The Evolution of Eyewear Fashion â€“ Designer Sunglasses by Nicolette Aquilina

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Sunglasses were invented by Sam Foster, founder of Foster Grant Company in 1929. During that time, the sole purpose of those lenses was to protect the eyes from the sunâ€™s harmful rays. It wasnâ€™ fashionable, then; unlike today when everywhere you look there are â€œshadesâ€• in different colors and designs. Sam Foster realized that if the body needed protection and people wear clothes for that; the eyes have to be shielded as well because the sun can cause permanent and irreversible damage that can lead to blindness. Little did he know that creating such a contraption, will be one of the biggest inventions in the history of mankind.

The idea of sunglasses sprouted from Asia in the year 1300; in China, eyes of the judges in a court hearing needed to be concealed so that they eye expressions couldnâ€™t be seen. At that time, the lenses were in quartz and smoked. The benefit wasnâ€™t about looking good, shielding the eyes from the sun or as a vision aid â€“ it was plainly a shield. 130 years into it, with an idea coming from Italy, the Chinese made their first dark and vision correcting glasses but still for the judges of the court.

James Ayscough, during the mid 1700â€™s experimented on these lenses (they werenâ€™t called design sunglasses then) and he believed that by making the glasses bluish or greenish in tint, it would help in sight clarity. Still, he never considered that it can be used to shield the eyes.

How the Phenomenon came to be

Sam Foster sold his first pair in Atlantic City, New Jersey and after that, there was no stopping the spread of the newly modernized sunglasses. The Army Air Corps noticed its functionality and contracted a company called Bausch and Lomb to create eye spectacles that could shield the eyes from the sun of the air pilots during WW II. Polaroid Corporation perfected the lenses using polarized technology and a drooping frame of the glasses to completely block the â€œaviatorâ€™sâ€• eye Yes, you guessed it right â€“ Aviator Shades for RayBan. By 1937, anyone who had the money to purchase the Aviator took possession !

Hollywood Take Over

The hip sixties, with their fashion and flare, introduced several big company names that mass produced designer sunglasses. Who can forget Audrey Hepburnâ€™s Way Farerâ€™s (RayBan) or Jackie Kennedyâ€™s oversized the Jackie Ohh shades. These two women were the epitome of style and they knew how to wear them.

21st Century Eyewear

Today, you name it. The ever famous RayBan, Gucci, Balenciaga, Vogue, Oakley, Armani, Prada, Dior, and Fendi â€“ these magnanimous brands have their very own sunglass lines. Anywhere from Asia to Australia, there is a pair of shades made just for you.

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