



The first 'Reading Glasses Over the Centuries' Exhibition took place in 1956, during the Winter Olympics, in Pieve di Cadore and was then transferred to Padua University in 1959. On this occasion the collection's curator Enrico De Lotto expressed his hope that a National Reading Glasses Museum could be set up in the Cadore area. The dream of the Cadore scholar came true only many years after his death thanks also to the work of Vittorio Tabacchi, president of SAFILO and an enthusiastic eyewear collector, who dedicated himself to the acquisition of several important collections. The combined action of the *Regione Veneto*, of the *Cassa di Risparmio di Verona Vicenza Belluno Ancona*, of the *Comunità Montana Centro Cadore* and of other bodies and associations such as *ANFAO (Associazione Nazionale Fabbrianti Articoli Ottici)*, *Banco Ambrosiano Veneto*, *Camera di Commercio Industria Agricoltura Artigianato di Belluno*, *Consorzio Occhialerie Bellunesi*, *Provincia di Belluno*, *Assindustria Belluno-SIPAO* and *Banca Popolare di Novara*, led, in 1990, to the inauguration of the Museo dell'Occhiale in Tai di Cadore.

The management of the Museum was entrusted to the Centro Servizi Occhialeria until 1996 when the *Fondazione Museo dell'Occhiale* was set up. In 2001 Giuseppe Del Favero's collection, including period instruments and machines for the production in the Cadore of glasses, glasses cases and lenses, was acquired.

Site of the Museo dell'Occhiale:

**Cos.Mo.**

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**Opening Hours**

**September - June:**

Tuesday-Saturday 9.30-12.30 and 15.30-18.30  
Closed on Sunday and Monday

**July - August:**

Daily 9.30-12.30 and 16.00-19.00

**Museography project :** Studio Daniela Baldeschi

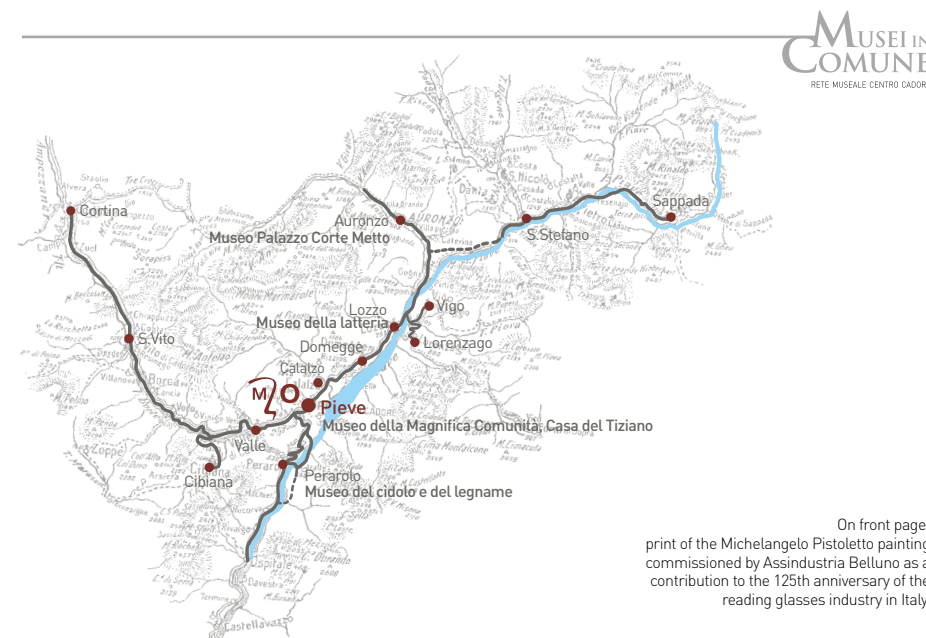
**Museology project:** Daniela Perco, Iolanda Da Deppo

