

Eyewear: A Visual History - another optical opus reviewed



You wait all year for an eyewear book and then two come along at once. New York eyewear designer Moss Lipow's *Eyewear: A Visual History*, at 360 pages, is a bigger book than [Cult Eyewear](#), reviewed [here last month](#). It's a very different hardback, but equally compelling.

Eyewear is for flicking through. Each page is marvellously illustrated with carefully photographed life-size frames, most of which come from Lipow's own collection. As well as this array of stills, he has sourced amazing pictures such as this one above (1956) from old magazines, catalogues, advertising and films.

Lipow begins in the first chapter - pre-1900 - at the very beginnings of glasses, charting the history of the early optical devices. There are lorgnettes, optical fans, scissor spectacles, pince-nez and monocles, but it's the second chapter on 1900-1945 in which you really begin to appreciate the extent of his glasses collection.

I was intrigued by the story linking sunglasses and billiard balls, and the detail provided around some early cat's eye designs and driving glasses is enlightening. *Eyewear* is providing Eye Wear Glasses with some much need early eyewear education! Brands to be found in this chapter include Shuron, American Optical, Bachman Bros and Montgomery Ward and some Bausch & Lomb aviators from the 1940s. There's even a pair of 1920s protective glasses from the Soviet Union.

The middle section covers the post-war sunglass boom, between 1945 and 1960. Find out here how the demise of ornamental hair combs is linked to eyewear manufacture. And it's from here on in that the book becomes an absolute joy with page after glorious page of amazing eyewear designs. The chapter on the 1960s is superb, with a focus on op-art, featuring contributions from Silhouette, Pierre Cardin, Spec-Trim, Renauld, Ray-Ban, Paulette Guinet, Oliver Goldsmith, Pierre Marly, Oleg Cassini (below) and American Optical (next down).

Continues below...



Above: Shutter sunglasses by Alain Mikli. Above those: are Italian metal sunglasses from Maga Design. And the big blue ones above those are Futura sunglasses from Silhouette. These final three feature in the final chapter, *The Age of the Licensed Brand* which features yet more amazing styles from Christian Dior, Bollé, Cazal, Moschino by Persol, and some astonishing Jean-Paul Gaultier sunglasses by Murai of Japan.

I particularly like the inclusion of Taiwan or Korea-made sunglasses alongside the Western brands, and Lipow describes the ramifications of Asian-made eyewear on the West's eyewear industries; he even features a Taiwanese "knockoff" of Alain Mikli's famous 'Picasso' 030 frame, directly opposite the genuine spectacle.

Moss Lipow's book is an eyewear design treasure trove, providing exactly the visual history its title promises. It's eyewear eye-candy, at times you don't know where to look! His writing is entertaining and informative and includes numerous little-known gems. But this book is first and foremost about the images, approximately 1,200 of them and every one is presented at a scale such that you can spot wonderful detail. Well worth investing in!

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***Eyewear: A Visual History* by Moss Lipow.**

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