

Stand out

Venus Eye Design's colourful new plastics collection is for those who aren't afraid to be bold.

This summer's style was all about colour, and Venus Eye Design led the pack with its new plastics collection. Full of lively and bright colours in strong, sophisticated shapes, it has already been a hit with fashion-conscious clients.

"My new plastics collection revolves around colour—exciting colours, like tangerine, lemon, a lot of citrus," says Mike Christiansen, owner and designer of Venus Eye Design.

Since August 2001, Edmonton-based Venus Eye Design has designed innovative eyewear in strong, high-quality acetate. Although the general consensus in the eyewear industry at that time was that plastics were out of style, it was actually because of the uncomfortable fit and non-trendy styles that the major players were creating. Christiansen—who personally designs each of Venus' frames—knew that with proper design, unique colours and contemporary styling, their laminate frames could fill a huge void in the marketplace. The continuing success of their plastic frames line shows just how right their observations were.

Venus' adventurous use of colour has set them apart from other lines. Their website describes their complex colour selection process: Scientists have determined that the human eye is capable of distinguishing over 300,000 colours. Each colour can trigger a diverse mood or feeling, as distinct and individual as human beings themselves. It is truly a personal experience that gives a particular colour its personalized character. With this foremost in mind, Christiansen thoroughly researches and analyzes the Venus colour palette for each collection as the designs evolve. With intriguing names such as chocolate mandarin, peach fondue and nanaimo bar in the mix, considerable thought and experimentation are given to choosing the perfect name to suit each frame colour.

Christiansen carefully studies fashion forecasts, discovers upcoming colour trends, and applies them to Venus' colour selection to produce frames that are significantly different than others in the market.

The two-toned colours on the fronts and sides of the frames in this collection are an example of a trend that has been everywhere this season. Why are two-toned colour schemes so popular? "It just adds that extra touch. For so many years, people are used to seeing one colour; monotone colour [frames]. The general public wants to see more dynamic in a frame. To add a different colour temple creates interest and stimulates the eye pleasingly," says Christiansen.

The shaping of this collection is also bold and dynamic compared to styles in previous years. This season is showing a trend away from rimless frames, as clients (in particular boomers) are embracing eyewear as a way to stand out and be noticed. "There's definitely a trend away from the thin minimalistic look, the four-point look, which was

large a few years ago. Now there is a thicker, bolder look. People want their frames to have a presence now. That's why I'm doing so many plastics and why I'm doing well with them across Canada."

This plastics collection revolves around strongly-shaped square and rectangular frames. "[We use] a lot of vertical and horizontal lines [in this collection]," says Christiansen. "The square corners on the leading edges of the frames create a dynamic and powerful looking frame." Although the frames are fashion-forward, they are not too bizarre for the typical, style-conscious consumer. According to their website, Venus's style philosophy is that their customers want a look that's simply stylish, but stylishly simple.

This doesn't mean that their customers are not afraid anymore of bigger and more powerful-looking frames. Plastic frames in particular are making a rebound overall, but Christiansen says that Venus has never had a downturn with their plastic collections. An added bonus is that these plastic frames can accommodate larger lenses, such as bifocals, making them perfect for boomers and anyone else who may have a complex prescription. "Everything's a little bit larger, so everything's been designed to accommodate any type of progressive and bifocal," Christiansen explains. Since 60 per cent of the Canadian population wears progressive lenses, it is wise for Venus to cater to this demographic.

The reaction to the collection has been very positive. "[It's been] phenomenal; it's been some of my best product ever released," says Christiansen. "I think that has a lot to do with the new colors I'm doing. They are very pleasing to the eye and very wearable. I'm releasing them in five or six colours. Most of my clients are ordering all the colours. People are making a lot of prescription sunglasses with these. So they are all-use frames—[they can be used] for sunglasses or regular ophthalmic wear."

With versatility like that, the future seems out of this world for Venus. •