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LENSES AND TECHNOLOGY:

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Brands Anew

DESIGNER AND LIFESTYLE BRANDS

Our Eyewear

THE NEW COUNTERCULTURE

EyeVote

IT'S ALL ABOUT YOUR VOTE

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NARROWING IN

Big is big. And round is all around. But narrow, elongated shapes are impacting eyewear in no small way. Especially popular with petite women and those who feel larger shapes overpower their faces, these designs may be smaller in size, but they are huge in style. And that's the straight and narrow on this ever-growing trend.



**MAXIMIZING
STYLE IN SMALL
SHAPES**

- Distinctive fades
- Rich, deep colors such as reds, blues and purples
- Softened lower eyerims
- Thick, outer eyerims
- Fun animal prints

Left from top: XOXO Indie Chic from The McGee Group; LYS from Lafont; BEBE Fancy 5048 from Altair Eyewear
Right from top: RAMPAGE 173 from Viva International Group; FYSH 3476 from WestGroupe; KONISHI KA5733 from Clariti Eyewear

Photographed by NED MATURA; Senior Features Editor GLORIA NICOLA

EMPOWERED BY

CANADIAN TV PERSONALITY, AUTHOR AND NEWSPAPER COLUMNIST **JEANNE BEKER** REFLECTS ON HER MULTIFACETED, MULTIMEDIA CAREER AND HER NEW ADVENTURE WITH EYEWEAR.

BY GLORIA NICOLA

From the time she was a child, Toronto-born Jeanne Beker wanted to be an actor. At 16 she set out to fulfill her dream, going to auditions and landing a role in the Canadian CBC sitcom "Toby." At 19 after playing a variety of roles in films and commercials, she headed to New York to study theater and then returned to Toronto to enter the theater program at York University, eventually getting a gig with CBC radio reporting on arts and entertainment. Later she went to work with 1050 CHUM, producing daily lifestyle and entertainment features for the station and launched the groundbreaking music magazine show "The NewMusic" in 1979.

"In 1985 I began thinking enough with this rock 'n' roll. I felt I needed to expand into another arena," Beker notes. "At that point there wasn't much fashion on TV, and fashion was not treated like entertainment the way it is today. So I jumped at the chance to host Fashion Television (FT)." She remained there for 27 years until the program ceased production in 2012. Beker also launched @Fashion, the Internet's first fashion website for American communications giant MCI in 1995. In 2001 and 2002, she had her own limited edition fashion lines, Jeanne Beker for Eaton's and Inside Out by Jeanne Beker with Sears Canada. Since 2010 she has been releasing a clothing line entitled Edit by Jeanne Beker, curating a collection of designer clothing for Fall/Winter and Spring/Summer seasons.

"One of the most important things I saw happen in those 27 years at FT was the democratizing of fashion," Beker explains. "Fashion

has become so much more accessible and ubiquitous. In fact we are beginning to see a backlash to all those makeover shows. People are doing their own thing now and doing it wonderfully well, going into their closets and mixing it up and strutting it out. But fashion can be a double-edged sword. You can let yourself become a fashion victim, but fashion can also empower you."

In fact, because Beker feels so strongly about the power of fashion, she has become actively involved in Dress for Success, a nonprofit, international organization that promotes the economic independence of disadvantaged women by providing professional attire, a network of support and the career development tools to help women thrive in work and life. "It's incredible to be able to reach out in this way to women and help them feel great about themselves. Fashion isn't going to save the world, but it does have the ability to transform and empower," Beker emphasizes. "It can lift us up to where we belong."

Her interest in fashion also led to the next logical step: eyewear. In partnership with Canadian-based WestGroupe, Beker is launching a signature collection of women's eyewear under WestGroupe's Fysh UK (Urban Kool) Eyewear brand. "Eyewear is a



FASHION



Styles from the
FYSH UK JEANNE BEKER
SIGNATURE COLLECTION



perfect

way of expressing yourself,”

Beker says. “It sits smack on your face. I’ve always thought a lot about glasses because I have worn them since I was 10. When WestGroupe approached me and was receptive to donating a portion of the proceeds from the eyewear to Dress for Success, it seemed like an ideal match. I like that they sell their products globally and I thought their marketing campaigns were very classy. I also like that WestGroupe is a family-run, Canadian company. It seems to me when you are Canadian you need to scream twice as loud to be heard.”

She describes her eyewear collection, which consists of six styles, each in four colors, as trendy and fun with cool colors, but not overly trendy. “I like to walk a little bit on the wild side, but I understand the need for restraint from a commercial point of view.”

Beker notes that she personally doesn’t like minimal glasses. “My feeling is if you are going to wear glasses, don’t keep it a secret. Glasses should be a bit playful; they should make a statement and be an extension of your wardrobe. That’s why I like bigger styles and I love patterns. I love the secretary look in glasses, but of course that depends on the secretary,” she laughs.

What is truly amazing to Beker is how much a pair of glasses can do for a person. “Glasses change both how you see the world, and how the world sees you,” she comments. “You can have so much fun with eyewear, and it is so much more affordable than shoes or

a bag. It’s never made sense to me to have only one pair of glasses.”

She also notes that colorations are very important in eyewear. “It’s like makeup,” she notes. “It can change the whole mood of your look,” she says. Her own favorite color is red. “I have a new red carpet in my living room, and it makes me feel good. Red is empowering. I also adore black, and black and white combos are so elegant. I like bright yellow and chartreuse too. I love warm colors. There are photos of my sister and me when we were children. I always wore reds and pinks, and she wore blues. Red is definitely my favorite color. It’s the color of passion.”

Her goal for the new eyewear collection is for it to become a go-to brand for those who want to be style leaders. “In the fashion world there is always a lot coming at us. It can be confusing. I want my eyewear to be for people who understand my sensibilities.” To Beker, style is ultimately an outward expression of how we see ourselves and want to present ourselves to the world. “Style is about being comfortable in your own skin,” she emphasizes.

What she likes best about her career is the people. “I love people. Being able to communicate with others is why I wanted to be in theater in the first place,” she says. “In fact I even studied mime in Paris in order to understand the fine points of communication. Mime is a great format. It’s pure, unbridled communication.”

What would she do if she were to change careers? “In my fantasy life, I would like to be a concert pianist (I’m thinking about taking piano lessons again). I also love art. I do a little painting when no one is looking. Or I could be a veterinarian. There are so many great things out there I would be happy doing,” she notes. “That’s why I love my career. It’s so multifaceted.”

As for advice to those starting out in the fashion business, Beker offers the advice given to her by her father: “Don’t be afraid and never give up.” And most importantly she adds, “Don’t take fashion too seriously or you will stop enjoying it.” ■



Jeanne Beker views her signature collection for Fysh UK Eyewear with Beverly Suliteanu, WestGroupe’s vice president of product development.

Jeanne Beker wears FYSH UK JEANNE BEKER SIGNATURE COLLECTION 3479 from WestGroupe.