**Research:** Iolanda Da Deppo, Laura Zandonella

**Graphics:** Claudia Cogato Lanza

**Text:** Daniela Perco

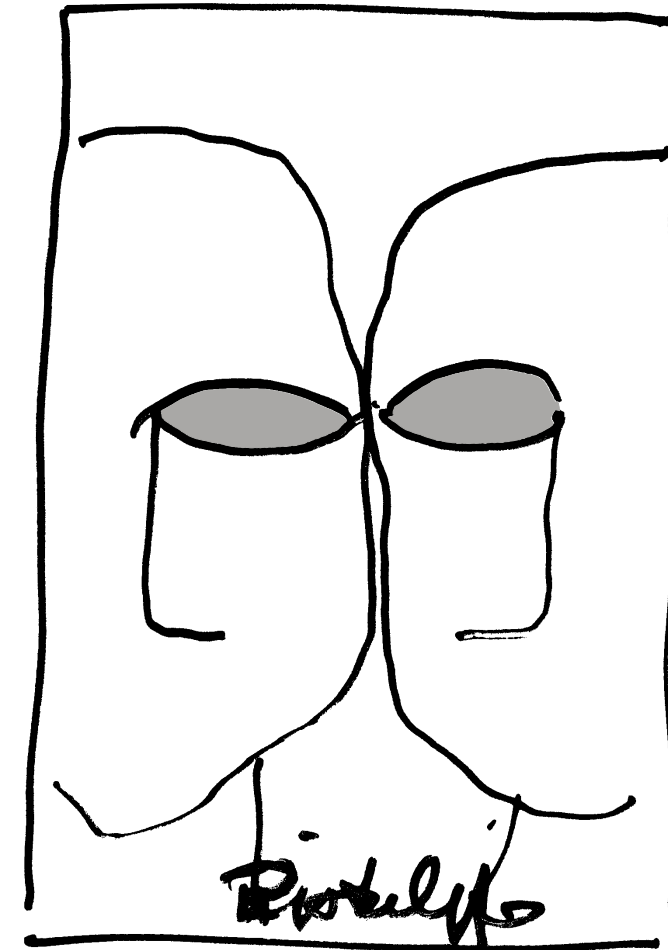
The Museum thanks all those who helped in its creation and gave their time to it.



On front page:  
print of the Michelangelo Pistoletto painting  
commissioned by Assindustria Belluno as a  
contribution to the 125th anniversary of the  
reading glasses industry in Italy.



# M/O Museo dell'Occhiale



The Museo dell'Occhiale was set up to collect, study and protect objects, images and sources – both oral and written – relating to the history of eyewear and other optical instruments in their various forms and to illustrate the history of the reading glasses industry and its offshoots in the province of Belluno.

The promotion of this heritage and its educative role, in historical and cultural terms, is another important objective of this cultural institution.

The desire of the members of the *Fondazione Museo dell'Occhiale* (*Comunità Montana Centro Cadore*, *Magnifica Comunità di Cadore*, *Assindustria Sipao*, *ANFAO*, *Unione Artigiani*, *Appia*, *Cgil*, *Cisl*, *Uil*, *Provincia di Belluno* and the *Camera di Commercio Industria e Artigianato di Belluno*) and of Pieve di Cadore town council to provide a more suitable location for this important collection of objects and documents led to the setting up in August 2007 of the new Museo dell'Occhiale in the Cos.Mo. (Centro Operativo Servizi Museo dell'Occhiale) building in Pieve di Cadore.

This conceptually modern building was restored by Pieve di Cadore town council and by the *Comunità Montana Centro Cadore* who also financed the Museum layout and the furnishing of its multi purpose room with the financial support of the *Regione Veneto* and the *Cariverona Foundation*.



## The Museum Itinerary: 1<sup>st</sup> floor



“Reading glasses taken seriously”

Tomás Maldonado’s insistence on the seriousness of eyewear and optical instruments and his emphasis on their importance in the historical and social development of Western culture was one of the themes of the first great exhibitions of the Museum. The exceptional collection of glasses, glasses cases, optical instruments, binoculars and telescopes put together by the opticians Jean Bodart and Jean Bernard Weiss and by the scholars Enrico De Lotto and Luca Moioli, together with appropriate images and exhibition structures, formed the basis of an analysis of the importance that lenses, in their various forms, have had in human history at least since medieval times. The visitor is drawn into a darkened room by an enormous illuminated pupil and by a sequence of photographs of facial expressions which subsequently reveal the faces they belong to. A visit to the exhibition concentrates on several important themes: sight; diseases of the eye and the development of optics; the birth of corrective eye glasses in the thirteenth century and the disputes over the identity of their inventor; the existence of a Venetian optical industry, already flourishing in 1300, for the production of lenses for reading glasses and for magnification in rock crystal; the development of lenses for long sight prior to those for short sight. Of particular interest is the print of a fresco dating to 1352 depicting Fra’ Ugone of Provence reading with the help of glasses for long sight. The images which accompany the exhibits in glass cases are of great assistance in tracing the evolution of materials and forms: from nose glasses in bone, horn, wood and metal, arched, wig and hat glasses to the introduction of rigid lateral arms at the beginning of the eighteenth century.



