovation, concentrating on different aspects of eyewear production – the designers, the companies that produce machinery for the optical and ophthalmic industries, equipment for opticians, lens manufacturers... in other words, the entire supply chain is represented; no other trade show in the world dares as much. The Midodaily visitor guide, edited by the staff of Ottica italiana, is essential to finding one's way to all the events the Show has to offer (36). As expected, opticians are the beneficiaries of special Mido focus, with training seminars and continuing education courses (37).



36



37



38



*In recent years, it has become a tradition for Mido to offer free train travel to opticians arriving from various parts of Italy (39).*

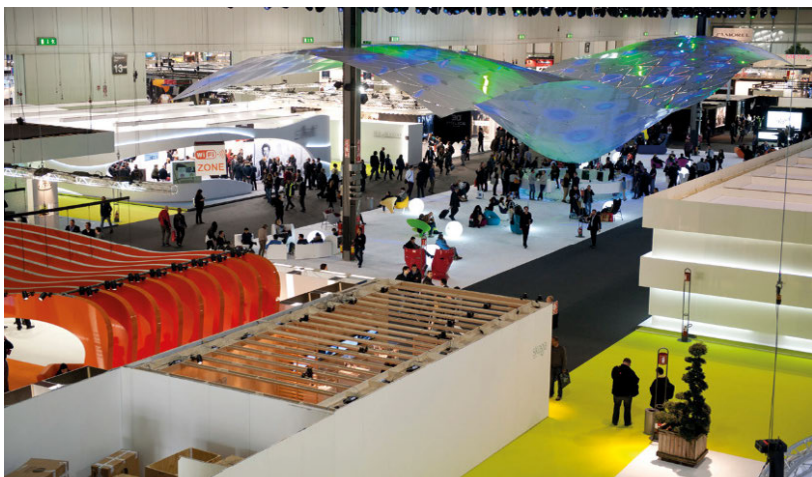


(41)



*The history of Mido in photos*

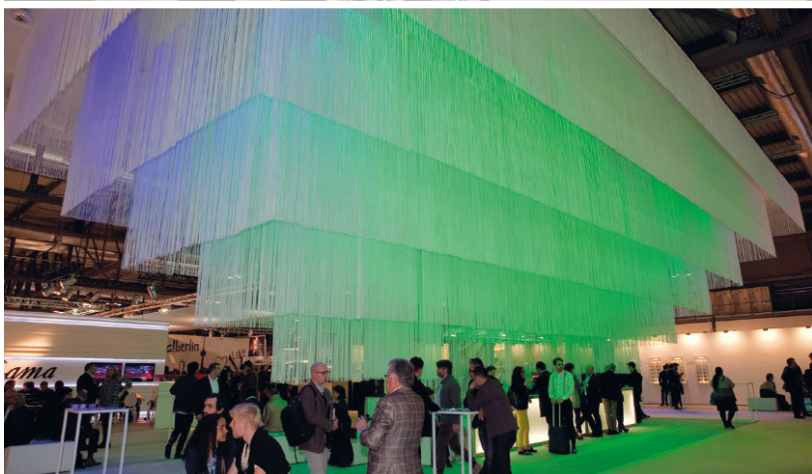
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43



44















*From 2015 forward, Mido's organizers focus on promoting the event through elegant ad campaigns: Acquario, one of the 4 subjects of the MIDO 2017 campaign (48).*

