

20/20

europe

international eye fashion

CONSCIOUS CREATIVITY

Interview *Robert La Roche* / **In detail** *Rolf*
Brand profile *Einstoffen* / **L&T Maximus Optic**



#PLANETROLF: A CREDIBLE, SUSTAINABLE QUEST AND ENDEAVOUR - IN EYEWEAR

AWARD-WINNING EYEWEAR LABEL ROLF IS ONE OF THE OPTICAL INDUSTRY LEADERS IN THE PRODUCTION OF SUSTAINABLE NATURAL EYEWEAR, WITH A COMPANY ETHOS THAT MATCHES THAT COMMITMENT AND PASSION FOR INNOVATION-DRIVEN DESIGN AND SELF-SUFFICIENT, CRAFT-ORIENTED LOCAL PRODUCTION. 20/20 EUROPE SPOKE TO ROLAND WOLF, FOUNDER AND MARCEL SCHLICHTER, SALES MANAGER, AHEAD OF THE OPTI FAIR IN MUNICH TO FIND OUT HOW THE COMPANY IS PREPARING FOR 2024.

Interview by Clodagh Norton

SUSTAINABILITY AND CONSCIOUS DESIGN ARE INTRINSIC TO ROLF'S PHILOSOPHY AND HAVE BEEN SINCE THE START. WHAT ARE THE FUNDAMENTAL AREAS THAT YOU FOCUSED ON THROUGH THE LAST YEARS AND HOW HAVE THINGS DEVELOPED OR PIVOTED?

Roland Wolf: The company's ethos is built on four pillars: a commitment to a healthier planet based on the concept of local production and a high product depth: innovative rethinking of norms: the use of plant-based and natural materials: and the promotion of sustainability through durable and long-lasting products.

In recent years, our courage and vision to produce innovative eyewear in Europe has paid off. Thanks to our in-house manufacturing and creative minds in R&D, we have been able to deliver and work on new products and projects at the same time. One result is our 3D printed bean glasses. Launched as the SUBSTANCE COLLECTION with the 'get back on track' package during the Covid shutdown, we gave our partners a fresh and positive vibe with a product that delivers on quality, design, innovation, sustainability and price.

Since then, this product line has grown with a SUBSTANCE KIDS COLLECTION and most recently the WIRE COLLECTION. We invested in the latest 3D printing technologies in our local production facility in the Tyrol and are able to print all kinds of materials. So, we have a great basis for our future product development and prototyping. We plan to continuously launch



The Rolf 'family': **Bernhard, Christian and Roland Wolf**

new products and collections at upcoming trade shows. This investment underlines our commitment to high technology, innovation and independence.

We have also used the time to implement major projects such as rebranding, the thermal refurbishment of our factory and the construction of a new sustainable eyewear store concept in Reutte.

ROLF HAS ACHIEVED MULTIPLE AWARDS FOR SUSTAINABLE PRODUCT DESIGN AND INNOVATION. WOULD YOU BE ABLE TO TELL US ABOUT THE MOST RECENT 2 OR 3 AWARDS AND THE RELATED PRODUCTS/THEIR MATERIALS.

RW: Rolf has won several prestigious awards for our sustainable product design and innovation. Most recently, we were awarded Platinum Winners in two categories at the 16th GRANDS PRIX DU DESIGN in Canada. The first was in the 'Special Awards / Products + Wood' category, recognising our innovative wooden eyewear designs. The second was in the 'Industrial Design / Product - Consumer Goods' category, recognising the consumer appeal and excellence of our products.

We have won the Materialica Design + Technology Award 2023 in Germany for our new Wire collection, an evolution of the 3d printed plant-based glasses. Sustainable materials and bold colours combine in a progressive design and underline the spirit of the times. Adjustable temples and nose pads allow for a perfect fit with striking threads adding an artistic touch. The Wire Collection offers several ways to mix and match, combining style and functionality.



