

Ooh La La! What We Can Learn from French Opticianry

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About Your Instructor

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- 3rd Career
- Learned French in Senegal, West Africa as a Peace Corps Volunteer
- Worked for Lafont for 4 ½ years
- Master Optician

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Why Should You Care About French Opticianry?

Unique Healthcare Model
France's eye care system maintains strict separation: opticians sell glasses while ophthalmologists handle medical care through prescriptions.

Critical Doctor Shortage
Long waits for eye exams have prompted recent expansions in opticians' roles to help meet growing demand.


Fashion Meets Function
Glasses are essential fashion statements—many French people own multiple pairs, including sunglasses for sunny regions.

Why This Matters Globally
Understanding French opticianry reveals universal themes: healthcare system challenges, cultural values around vision and style, and innovative approaches to improving patient care access.

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Class Objectives

- Learn how to use a flame to adjust buffalo horn frames
- Describe French opticianry education system and contrast it to the licensure landscape of the US
- See the value of being surrounded by optical competitors and creating optical destinations
- Know what elements of French frame manufacturing are completely unique to the country and indicate where those manufacturing centers exist on a map
- Describe how the US and France are key players in an international opticianry landscape



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The French Way of Thinking – La Patrimoine



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Meilleur Ouvrier de France



Master of the Craft in France

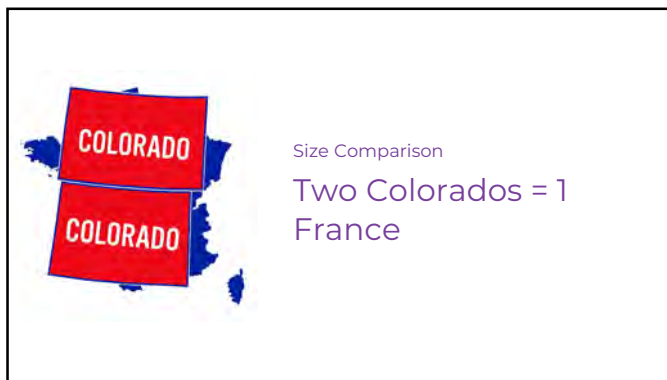
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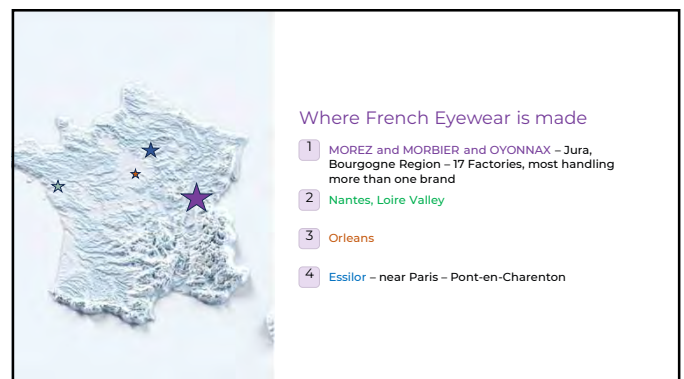
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Essilor



Essel + Silor = Essilor (1979)

Essel (Société des Lunetteries) was founded in 1849 (then-called L'Association Fraternelle des Ouvriers Lunetteries) as a small network of eyeglass assembly workshops in Paris. It expanded in the late 19th and early 20th centuries by acquiring factories in nearby Parisian neighborhoods and Eastern France. Essel soon added frame design and trade to its activities. In 1955 Essel launched a rimless frame line, Nylor, that is still used today. Essel's breakthrough came in 1959 with the invention of Varilux, 1931 - 1972

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Silor History

Silor (Société Industrielle de Lunetterie et d'Optique Rationnelle) first started under the name Georges Lissac in 1931 as the first eyewear department store of ophthalmic lenses and frames before becoming a lens manufacturer. In 1954, as a precursor to Essel's progressive lens, Lissac made a discovery of its own: the Orma 1000 lens, a plastic material for lens production



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French Eyewear Brands



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French Eyewear History

Eyewear manufacturing began in Italy in the 12th century by monks then became a sign of wealth. Binocles, Pince-Nez, Lorgnettes
Eyeglass manufacturing was industrialized in Morez, Haut-Jura, in the 19th century. Specialized metalworkers had been active in the area since the 16th century.

