

Press Release

The cultural eyewear project created and promoted by the National Association of Optical Goods Manufacturers is set to open

ANFAO INAUGURATES "THE LENS OF TIME" IN VENEZIA, AN EXHIBIT THAT NARRATES THE STORY OF EYEWEAR THROUGH ART, DESIGN, AND INNOVATION

7 May – 30 July 2025, Palazzo Flangini, Venezia

Venezia, 7 May 2025 – Today, “**The Lens of Time – The History of Eyewear in Italy**” exhibit was inaugurated in the heart of Venezia at **Palazzo Flangini**. The project was produced and sponsored by **ANFAO**, curated by **Fondazione Museo dell’Occhiale**, in collaboration with **Fondazione di Venezia** and **Fondazione M9 – Museo del ’900**.

The exhibition is a journey through time, exploring history of eyeglasses – from their Medieval origins through the Industrial Revolution to contemporary design – where it played a starring role in 20th-century Italian pop culture and fashion through cinema, the avant-garde, stylists, and experimentation with shapes. It all unfolds across **12 narrative stages**, featuring more than **150 original pieces** and never-before-seen materials.

On display are unique eyeglasses from three distinguished Italian collections – the **Eyewear Museum** of Pieve di Cadore, that of the **Vascellari Family**, and the **Arte del Vedere** Collection by **Lucio Stramare**.

The exhibit also includes a virtual tour of the Pieve di Cadore Museum and an interactive “Timeless Frames” electronic kiosk that allows visitors to virtually try on some of the historical eyeglasses on display and share the images.

Two **contemporary works of art** by artist Maurizio Paccagnella enhance and complete the museum concept. The first, **Trasparenze**, is a sculptural piece that draws inspiration from the Cadore mountains – cradle of Italian eyewear – and from the beauty of Murano and Venetian glass, in tribute to the lenses of the earliest spectacles. This installation was crafted using recycled acetate from eyewear production. The second, **Sguardo nel Tempo**, captures the essence of looking through time. Its gently undulating surface – a nod to the Venetian lagoon – reflects the countless gazes of those who have worn glasses throughout history, weaving together the story of humanity with that of eyewear.

“With The Lens of Time, we wanted to stop time – or rather, travel through it – to show how eyeglasses have always been much more than just a functional object. Eyewear has been status symbols, fashion accessories, medical devices, works of art, and witnesses to technological evolution, a reflection of social, cultural, and aesthetic needs. And, above all, they have been, and are, a representation of identity – the identity of regions, of the companies and people who make them, and of the individuals who wear them,” remarked ANFAO President **Lorraine Berton**. *“This project grew out of the desire to create a space to celebrate a product that is one of the most authentic symbols of Made in Italy,”* she concluded.

Nicola Belli, Vice-President of ANFAO responsible for production, innovation and Made in Italy, emphasized that *“Made in Italy is one of our defining values and it is crucial that we also convey this through a cultural lens. Each piece on display tells a story of centuries-old craftsmanship, constant innovation, and the kind of unique creativity the world admires. This project also plays a key role in inspiring creativity and awareness among younger generations, helping to build a bridge between industry and emerging talent. That’s why, as part of The Lens of Time, we’ve also partnered with IUAV, the University of Venezia, thanks to support from the Ente Bilaterale Occhialeria. Between June and July, we will host three ‘Wave’ workshops involving 60 students who will work in the areas of technology, sustainability, and sports. We’ll be sharing their ideas at a special event at Palazzo Flangini before the exhibit wraps up.”*

Actress and presenter **Martina Colombari** welcomed guests and hosted the opening ceremony alongside distinguished participants: Deputy Chief of the Cabinet of the Ministry of Enterprises and Made in Italy, **Elena Lorenzini** and Councilor for Tourism and Economic Development of the City of Venezia, **Simone Venturini**.