ROLF: evolved collection



Rolf: FUSION collection

WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE INTRODUCTION OF PLANT-BASED PRINTED EYEWEAR A FEW YEARS AGO AT ROLF AS A TURNING POINT IN TERMS OF THE COMPANY'S SUSTAINABLE POSITIONING? EXPLAIN HOW THIS WAS A GAME-CHANGER FOR THE COMPANY.

RW: From the very beginning in 2009, Rolf has been committed to sustainability, conscious design and local production. The recent award for our wooden eyewear in Canada shows us that the core and origin of Rolf eyewear is still perceived as and in tune with the zeitgeist. More and more we hear from our customers that Rolf wooden eyewear is timeless craftsmanship of the highest quality. We recently had a loyal customer in our flagship store in Reutte who has been wearing our wooden glasses for 12 years and has now decided to buy a new pair of Rolf bean glasses. So we wouldn't say that the bean glasses were the start of our sustainability journey. Rather, it shows that Rolf is constantly working to make better glasses with appeal to a wide range of customers around the world. Making sustainable eyewear that is better, more functional and more durable than conventional eyewear is what drives us. It is our belief that this is the only way we can leave the planet a better place for future generations. That's why we keep talking about #planetrolf.

IN 2024, WHAT IS THE FOCUS FOR YOUR TEAM IN TERMS OF FURTHERING SUSTAINABLE RELATED PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT, DESIGN OR CSR? (CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY)

RW: As part of our rebranding process, we developed the idea of the #planetrolf. The #planetrolf is more than a slogan. It is a symbol of our commitment to a more sustainable planet and a cornerstone of our corporate philosophy and DNA. It's a place where all our ideas and visions have a place. We invite everyone to be part of it. In a fast-moving world where the importance of sustainability is often neglected and diluted, we have chosen to go our own way - a way that reflects our core values. #planetrolf stands for innovation, for constantly challenging the status quo and for our commitment to producing high quality, durable eyewear

from renewable resources. We communicate openly and with transparency, leaving it up to our partners and customers to decide what they consider to be sustainable and honest products. Our approach to sustainability is based on our own standards and beliefs, rather than relying on external organic or eco labels. To shout out this message the expansion of our international sales is at the top of the agenda for 2024. In addition to our core markets DACH and BENELUX, we will focus on European countries such as Italy and Spain, but also on Scandinavia and the American market, where we are already represented but still see plenty of room for improvement.

CAN YOU GIVE US A SNEAK PEEK OF ANYTHING YOU WILL BE LAUNCHING AT OPTI?

RW: The FUSION COLLECTION will be launched at Opti. It symbolises the fusion of our knowledge of eyewear design, technical expertise and use of natural materials. It is a real milestone for us. We are delighted to be able to present this development to our customers and invite everyone to take a look at our new products. And of course, we won't forget our heart and soul, the wooden and stone glasses collections, which will grow with some great new designs.

MARCEL, YOU HAVE RECENTLY JOINED ROLF AS SALES MANAGER. WHAT IS YOUR PERSPECTIVE ON ROLF'S POSITIONING IN THE MARKET AS A SUSTAINABLE INNOVATOR, WITH A BROAD OFFER OF COLLECTIONS FOR ALL AGES, WITH A SPECTRUM OF PRICE POINTS? WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FORWARD TO, MOVING AHEAD?

