



The Italian Trade Commission and Italian Optical Goods Manufacturer's Association Proudly Present: "Eyewear from the Beginning to the Future; The history of eyeglasses from their invention in Italy to the latest trends"

***Exhibition at Vanderbilt Hall® at Grand Central Terminal, March 19-24, 2010
Celebrates centuries-long heritage of Italian eyewear design and manufacture***

New York, NY, February 2010 –The Italian Trade Commission – ICE and the Italian Optical Goods Manufacturers' Association – ANFAO are proud to announce, "Eyewear from the Beginning to the Future: The history of eyeglasses from their invention in Italy to the latest trends," a dynamic retrospective exhibition that showcases not only the fascinating history of eyewear but also highlights the quality, craftsmanship and innovative design of Italian-made products. The exhibition, to be installed within Vanderbilt Hall® at Grand Central Terminal opening to the public between March 19 and March 24, features a chronological presentation of eyewear design from its invention in Italy in the 13th Century to the present day and beyond. This unique showcase illustrates the dominance of Italian-made craftsmanship within the world of eyewear, while highlighting the individual impact and influence of international designers in this dynamic category.

Ambassador Umberto Vattani, President of the Italian Trade Commission (ICE) comments, "We are very proud to be collaborating with ANFAO on this exciting historical presentation. The exhibition captures and communicates the exceptional heritage of design excellence to be discovered in Italian-made eyewear and celebrates the unique elegance, style and innovation projected through the lens of iconic Italian manufacture." As home to the world's most-prestigious and recognizable companies in all lifestyle categories, Italian design and craftsmanship has long been the object of international appreciation and respect. Italian-made eyewear is no exception; a highly-visible and functional luxury accessory with which consumers can adorn their face and define their own style.

Vittorio Tabacchi, President of the Italian Optical Goods Manufacturer's Association (ANFAO) states: "With the United States as the largest single market for luxury eyewear, Italy's long history in fashion, design, technology and craftsmanship has allowed Italian-made products the ability to create classics as well as forecast future trends. Many iconic styles will be on display in this unique eyewear exhibition, as well as at NYC's 2010 International Vision Expo show being held in New York at this same time."

Italian exports to the US comprised between 30-40% of total US eyewear imports in 2009, second only to China who dominate in the production of lower-priced frames.* According to the Vision Council of America, approximately 30% of the American population is near-sighted and 60% far-sighted – a total of up to 80% of the US population who rely on glasses or another form of vision correction everyday. Driven by the huge volume of consumer demand for eyewear and increasing call for designs that complement individual fashion and lifestyle choices, the diversity and sophistication of eyewear design has created incremental business for prestigious brands who recognize the dynamic opportunity to integrate designer eyewear as a category within their collections of accessories. These designer brands overwhelmingly place their trust in Italian manufacturers to bring their design vision to life.

Designed by award-winning Italian Architect Giorgio Borruo and curated by Alessandra Albarello, the Exhibit at Vanderbilt Hall® at Grand Central Terminal draws inspiration from iconic First Lady and New York City resident, Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis who campaigned for the preservation of the Grand Central Terminal building, expressing concern that the city's modern architecture was creating a "world of steel and glass boxes." Borruo's installation refashions the traditional glass display case as a fractal, inhabitable city. As he explains, "The structure is designed to act as metaphor for both modern eyewear and the subways, roads, paths and histories that fracture, connect and reveal the spaces we inhabit."

Exhibit Opening Times: March 19-23, 8am -10pm, March 24, 8am – 5pm. Vanderbilt Hall® at Grand Central Terminal.

About the Italian Trade Commission-ICE

The Italian Trade Commission-ICE, is the Italian government agency entrusted with the development, facilitation and promotion of trade between Italy and other countries in the world. Its mission is to support the internationalization of Italian firms and their consolidation in foreign markets. Through a network of 116 offices in 88 countries, of which 6 are located in the United States, ICE is the most authoritative ambassador of Made in Italy excellence in the world. For more information visit <http://www.italtrade.com/>

About the Italian Optical Goods Manufacturers' Association-ANFAO

ANFAO's goal is to create a profitable synergy between the Italian companies involved, represent their interests in the institutions both nationally and internationally, protect the economy, trade union and tax, organize the Mido Italian eyewear fair, and promote information campaigns.

Please Note: An invitation-only Press Conference at 5pm followed by a VIP Cocktail Party at 6.30pm will take place on March 18th to officially open the exhibition. For further information and press invitation please contact Nike Communications.

U.S. Press Contact

Stefanie Altman
Nike Communications, Inc,
New York, NY
Phone: 646.654.3435
saltman@nikecomm.com

###