In 1796, master nail maker Pierre Hyacinthe Caseaux designed the first wire frames. By the early 19th century, he employed 13 workers and produced 3,600 pairs of glasses per year, selling them in France and Switzerland

Audiometer invented in 1920, Hearing Aids have long been integrated into the optical space, granting further legitimacy to eyecare as a public health strategy.

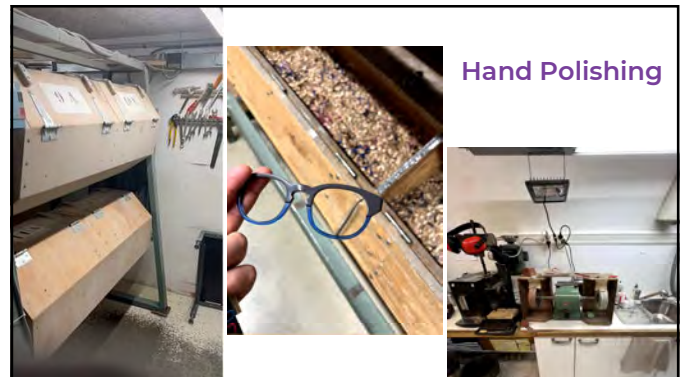


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French Manufacturing Strengths:

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Hand Polishing



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Bespoke Eyewear



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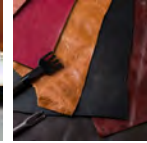
Luxury and Unconventional Materials



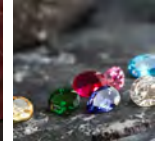
Gold



Titanium



Leather



Precious stones

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Fabric Inlays



Detailed Painting/Masking



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Metal and Acetate Combinations



Photo Credit: Anne et Valentin

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French Opticians Worth Mentioning:


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Jean Gabriel Augustin Chevallier



1178-1848: A fourth-generation master optician, Chevallier built on his family's legacy that began in 1740. Serving kings and emperors, he was recognized by the French Academy of Sciences as a brilliant engineer. He invented the solar microscope, popularized opera glasses, and his inventions were used by the French navy and army.

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Augustin Jean Fresnel

- 1814
Engineer beginning in Road construction, then interested in optics. Studying polarized light, confirming the wave theory of light
- 1818
Diffraction: the bending and spreading of waves as they pass around an obstacle or through a narrow slit
- 1822
Presents designs for Lighthouse lenses
- 1823
First lighthouse built with Fresnel lenses, Fresnel becomes the chief of Lighthouses in France

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Pierre Marly

The famous French Optician who changed eyewear from medical devices to extraordinary expressions of style. Stylist to the stars and the US like Elton John and Sophia Loren.


Creates the Eyeglasses Museum first in Paris with pieces he collected if the stars had a need for repair – he'd get them a new frame and keep their original. Then moved to Morez. His shop is still owned by the third generation today.



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Jean-Pierre Bonnac

French Optician who developed the specialization of pediatric eyewear and low vision. He passed in 2015.



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carte d'assurance maladie vitale

Insurance in France

EMISE LE 08/01/2005

1 88 88 88 088 088 88
NNNNNNNNNN
BBBBBBBBBB

Everyone has state funded vision insurance covering basic eyewear. They may also have a secondary plan that covers more through an employer or by purchasing.