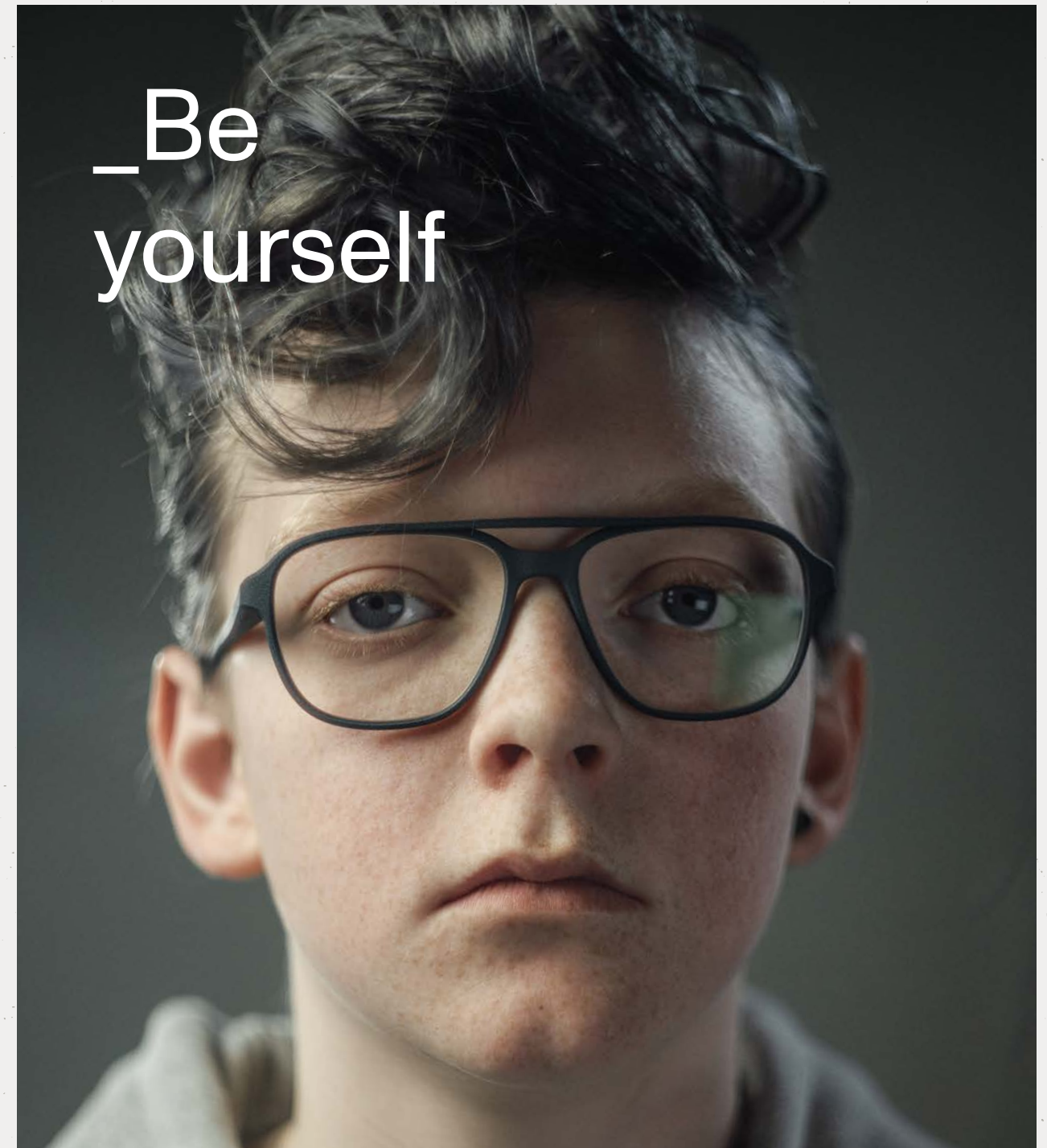
Marcel Schichter: I am very happy to be part of the Rolf family and to contribute my 25 years of experience in the industry. Rolf is leading the industry as a pioneer in sustainability and the rapidly increasing demand for our bean glasses worldwide confirms this. We have a product portfolio for young and old and at different price points that allows us to appeal to many people. I look forward to driving international growth and convincing as many people as possible of our vision.

WHAT REGIONS ARE A KEY FOCUS IN 2024?

MS: In addition to our core markets of Germany, Austria and Switzerland, we will focus on European countries such as Italy and Spain, but also Scandinavia and the American market, where we are already represented. Our plan is that, as we grow, we will also focus on our service and our existing partners. Process optimization, workflow optimization and the expansion of our internal structure give our customers the assurance that we are not only thinking innovatively about the product, but also growing and adapting in the background to offer the best possible service.

Rolf will exhibit at opti, Mido, 100% Optical (London) and The Loft in New York.

rolf-spectacles.com



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