



NEWS

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Shoe Obsession

On view February 8 - April 13, 2013, at The Museum at FIT

The Museum at the Fashion Institute of Technology (MFIT) presents *Shoe Obsession*, an exhibition that examines our culture’s ever-growing fascination with extravagant and fashionable shoes. In fact, designer shoes have overtaken “It” bags as the most coveted fashion accessories. In response, shoe departments in major department stores have undergone significant expansions, and the “great designer shoe wars” have escalated. Shoes by established designers such as Manolo Blahnik and Christian Louboutin continue to be bestsellers, while the number of rising stars within the footwear industry is multiplying. Over the past decade, heels have reached new heights—as have prices. High-heeled shoes—the fashion shoes of the 21st century—have become so tall that even a 4-inch heel is considered “low.”

Shoe Obsession will feature approximately 150 examples of contemporary footwear, highlighting the extreme, lavish, and imaginative styles that have made shoes central to fashion.



Manolo Blahnik, 2003
Courtesy of Manolo
Blahnik
Photograph © The Museum
at FIT



Christian Louboutin
Pigalle heels, fall 2012
Courtesy of Christian Louboutin



Roger Vivier (Bruno Frisoni)
Eyelash Heel pump
fall 2012-2013
Rendez-Vous (Limited Edition Collection)
Courtesy of Roger Vivier/Photo by Stephane Garrigues



Pierre Hardy, fall 2010
Courtesy of Pierre Hardy

The popularity of designer shoes has grown rapidly. Little more than a decade ago, appreciation of Blahnik’s feminine, elegant designs was limited primarily to fashion insiders. Then the style-conscious characters on the popular television series *Sex and the City* were presented as obsessive about his shoes, and Manolo Blahnik became a household name. *Shoe Obsession* will include a pair of Blahnik’s rhinestone-buckled, silver *D’Orsay* shoes—a version of which was used in a 2003 *Sex and the City* episode titled “A Woman’s Right to Shoes.”

Blahnik's success paved the way for other high-end shoe designers, a number of whom have become celebrities in their own right. Christian Louboutin's undeniably sexy shoes—with their signature red soles—have established him as one of the best-known footwear designers in the world. The designer's cherry red, fiercely spiked *Pigalle* pumps from fall 2012 will be among his many influential styles on view in the exhibition. Bruno Frisoni, as artistic director at Roger Vivier, has maintained that brand's legacy of opulence and impeccable craftsmanship, yet Frisoni also cultivates a style all his own. His modern, seductive aesthetic will be highlighted by his exquisite *Eyelash Heel* feathered pump, from the limited-edition *Rendez-Vous* line. Also featured will be shoes by Pierre Hardy, whose work is defined by strong, graphic silhouettes and bold color combinations. While Hardy's own brand has grown steadily since its launch in 1999, the designer is also known for his collaborations with Balenciaga, Hermès, and even Gap.

At just over 30 years of age, Nicholas Kirkwood has already gained a loyal following for his edgy silhouettes and unusual mixes of materials. Kirkwood has also created some of the most memorable shoes to grace the fashion catwalks in recent years, collaborating with fashion labels such as Paco Rabanne and Rodarte. Other up-and-coming designers to be featured include Alexandre Birman, a young Brazilian born into a family of shoe designers. Birman is known for his expert use of exotic skins—many of which are vibrantly hand-painted. Charlotte Olympia Dellal's glamorous shoes are often inspired by the 1940s, yet the designer's bold choices of print and color exude a fresh, modern charm. Although Alessandra Lanvin's shoe label, *Aperlai*, was founded just three years ago, the designer's sophisticated references to fine art—including her Cubist-inspired *Geisha* heels—have positioned *Aperlai* as a brand to watch.