Speaking for Fondazione Museo dell’Occhiale, curator of the exhibit, President **Vittorio Tabacchi** highlighted that the Museum was established with a precise and deeply felt objective, *“to preserve and add value to the historical memory of an object that has transformed our way of seeing – and being seen. Eyeglasses aren’t just optical tools; they are silent witnesses to the evolution of society, thought, and individual identity. Preserving their history means recognizing their cultural, human, and innovative value. Ultimately, telling the story of eyewear means telling the story of each of us. With The Lens of Time, we take this living, engaging narrative beyond the walls of the museum, to show that eyewear is also a visual language, a form of design, and of art. We believe the Museum should be a place of memory, but also a driver of the future.”*

Vice-President of Fondazione di Venezia, **Carlo Boffi Farsetti**, pointed out that *“The Lens of Time is the first exhibit to be hosted at Palazzo Flangini, and there could be no better way to inaugurate the Foundation’s new headquarters than with an event like this exhibit – one that honors a truly Italian excellence, particularly tied to the Veneto region, renowned around the world. Today is a memorable day for us because, after extensive renovation, we are finally able to return an architectural landmark to the city in its restored original beauty, and to offer a vibrant space designed to promote cultural and artistic events. This captivating exhibit perfectly illustrates the importance of raising awareness about the eyewear industry – a sector known for its exceptional craftsmanship and production expertise. It’s deeply engaging in how it builds bridges between tradition and experimentation, art and design.”*

Elena Lorenzini, Deputy Head of Cabinet at the Ministry of Enterprises and Made in Italy, delivered a message on behalf of Minister Adolfo Urso: *“The Lens of Time exhibition is a powerful expression of the identity and mission of the Ministry of Enterprises and Made in Italy. Through its content, it reflects the pillars that guide our work: enterprise, excellence, entrepreneurship, and a production chain deeply rooted in local communities – one that adds value at every stage of the process. As part of the official events for National Made in Italy Day, the exhibition stands as a symbol of a brand, an idea, and a shared dream: to make the unique value of Italian craftsmanship tangible, visible, and globally recognized.”*

The closing moment of the inauguration was entrusted to art historian **Jacopo Veneziani**, who fascinated the audience with a visual journey through the evolution of eyewear in art. *“Eyeglasses are not just tools – they are frames of identity, mirrors of time, silent storytellers of who we are. As*

an everyday object and a powerful cultural symbol, eyewear has fully entered the collective imagination, reflecting social, aesthetic, and intellectual transformations. Today, we took a journey through the history of art and representation to explore how eyewear has taken on ever-changing meanings over the centuries: from symbols of wisdom and introspection in 15th-century portraits, to ironic or provocative elements in contemporary painting, and through 18th-century caricatures and the iconography of modern intellectuals.”

Curators of the exhibit, architect **Daniela Zambelli**, Director of Fondazione Museo dell'Occhiale, and art historian **Alessandra Cusinato**, then presented the exhibit itinerary in detail, guiding guests through an exclusive tour of the show.

The Lens of Time is part of the official program for the **National Made in Italy Day**, sponsored by the **Ministry of Enterprises and Made in Italy**, and is also included on the calendar of the **2025 Venezia Architecture Biennale**.

Useful information

Open to the public: from 3 pm on 7 May to 5 pm on 30 July 2025

Hours: Monday - Sunday from 11 am to 5 pm

Admission: Free

Address: Palazzo Flangini - Cannaregio, Calle Flangini 252 – Venezia

ANFAO – National Association of Optical Goods Manufacturers

Established in 1954, ANFAO represents more than 130 Italian businesses active in the eyewear sector. The association is a member of Confindustria and operates with targeted objectives – first and foremost, to create a robust, profitable synergy among the member companies in the eyewear sector. In a climate of complete collaboration, ANFAO is committed to representing industry interests in interactions with Italian and international institutions, actively contributing to strengthening its competitiveness and promoting the value of Made in Italy worldwide, which has consistently been a symbol of quality, innovation and style. The association promotes the development of the Italian optical industry by supporting innovation, sustainability, and internationalization. ANFAO also promotes MIDO, the leading international eyewear trade show.

ANFAO Press Office

CAROLINA MAILANDER COMUNICAZIONE

Marcella Laterza	+39 335 7559154	marcella.laterza@cmailander.it
Stella Casazza	+39 349 3579552	stella.casazza@cmailander.it
Paola Masera	+39 335 6643677	paola.masera@cmailander.it

ANFAO

Associazione Nazionale Fabbricanti Articoli Ottici

20145 Milano - Via A. Riva Villasanta, 3

Tel. 02 32673673

anfao@anfao.it

www.anfao.it