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Studying Opticianry in France

at more than **70** opticianry programs

In the US we have 19 schools, and only 2 west of the Rockies

Baccalaureate
Finishing up high school level studies, usually with an emphasis. Those who had a science, economic or arts baccalaureate are prepared generally for the next level. Those with a technology baccalaureate have an advantage and those with an opticianry prep course (41 in the country) are passed to the BTS program

BTS Opticien – Lunetterie
(brevet de technicien supérieur) A technical certificate in opticianry, taking 2 years after high school plus a 6 week internship (BAC+2) BASIC COMPETENCE – Allows you to do what we do here

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Advanced Opticianry Education in France

le Bachelier optique (bac+3)

Optician with a specialization, Manager, Creation (lab)
Design (frame)

la Licence professionnelle optique (bac+3)

Low vision, contact lens fitting



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Master Level Opticianry Education

le Master optique (bac+5)

Our equivalent of a Master Optician, fit to manage all aspects of an optical business including management, frame and lens production.

le Mastère spécialisé optique (bac+5)

Our Equivalent of an Optometrist

- 🕒 The French government controls entry into school programs. Every graduate gets a job.

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Prescribing laws

An optician has the right to adjust the Rx of the patient from the original Rx, provided by an ophthalmologist for:

1

Year
under 16

5

Years
16-42

3

Years
over 42

With a valid Rx, an eye test and the patient being able to achieve better results with the modification.

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Professional Organization

There is a French equivalent of the United Opticians Association:



Also came from similar organizations joining forces in 2019. However, in France over 80% of opticians are part of the ROF, which is primarily an advocacy organization.

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Continuing Education

No CE Requirement

There is no requirement for continuing education in opticianry.

Voluntary Education

All voluntary education is done through a few shows but mostly vendors.

Private Equity

Private Equity is buying practices in France too. There is less of a generational effect due to economic and educational cycles.

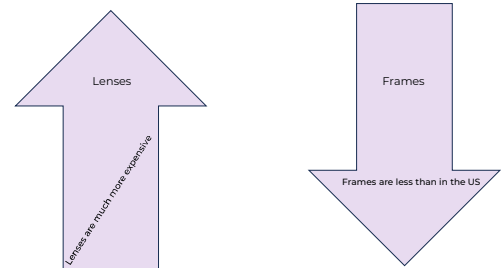
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Optometrists in France

There are very few Optometrists, all ODs came from Opticianry and work in Ophthalmology offices. These are our roots too.

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Pricing Differences



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Lens Technology in France

Major Brands

- Essilor
- Rodenstock
- Zeiss

Lens Technologies exist in France that do not exist here.

Myopia Management

They have been using Myopia Management lenses (Hoya) in 2020 and just this year, the government has begun reimbursing for these lenses for kids with progressive myopia under 16.

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Optical Store Density

Optical stores in France (68.52M population)	Optical stores in Texas (31.29M population)	Independent
12,400	1,700	50%

Prevalence of Optical Stores, bunched together, still lots of Optic 2000; EssilorLuxottica owned chains

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Frame Display Techniques

Frames are displayed like jewelry, flat

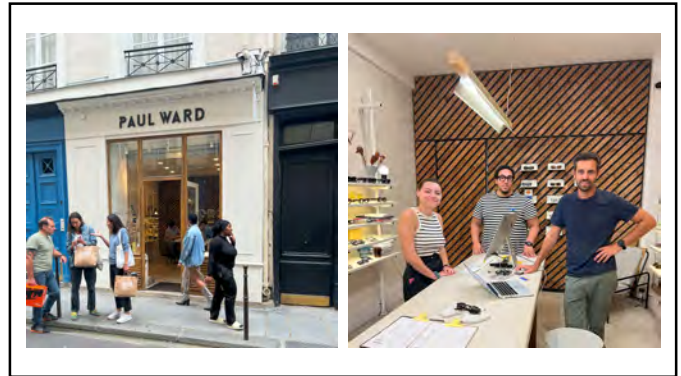


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Retail Concepts: The Monomark



