

- F** voir page 39
- D** siehe Seite 41
- I** vedi pag 44
- E** véase la página 46

The family way

Progressive, unpretentious and uncompromising in offering their clientele the very best, family-owned Italian optical business Ottica Venturi is a prime example of how a small, independent optical chain can beat off the competition and find its own niche. Located on Italy's Adriatic coast in the area between Pesaro and Fano, the Venturi family runs the five stores as a team. Founded by Augusto Venturi and his wife Maria Filomena, today their daughter Elisa Venturi manages the business while her brother Alfredo takes care of the interior design.

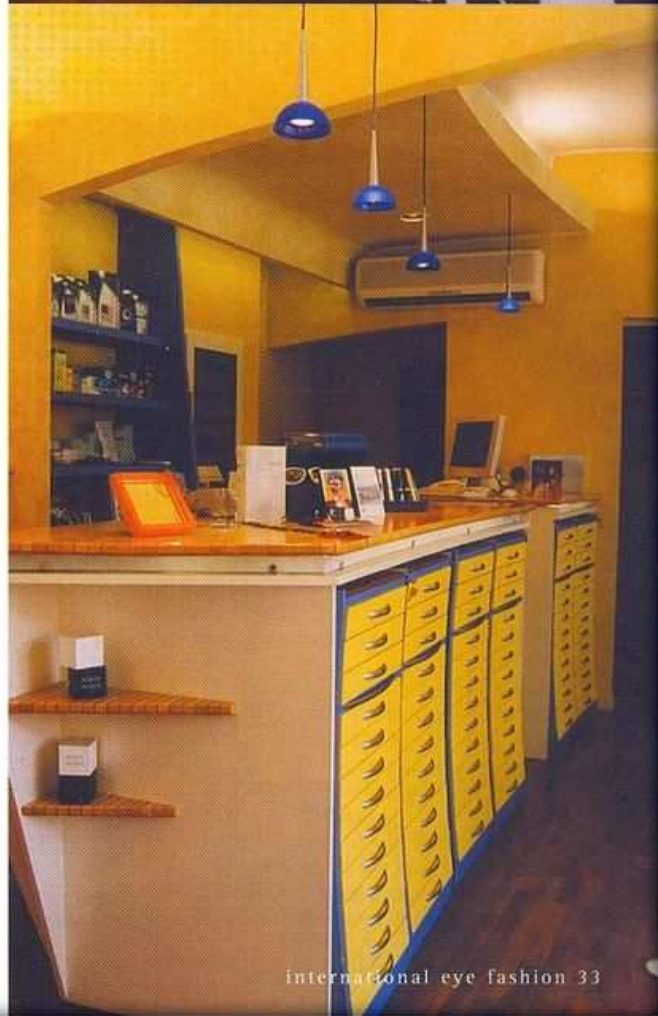
The first Ottica Venturi store was opened in 1968 by Augusto Venturi and his wife Maria Filomena. "Our children grew up in a free-thinking, cosmopolitan environment," explains Maria Filomena. Their daughter Elisa Venturi took over the family business when she had finished her psychology degree. Her brother Alfredo trained as an architect.

Today Elisa Venturi works in the main store in Pesaro. Previously she managed one of the branches in Fano. This store was redesigned in 2000. "It was already an attractive store," she explains, "but it needed to be really special and exclusive, with a different approach to design from a traditional optical store."

"The customers appreciate the Fano shop interior," she says. "Many of them are very young, and they include foreigners who visit the city each summer. "But our older customers like its modern style too," says Elisa affectionately.

Beyond space and form

The redesign of the Fano store was directed by Alfredo Venturi. He also helps with the marketing and pr. He was just the person to transform the small 50 m² space into an attractive boutique. The tiny modern interior really leaves an impression on people who go there; it's contemporary without going over the top, it's neither minimal nor too luxurious. From the architecture to the furnishings inside, the modern styling is tasteful (in a typically Italian way!) with



Above right: The Venturi store in Pesaro is modern and exclusive with attractive furniture

Right: The Venturi shop in Fano has a warm, sunny interior

RETAIL INTERIORS

From left to right:

Frames are displayed in attractive niches in the Fano store

The flagship store in Pesaro has two floors



attention paid to the essence of things: slanting counter-ceilings, which are slightly curved to create a feeling of movement; irregular plaster walls with integrated niches that create a harmonious space; soft lines and forms and concave or convex-shaped furniture. The walls are the colour of the sun, a warm, luminous pastel yellow which integrates well with natural or artificial light. "In addition to the visual effects of colour and shade, I've added tactile materials using different grains, tones and relief surfaces," explains the architect.

