

FIND

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People will stare

Italian design signs these frames

By Patricia Harris and David Lyon | March 26, 2006

When Filippo and Franco Urbani started molding eyeglass frames in the late 1940s, they had no idea that their little shop in Venice would become a fashion crossroads. Roughly a decade later, they collaborated with a family friend to design a distinctive style of his own. The beautifully proportioned, heavy frame carries Le Corbusier's name to this day, but comes now in many colors beyond the original basic black.

The current generation, in the person of Lorenzo Urbani, continues the tradition of innovation in the family shop just off St. Mark's Square and in a second shop on Lido di Venezia. Urbani is happy to mug in a pair of Le Corbusier frames, black-and-white op-art frames from the 1960s, or oddly asymmetrical contemporary frames of his own design.

Ottica Urbani carries many big-name designers, but most customers come looking for a one-of-a-kind fashion statement that no one else at the office or on the beach will be wearing. For that, stick to Urbani's own collections, including the brightly colored plastic frames hinged so as to fold up into a change-purse-sized package. The vibrant, often translucent plastics combine strikingly with dark sunglass lenses.

For the ultimate Venice souvenir, the limited edition "gondola" frames mimic the shape of that signature vessel of the canals.

Ottica Urbani, S. Marco 1280, Venezia, 011-39-041-5224140; Gran Viale 61, Lido di Venezia, 011-39-041-5261226. www.otticaurbani.com. Frames start at around \$110. ■

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