



## ***Exhibit of the Month***

### **ROMAS KALANTA'S SUNGLASSES**

*Museologist Simona Gustaitytė*

- Materials: dark green glass, metal alloy, plastic;
- Length – 14 cm;
- The 1990s.

The idea of modern sunglasses is relatively recent and encourages us to look back at the last century, but the history of their ancestors dates back more than a hundred years. The earliest known example of the need to protect the eyes from sunlight was created by the ancient Inuit. In order to avoid dazzling rays reflected in the snow, they covered their eyes with a piece of wood, bone or other material with narrow slits for the eyes. In ancient times, they were also covered with polished gemstones, and in China facial expressions of judges were hidden by glasses of smoky quartz plates. Of course, such glasses were neither a protection from harmful rays nor the prevailing fashion trend.

From the 18<sup>th</sup> century, tinted lenses of glasses were used to treat visual impairments, and only in the 20<sup>th</sup> century glasses became a stylish accessory: primarily, among Hollywood film actors, and since late 1920s until early 1930s they reached masses of the general public with the onset of mass production. The 1930s mark the start of polarized glasses that protect from the glare of the sun.

Such aviator-style glasses were used by U.S. Air Force pilots during World War II and soon became widespread in society. Although the design of glasses changed several times in the coming decades, their popularity remained as they became a way of expressing fashion.

The exhibit in the photos is glasses, which belonged to the Lithuanian freedom activist Romas Kalanta, who died protesting against the Soviet regime. Until his death, the life under the conditions of the totalitarian regime was difficult for the young man; therefore, it is not surprising that he admired Western culture, the movements that began there, rebelling against the current order. R. Kalanta was interested in the hippie subculture popular in the 1960s-1970s and rock music; moreover, he played the guitar himself, wore fashionable long hair and copied hippie style. "Freedom through clothing", rock music and hippie worldview become the forms of passive resistance and an opposition to the "Soviet man" model implemented in society.





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