Milano Eyewear Show  
**25, 26, 27 febbraio | 2017**



mido.com

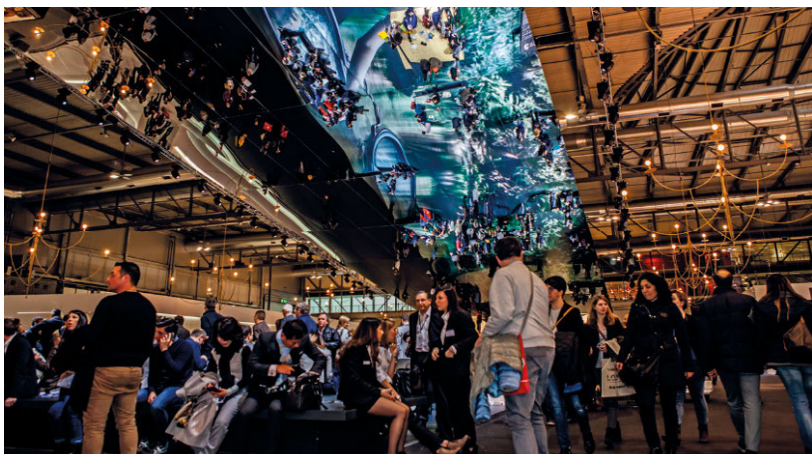








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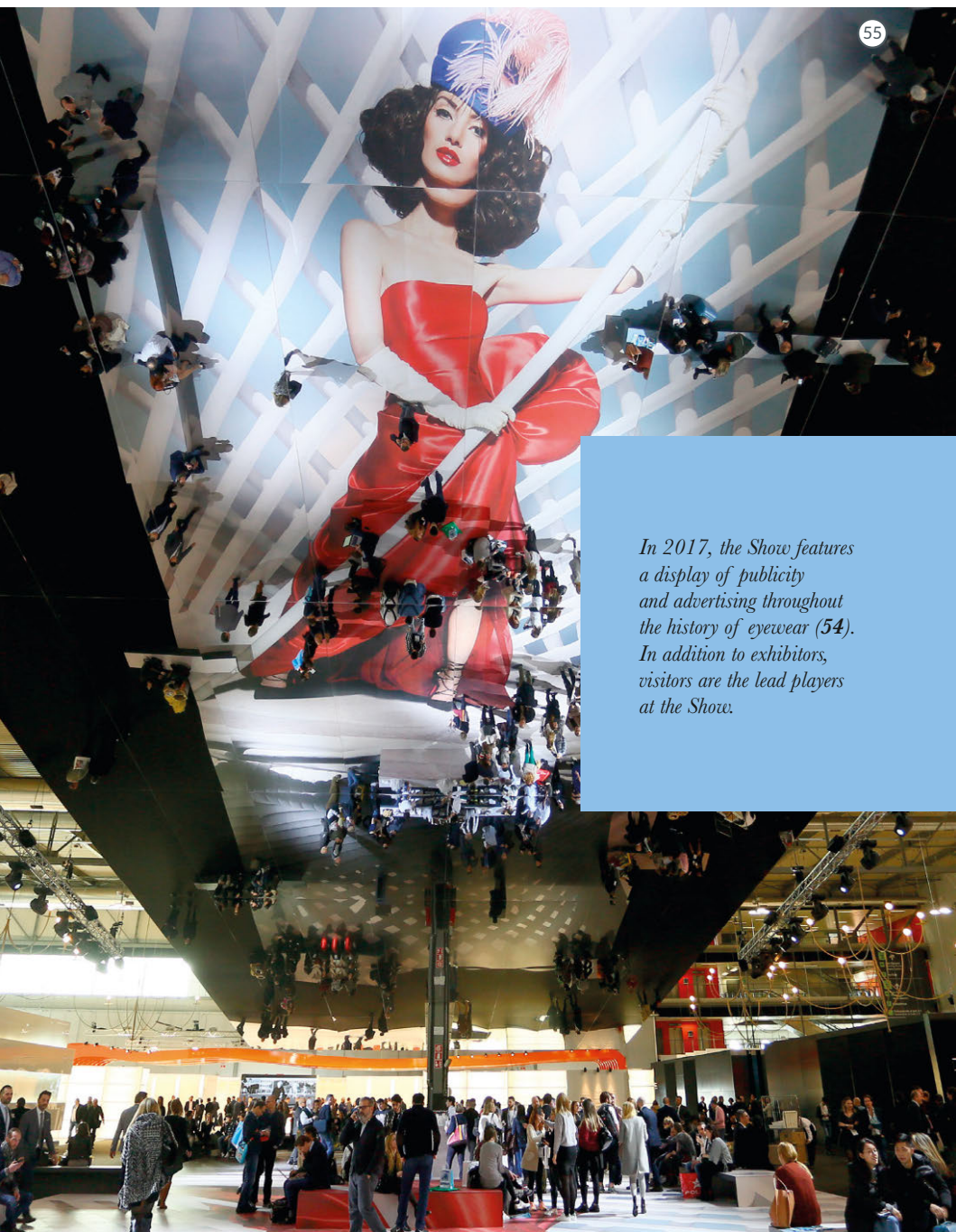
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54







*In 2017, the Show features a display of publicity and advertising throughout the history of eyewear (54). In addition to exhibitors, visitors are the lead players at the Show.*