Only a few frames are displayed, some on small stands in the window, particularly sunglasses. Some of the models are backlit in a metallic showcase. The optical frames are stored in drawers under the counter which is made of wood and Plexiglas. The design of the interior is finished off with a few pieces of sophisticated furniture, a group of chairs which catch the eye. The whole concept was conceived and designed by Alfredo Venturi and – in part – put together by local artisans.

Maria Filomena Venturi explains the family's philosophy for the business: "It's important to be different. We wanted our shops to be beautiful. For us our shops are like our own home. When you are spending eight or ten hours in one space you need to make it as pleasant as possible, for yourself and for your customers. The customer wants to find happy, warm people when they enter. This is how we like to come across."

That is the essence of this design project. The individuality of the stores comes from a feeling of enjoyment of being with people. This is the family's motivation, beyond just selling. In this sense the boutiques in Fano and Pesaro represent the new generation of the Venturi family, they are different from the other three

shops. And it's not just a question of aesthetics, this is a business decision as well. The aim is not to standardise what is on sale. "In these two stores we prefer to sell eyewear that we choose ourselves, not just the latest trends. We like to be a part of making our customers feel good, we want them to feel that with our help they have found an original frame style."

A culture for individual eyewear

The Venturi's 250m² flagship store in Pesaro was redesigned in 2001. It has two floors, which gave Alfredo Venturi licence to explore the architectural potential of the interior. The spaces are clearly defined, putting the customer at ease, and ensuring conversations with them can be relaxed. "Although sales of sunwear are vital, we try to focus on optical frames. The aim is to help the customer find the solution that perfectly suits their requirements. We need to talk to each of our customers without being interrupted," explains Elisa Venturi.

Looking after the window displays is of prime importance here. They are changed every two months. "The windows are like an invitation, they are the start of the relationship with a potential customer." The windows should attract attention and give a feeling of depth, to draw the public's attention inside. In the Pesaro store, as in Fano, run-of-the-mill publicity pictures are not used; and just a few frames are displayed. "If you display too many," says Mrs Venturi, "people touch them and try them on, and then they start to look worn."

