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## Anatomy of a shade: Mykita & Bernhard Willhelm's Franz

Everything you always wanted to know about sunglasses but were afraid to ask

**They are instantly recognisable, celebrities' favourite accessory, an absolute must have. But what is the story of FRANZ? Take a peek behind the scenes at MYKITA, the brand behind the cult sunglasses.**

You may have already spotted FRANZ on the pages of fashion publications, movies, gossip magazines or sharp design blogs. Designed by German avant-garde fashion designer Bernhard Willhelm together with eyewear brand [MYKITA](#), FRANZ is an aviator-style, fusing the brand's trademark feather-light sheet metal frame with dashing mirrored lenses. Here is a chance to get to know more about MYKITA's stunning limited edition collection.

### MYKITA & Bernhard Willhelm

Renowned for his colourful, high-spirited and energetic women's and men's collections, German designer Bernhard Willhelm is known to push boundaries and think further than just clothes. With [MYKITA](#), we get to see more of Bernhard again.

Founded in 2003 by a group of four composed of Philipp Haffmans, Harald Gottschling, Daniel Haffmans and Moritz Krueger, Berlin-based MYKITA has continuously been raising the bar when it comes to eyewear. They have come up with a highly innovative and functional design: simple plug connections that make complex soldered joints and screw connections redundant, are paired with featherweight frames cut out of stainless sheet steel and folded into form. MYKITA's handmade frames are state of the art sunglasses and prescription spectacles.

## A chat with MYKITA

We sat down with MYKITA's Philipp Haffmans, head of design, and Xenia Deger, Marketing & PR Director.

### **Bernhard Wilhelm is quite the exuberant character, while MYKITA is known for their clean and crisp look. What is it that links the two of you?**

Philipp Haffmans: Similar to Bernhard Wilhelm, our focus lies not just on the eyewear market. There is a world beyond the business, and together with people like Bernhard it is easy to cross this border. This is where the fun part starts.

### **How did this collaboration come about?**

Xenia Deger: We actually received an e-mail from Bernhard. He was asking if we were interested in collaborating on some eyewear for his AW09 show, which was exceptionally happening in Berlin rather than Paris where it is usually hosted. Of course we were very interested in working with Bernhard, as we have great respect for his work and are big fans of the rather crazy "Bernhard Wilhelm world". When they sent us the collection moods and theme (a seventies ski-style collection), we were thrilled. It immediately made our creative juices flow. Then everything went very fast: we completed the sample collection in less than 2 months.

### **What was most stimulating in working with Bernhard Wilhelm?**

Philipp Haffmans: The work of Bernhard Wilhelm and Jutta Kraus stands apart from the traditional fashion circus. In their world, the absurd is normal. This view on the world made the collaboration feel uncomplicated and easy. Endless discussions about details did not take place.

### **What was the inspiration for FRANZ?**



FRANZ by MYKITA & Bernhard Wilhelm

Philipp Haffmans: Skiing and its slalom wizardry, downhill heroics, cross-country stamina and fearless jumpers seen at the 1976 Winter Olympics in Innsbruck provided the inspiration for Bernhard Wilhelm's men's collection. The latter is not strictly speaking a skiwear collection, however, but rather what Bernhard Wilhelm considers a "striped hybrid", boasting both: substance and style. To accompany his ski outfits, he has joined forces with us, to present three mirrored sunglasses models. The result is a trio of aviator-style sheet-metal frames: FRANZ, but also the SEPP and LUKE models. The FRANZ model was inspired by and named after legendary downhill champion Franz Klammer.

### **Could you tell us more about the design process for FRANZ?**

Philipp Haffmans: The expansive but modest design is a conscious reference to the inadequacies of

past manufacturing methods. Back in those days, precise laser cutting technology just didn't exist. As a result, certain styles appear quite chunky. By using our production methods this look is transported into the present and through this we have created a new design language.

