

NEWSMAKER / **Modo Eyewear****Greening the Way**

BY DEIRDRE CARROLL / SENIOR EDITOR

NEW YORK—The Modo Alessandro Lanaro founded in 1990 with the creation of his own brands Modo, M+ and Saki, is a very different company than the Modo of today. It's a different company than it was even 10 years ago, according to its founder.

"A lot of things have changed in the past decade," said Lanaro, president and CEO of Modo Eyewear. "One of the main reasons is that we decided to increase our portfolio about seven, eight years ago when we started licensing and following a different approach to what we did up until then.

"We have seen the waves of the marketplace change; 10 years ago designer brands had taken over, they were increasing in relevance and so that forced us to enter that space. I think that today, what we see is that House brands are back. The waves of fashion and customer's needs go through phases. They have changed again and we are certainly seeing our phase right now."

Today, Lanaro described the company as segmented into four main quadrants: House brands, which include Modo and Eco; Designer brands, which include emerging designers like Derek Lam, 3.1 Philip Lim and Jason Wu and which serve as a sort of design laboratory for the company; Contemporary brands, like the company's licenses with 7 for All Mankind, Baby Phat and Phat Farm (and a soon to be announced new license); and Sport brands, which include the company's agreements with the NFL and the US Open, among others. In addition to that, the company has a successful private label business that serves as a fifth revenue center.

Additionally, in 2010 Modo bought out the rights to Modo Europe after an eight-year long disassociation and established an office in Milan,

headed by Giovanni Lo Faro, to expand and grow their distribution in Europe and emerging markets in Russia and Asia.

However, an integral part of the Modo of today is the leadership role it has taken by adopting its proactive pro-environmental stance, most evident in their Eco (Earth Conscious Optics) collection, which has a certified composition of 95 percent recycled materials.

"Eco is our innovation," stated Lanaro. "The innovation is more conceptual and so powerful that we have never seen that many doors open all at once. The conversation surrounding Eco is so fascinating. It allows us not to be just another company, but a company that has a truly powerful concept.

"A year and half ago, some critics considered the things we were doing to be crazy. Why would I spend hundreds of thousands of dollars and nine months auditing our process if no one asked us to? But it was probably one of our best decisions ever because we created a level of credibility that is absolutely essential in this business. The green business is changing dramatically because there is so much greenwashing out there that unless you set yourself apart with the proper credibility you will not succeed. We did the right thing and we continue doing the right thing—nothing is taken for granted."

In fact, Modo is so committed to its green practices that it undergoes a random auditing process every six months from UL Environment, the organization that provides Modo with their Environmental Claims Validation (ECV) for the Eco line, to ensure that the collection of the recycled mate-



Modo's Alessandro Lanaro has diversified the company and forged a leadership role in sustainability issues.

rials retains its standards. Additionally, Modo is exploring ways to rework the manufacturing process to make it more efficient and environmentally friendly.

"We are trying to make a product that is going to have the least amount of impact and in fact, we are taxing ourselves so that impact is offset by the action we are taking, be it planting trees or donating frames to those in need," Lanaro said. "So the process is working very well. The interest in the product and the conversation is amazing and I have to say that I do believe that Eco could be one of the biggest House brands in the marketplace."

He added, "One of the main characteristics of the brand is that there are no limitations on design, there are no limitations on price point, we

Continued on page 14

FRONT LINES

NEWSMAKER / Modo Eyewear

The Business of Green

Continued from page 12

are not more expensive, in fact we are infinitely less expensive, and there are no limitations on quality. If you take other brands that are similar in quality, in craftsmanship, in design and you compare the price point, we are actually more valuable. I could have demanded a higher price but I did not want to do that.”

So, is there room for a higher priced green product?

“Yes there is,” declared Lanaro. “And we are doing that with the upcoming launch of Modo Recycled, which is going to be a sub-collection we created where we use better materials in the details, in terms of titanium and special hinges and so on. So we are moving in that direction with Modo as well.”

Additionally, Modo is launching an Eco Kids collection this summer since environmental issues are of particular interest to younger generations, the company said.

“Slowly, we are greening the company if you will, and Eco is certainly a conversation point that is very important and critical to our future,” explained Lanaro. “When we looked at our company, we decided we needed to be a company with a purpose and in 10, 20, 30 years from now we want to be known for something. We need to stand for something.”

And they are well on their way. “We want to be a more sustainable company. We want to lead the way and we are going to lead the way and we are



Eco's Spring ad campaign features environmentalist Summer Rayne Oakes.

going to constantly think of ways we can improve. I believe in building a company. I don't have an exit strategy, nor am I looking for one. I don't want it. I am having fun, we are healthy,” concluded Lanaro. ■

dcarroll@jobson.com

OUR REPUTATION SPEAKS FOR ITSELF

Since 1983, we have helped over 400 clients sell their business or develop a financial strategic partner; completing over \$8 billion in transactions.

As the exclusive representative specializing in the ophthalmic industry we take pride in our relationships, reputation, honesty and results in the United States and internationally.

EXCLUSIVE INVESTMENT BANK TO THE OPTICAL INDUSTRY

www.hpcpuckett.com

Office: (858)756-4915



HPC PUCKETT & COMPANY
Specialized Investment Banking

Since 1983