Nicholas Kirkwood x Keith Haring, 2011
Courtesy of Nicholas Kirkwood



Alexandre Birman, resort 2013
Courtesy of Alexandre Birman



Aperlai (Alessandra Lanvin)
Fall 2011
Courtesy of *Aperlai*

In addition to showcasing leading shoe designers, *Shoe Obsession* will feature extraordinary styles from major fashion houses. Givenchy, now under the creative direction of Riccardo Tisci, produces shoes that complement the moody elegance of Tisci's clothing. The exhibition will feature a style from the spring 2012 couture collection, adorned with a metal T-strap and sharp "piercing" detail that mirrored the extreme jewelry worn by the models at the collection's debut. While many 21st-century shoe styles may be perceived as extreme or extravagant, avant-garde designers such as Japan's Noritaka Tatehana push the envelope even further. An example of Tatehana's *Lady Pointe* shoes, a style worn by Lady Gaga in a recent television performance, will also be on view. The shoes measure a vertiginous 18 inches tall. While not as extreme in silhouette, Andreia Chaves's remarkable *Invisible* shoes feature an asymmetrical façade of mirrors that reflects the wearer's surroundings, acting as a unique form of camouflage.



Noritaka Tatehana
Lady Pointe shoes (designed for
Lady Gaga), 2012
The Museum at FIT
Photograph courtesy of
Noritaka Tatehana



Andreia Chaves
Invisible shoes, 2011
Leather, printed nylon, laser-cut mirrored façade
Courtesy of Andreia Chaves



Gucci, spring 2010
From the collection of the Baroness Monica von
Neumann
Photograph © The Museum at FIT

Although the average American woman owns about 20 pairs of shoes, the collections of true shoe fanatics are vast. *Shoe Obsession* will feature shoes from women with incredible collections. Jewelry designer Lynn Ban owns 20 pairs of heels by Azzedine Alaïa, as well as three pairs of Prada’s fall 2012 “flame” shoes, examples of which will be featured in the exhibition. Baroness Monica von Neumann, whose love of exquisite high heels was outlined in the 2011 documentary *God Save My Shoes*, will be represented by styles from eminent luxury brands such as Gucci and Hermès. Daphne Guinness—one of today’s most influential style icons—will also lend a selection of her heels, including extreme examples by Alexander McQueen and Nina Ricci.

Shoe Obsession will be co-curated by Dr. Valerie Steele, director and chief curator of The Museum at FIT, and Colleen Hill, associate curator of accessories, together with Fred Dennis, senior curator of costume.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a book, also titled *Shoe Obsession*, published by Yale University Press. In addition to essays by Steele and Hill, the book will feature more than 150 color photographs of exceptional 21st-century shoes. All royalties from sales of the book will benefit the Fashion Institute of Technology.

The Museum at FIT, which is accredited by the American Alliance of Museums, is the only museum in New York City dedicated solely to the art of fashion. Best known for its innovative and award-winning exhibitions, which *The New York Times* has described as “ravishing,” the museum has a collection of more than 50,000 garments and accessories dating from the 18th century to the present. Like other fashion museums, such as the Musée de la Mode, the Mode Museum, and the Museo de la Moda, The Museum at FIT collects, conserves, documents, exhibits, and interprets fashion. The museum’s mission is to advance knowledge of fashion through exhibitions, publications, and public programs. Visit fitnyc.edu/museum.

The museum is part of the Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT), a State University of New York (SUNY) college of art, design, business, and technology that has been at the crossroads of commerce and creativity for nearly 70 years. With programs that blend hands-on practice, a strong grounding in theory, and a broad-based liberal arts foundation, FIT offers career education in more than 45 areas, and grants associate, bachelor’s, and master’s degrees. FIT provides students with a complete college experience at an affordable cost, a vibrant campus life in New York City, and industry-relevant preparation for rewarding careers. Visit fitnyc.edu.

The Couture Council is a membership group of fashion enthusiasts that helps support the exhibitions and programs of The Museum at FIT. The Couture Council Award for Artistry of Fashion is given to a selected designer at a benefit luncheon held every September. For information on the Couture Council, call 212 217.4532 or email couturecouncil@fitnyc.edu.

Museum Hours: Tuesday-Friday, noon-8 pm; Saturday, 10 am-5 pm. Closed Sunday, Monday, and legal holidays.

Admission is free and open to the public.