**You got the FRANZ sun lenses from Carl Zeiss Vision. But tell us, how are the lenses part of the creative process, what is their influence on the final sunglasses? Is it a sort of a chicken and the egg thing: do you have a particular lens colour and mirror in mind for a specific model, or do you see a beautiful sun lens and think: "This is great, inspiring, it would look fantastic on a pair of sunglasses. I need to design something right now!"?**

Philipp Haffmans: In this collection the choice of the lenses played a major role. Like a curtain, mirrored lenses literally close the wearer's face. It has been the time to bring this look back on stage. At the moment when Bernard Willhelm called us, we had already been discussing that issue. And when he came up with the Olympic winter games thing, it was somehow a perfect match. The mountain issue brought other pictures to our minds, e.g. Reinhold Messner climbing up the Mount Everest. Because of the extreme light conditions up there, the mirrored lens type has been part of the protecting equipment. So, one thing led to another and in the end the bulky, mirrored aviator shapes were the result. By the way, another style ALOIS, featuring the same design language, the same use of shape and form, joined this edition. Executed in extreme colour combinations such as bright green with a green mirror on the lens, or brown with a soft brown mirror.

**FRANZ has accomplished the amazing achievement to become the iconic accessory of Sex and the City 2. Among thousands of fashion items, FRANZ is the one piece we're seeing everywhere: Sarah Jessica Parker is even wearing FRANZ on the movie poster and the trailer. How did FRANZ end up on Sarah Jessica Parker's nose? Did Patricia Field, the movie's costume designer get in touch with you, or was it some kind of a pleasant surprise?**

Xenia Deger: We had received an email from Warner Brother's production department, asking if we would be interested in supplying some eyewear for the set. Sarah Jessica Parker wears our HEATHER model in her private life. Well, of course we were interested! We sent them the frames that SJP wears, and actually it is also in the movie – we already spotted them in the latest trailer. In addition, during a press day at our PR agency in Paris, Patricia Field spotted the FRANZ, and requested it in all colours plus a special colour, silver. We got very excited and sent it off. On the first day of shooting, in September 09, we saw that the golden FRANZ was used in the outfit of the first scene that was shot! Bingo.

Philipp Haffmans: Building the character of Carrie for "Sex and the City 2"®, Patricia Fields had a certain picture in mind: white and gold. The white dress is accomplished with golden shoes, a golden necklace, a golden clutch by Chanel and at Mykita she found a pair of gold-golden sunglasses. I think at that moment there wasn't any other frame like this on the market.

**MYKITA has fresh and exciting collaborations going on: you have worked with e.g. designer Bent Angelo Jensen of Herr Von Eden or Marios Schwab. Is there any new project you would like to tell us about?**

Xenia Deger: We like to collaborate with other designers as it broadens the mind, and new ideas come together with fun results. With Romain Kremer we just developed a frame that's more of a helmet, the YURI. Actually, it features little peek holes instead of lenses.

Philipp Haffmans: ... and when people like Lady Gaga like to disguise themselves with objects such as those mentioned above, it is even more fun.

## More about the topic

[» More about MYKITA](#)

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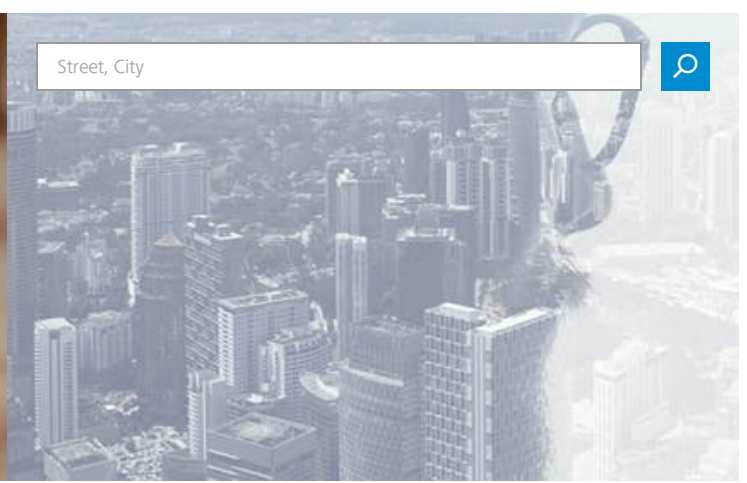
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