The significant developments of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are presented - valuable materials (enamelled metals, coral, mother-of-pearl, whale-bone, tortoise-shell) and shapes dictated by fashion: hand-held glasses (face-à-main) - pieces of jewellery which could be folded into the handle of a walking stick, a fan or a necklace; nose-glasses (pince-nez) and glasses with arms; monocles to be inserted directly into the eye socket. The dictates of fashion influenced corrective and protective eye wear in the twentieth century giving rise to new shapes and colours, thanks also to the introduction of innovative materials (aluminium, nickel, celluloid, ebonite, synthetic resins, monel and titanium). A section of the museum is dedicated to the protection of eyes from harmful atmospheric agents and from factory pollutants with various types of glasses: the slit glasses used by Eskimos; glasses with coloured lenses and side flaps, such as the famous Venetian glasses “alla Goldoni”; glasses with quartz and amethyst lenses to which therapeutic properties were attributed in the east; glasses with large protective frames for work or sport. The museum collection includes a considerable number of glasses cases in ivory, leather, gold, painted wood and silver filigree. The last section of the museum is dedicated to instruments for long distance vision - long and short binoculars and telescopes. The Venetian papier-maché articles, the small French opera glasses encrusted with enamels and precious materials and the fans decorated with ivory or clear tortoise-shell complete with tiny telescopes inserted into the centre are particularly valuable. A small section also deals with optical instruments and devices for entertainment and instruction such as magic lanterns and stereoscopes.

## The Museum Itinerary: 2<sup>nd</sup> floor



From street-sellers to brand-names:  
the birth and development of the reading glasses  
industrial district

The second part of the museum, on the upper floor, recounts the history of the development of the reading glasses industrial district from the end of the nineteenth century in the mountainous province of Belluno. The life-size figure of a scissors, glasses and general merchandise seller and the sales cry of the travelling Cadore bone comb salesmen invite the visitor to discover the historical and cultural context of an industry which was strongly influenced by emigration and the search for work. Starting from the setting up of the first optical laboratory in Calalzo di Cadore by Angelo and Leone Frescura Petenèr and Giovanni Lozza, photographs, objects and original documents trace the first decades of the development of the reading glasses industry in the Cadore area. The complete reconstruction of an old forge (Giovanni Lozza was a blacksmith and mechanic and many local people showed talent in the field of precision mechanics) is particularly interesting. The sale of Frescura and Lozza’s optical laboratory to the Milanese entrepreneur Enrico Ferrari and Ulisse Cargnel’s management of the business at the beginning of the twentieth century, were the turning points in the industry’s move towards modernisation and industrialisation. The department managers and specialised workers who emerged in this period were the driving force in the setting up of a series of new factories in the first decades of the twentieth century.



The Museum has dedicated space to the oldest companies whose histories are traced in this section. Alongside a chronological history of glasses and glasses cases production and photographs showing work in progress and the typical evolution of the industrial buildings there are small-scale simulations of work environments - a glasses cases work bench and the shop windows of the optical stores of the S.A.F.I.L.O and Lozza companies of the 1940s to 60s period. The Cadore and Belluno product, from the 1950s to the present day, is exhibited chronologically with emphasis on design and the brand names which have revolutionised fashion and eyewear since the 1990s and on the production models which have characterised the Cadore’s industrial fabric (a centralised production chain, according to Luigi Fontana) as compared to that of the Agordo area (a network of companies). This exhibition space on the history of the Belluno province reading glasses industry includes the partial reconstruction of laboratories for the production of glasses cases and celluloid and metal glasses between the 1950s and 60s and illustrates the social aspects of the work environment (the role of female and child labour, life in the factories, trade union struggles). There are two large photographs of factory interiors alongside reading glasses work benches. A 1940s film on the production of celluloid glasses, a 2007 documentary film on the last artisan in Italy still making glasses out of tortoise-shell and a few short workers’ accounts provide important information on materials, production techniques, factory organisation and sanitary conditions.