58



59





*The history of Mido in photos*

61



62



63









65

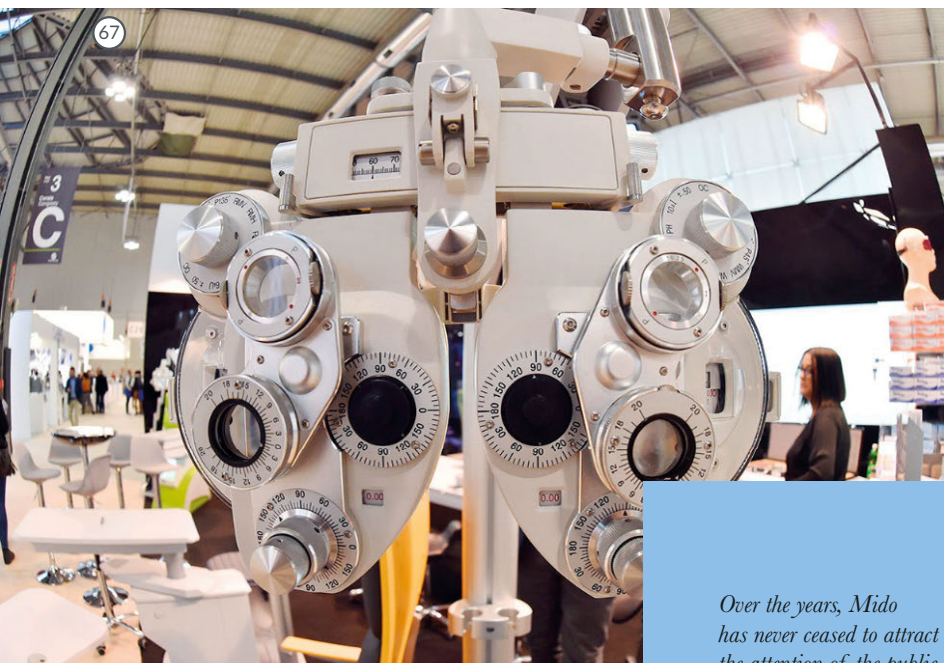


66





*The history of Mido in photos*



*Over the years, Mido has never ceased to attract the attention of the public (from 58 to 65), with all of its creative formulas and the runway shows with fashion models (66).*





69



*Mido is heir to the artisan and industrial eyewear adventure, which has its beginning in the legendary Angelo Frescura (69), the man who, in 1878 – with his brother Leone and Giovanni Lozza – founded the first eyewear factory (70) in the village of Rizzios just outside Calalzo di Cadore. Fifty years of glorious history: in 2020 the Show will again reinvent itself under the presidency of Giovanni Vitaloni (71).*



70



71



## Author's note and acknowledgments

The book you just finished reading is a work of fiction. And that is what it was intended to be: a novel. A novel set during the years covering the 50 editions of Mido. To give voice to Mido in an original manner and not like the compilation of a catalog. As such, it is the result of choices, real people and facts combined with purely imaginary characters, situations and facts. Its only goal: to bring into focus for the general public a topic that, in and of itself, would primarily be of interest only to industry insiders, no matter how vast the number, in a country like ours, deeply rooted in fashion, the culture of accessories and the artisanal and industrial production of eyewear. In this, we are the global leaders.

The story of the two main characters (and of those in their sphere) who guide us on the 50-year journey through Mido with their personal lives and encounters is, therefore, purely fictional and any resemblance to real people, facts and circumstances is entirely coincidental. On the other hand, the references to Mido and its 50 editions are all perfectly real and originate from interviews and documentary research conducted by me personally over a period of several months in the archives of *Vedere*, *Vedere International* and *Ottica Italiana* magazines, the use of which was fostered by the generous kindness and helpfulness of, respectively, Isabella Morpurgo and Massimiliano Lanzafame and their colleagues and associates.

Special thanks go to Isabella Morpurgo for her advice and suggestions throughout the process and, along with her, also to Francesco Gili, Astrid Galimberti, Susi Marotti, Monia Innocenti, Marcella Laterza and to the current President of Mido, Giovanni Vitaloni, for his trust in me and for his kind support in this 'light-hearted' – slightly risky – attempt to weave a story about the history of a trade show!

All-encompassing thanks, finally, to the many actors in this eyewear epic whom I had the pleasure of meeting in person, especially the sixty or more people I interviewed in Cadore, in Milan, and by telephone in various parts of the world, for having introduced me to the magnificent story of entrepreneurship that is the eyewear industry, filled with a passion for beauty and hope in the positive potential of the human adventure when applied to the business world.

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