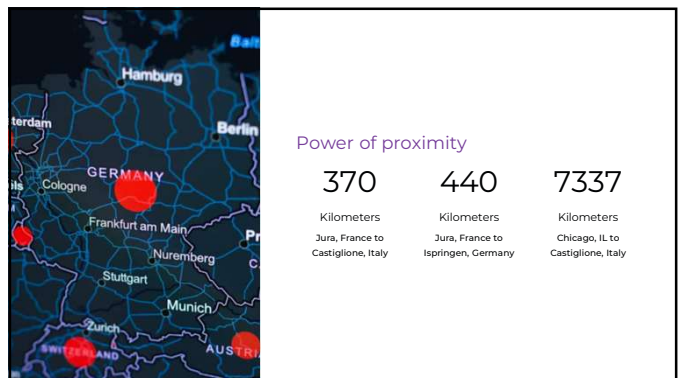
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Traditional Materials:




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Tortoiseshell



- The international and French ban on the sale of real tortoiseshell eyeglass frames comes from the 1973 Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).
- The hawksbill sea turtle, which is the source of tortoiseshell, was placed under CITES Appendix I in 1977. This prohibits all international commercial trade in the species and its products.
- The sale of antique tortoiseshell items made before these regulations may be permitted under specific conditions. However, it is illegal to trade or sell any products derived from tortoiseshell after the ban took effect.

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Buffalo Horn Adjustment Demonstration

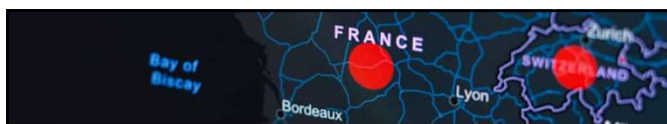
- **Dry Heat:** A Bunsen burner is usually around 300 degrees Celsius. Your frame warmer or salt pan? 160 degrees at the hottest.
- **Constant Motion** through the Flame
- **Small Adjustments** in any direction

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Buffalo Horn Adjustment: Let the Pro do it!



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Lesson #1

Eyecare is public healthcare.

The French understand that eyecare decreases the burden of disease and supports livelihoods.

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Lesson #2

There is a formula for being an eyewear powerhouse:

- Deep Heritage
- Pride in Craftsmanship
- Proximity to Components
- Fashion
- Eyewear Leadership

Lenses: Having less stringent regulations allows for more lens options.

Both frame and lens manufacturers lean into being locally made. We can too.

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Lesson #3



- More schools does not flood the market or make opticians less competitive.
- More shops, even in close proximity does not create competition, it incentivizes diversity.
- We need more opticianry schools and licensure to adequately serve patients.

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Lesson #4

Thank goodness for our continuing education.

Protect it	Engage with it
Teach it	Ask for what you want to learn
Support your state society	Join the UOA

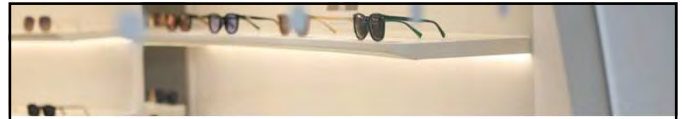
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Lesson #5 Part of honoring a profession is celebrating it



Your state and UOA needs to be better about recognizing excellence and giving excellent opticianry a platform to lead and inspire.

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Lesson #6

Displaying eyewear like jewelry is a flexible and secure option and raises the perceived value of a frame. The frame board is an American invention designed to drive frame sales. You control your inventory, not board allocations.

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Lesson #7



We owe it to the French for making eyewear fashionable. Period. Proximity to Fashion capitals is precious.

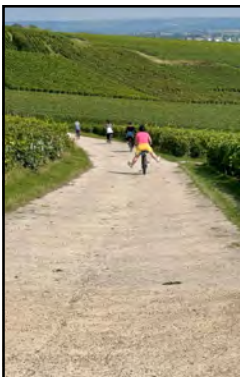
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Lesson #8



Don't try to adjust buffalo horn frame without the proper equipment.

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Merci!

Please evaluate this session



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