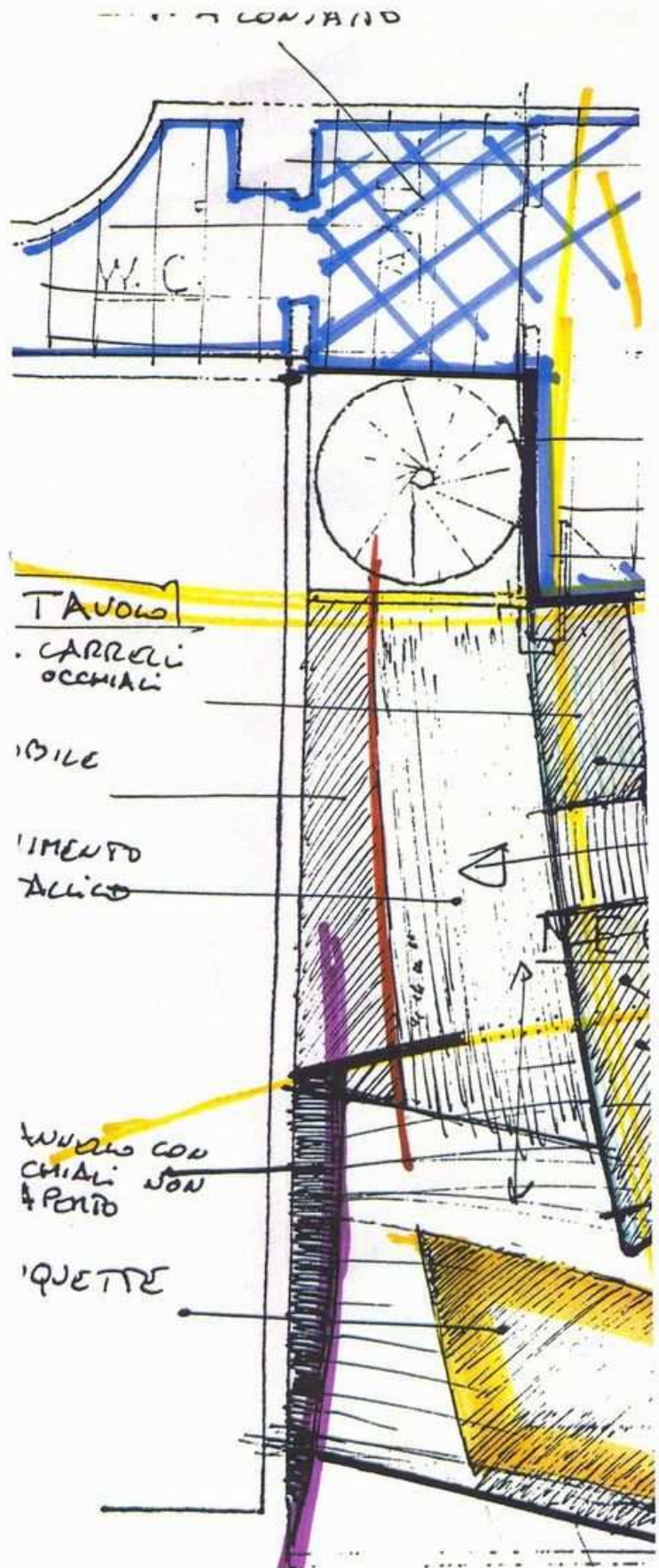
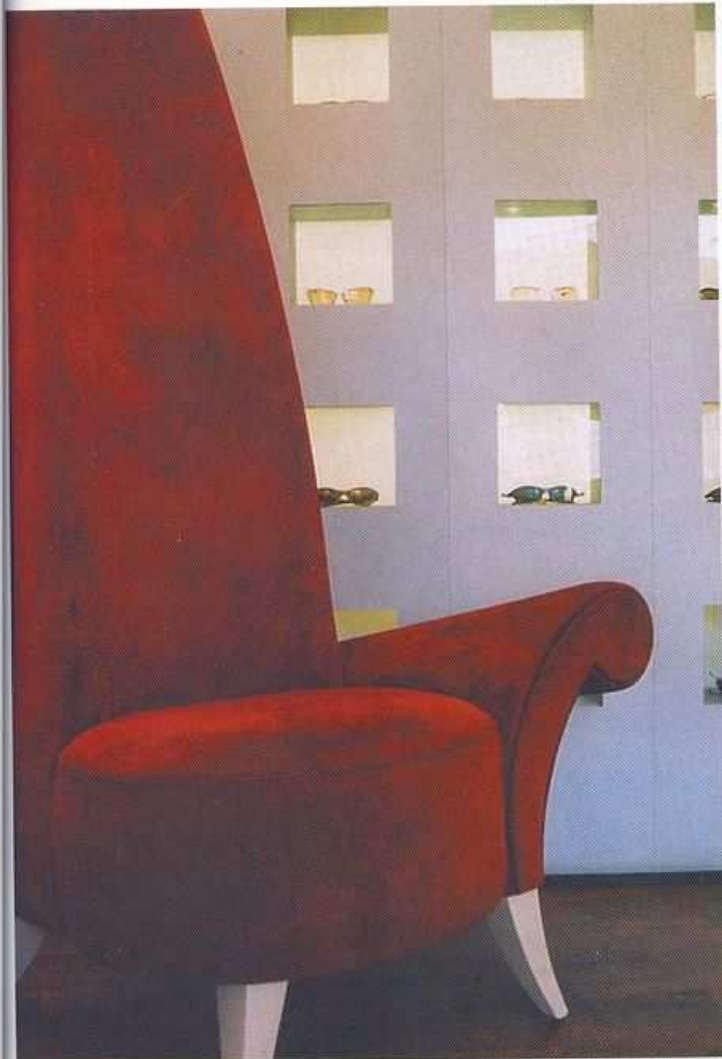
Elisa adds, "We know that elsewhere optical frames are on sale at a low cost. But this is not our philosophy. We prefer to sell fewer high quality frames at a higher price. If you come to us you are buying into the Venturi philosophy! This is what we believe."

RETAIL INTERIORS

From left to right:

Close-up of one of the unique chairs in the Fano store

Architect's drawing



The idea at Ottica Venturi is to preserve one's own personality and to find a high level of quality. "Nothing ventured nothing gained!" concludes Mrs Venturi. "It would be easier to sell products that the public asks for, to choose the easy option and stock the most obvious styles. But to be remembered, and to keep people coming in, we think we need to do our own thing. When we sell a frame that is a bit different, that's really the best publicity we could ask for."

Space for art

The young Venturis also want to give value to eyewear by putting it into a cultural context. They exhibit paintings and sculpture in the flagship store highlighting their own identity, and the traditions and culture of their surroundings. In the centre of the Pesaro store a work by Franco Bucci – a stoneware ceramic column, stands approximately six metres high.

The family is also involved in an annual art event, an initiative supported by Pesaro's Department of Culture. During Christmas each year, the store is transformed into a gallery. The frames disappear and the work of a local artist takes their place. The exhibition usually runs for a month – and the customer, as well as choosing a frame, experiences something new. "We aim to give something different to the city. We have had so many requests from artists that in future we plan to hold two exhibitions each year," explains Elisa.

Do they worry that someone else will start doing the same thing? Not at all. "When people copy you it shows you are doing something well!" says Elisa. She admits she would like to open a Venturi store in Milan in the future. And why not? She believes it would be a great personal challenge.