

THE ART AND SOLE OF SHOES

A Look at Contemporary Footwear as Sculptural

Works of Art

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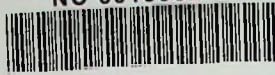
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NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN

THE ART AND SOLE OF A SHOE:

A Look at Contemporary Footwear
as Sculptural Works of Art

A Thesis Submitted to:

THE FACULTY OF HISTORY OF ART AND DESIGN

Name: Eileen Shields

Faculty of Design

Department: Fashion

Year: 1991



FIG 1.

CONTENTS

PAGE NO.

List of Illustrations

i

Acknowledgements

v

Introduction

vi

Chapter 1. Shoes as Fashion

1

Chapter 2. Fashionable Contemporary Shoes

13

Chapter 3. Shoes as Art

20

Chapter 4. Shoes in the Art World

24

Chapter 5. A Look at the Masters;

34

Conclusion

47

Appendices

50

References

Bibliography

56

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

1. Fabled ruby slippers worn by Judy Garland in 'The Wizard of Oz', designed by Hollywood costume designer Golbert Adrian, 1938. His first Arabian-style test pair was deemed too exotic for Dorothy. Heavenly Soles, Mary Trasko, Abbeville Press, 1989.
2. The Human Foot - Footwear News, July 30, 1990.
3. The Human Footprint - The Greatest American Feet.
4. The Bones in the Human Foot.
5. Predictions for Summer 1991 from the Milan Fashion Shows - (Calzatura, 10 November, 1990).
6. Trunk full of Yantruni evening sheos c. 1915 embroidered with antique textiles for Rita de Acosta Lydig. The trunk, in Russian leather, lined with velvet, was accompanied by a similar case for day shoes (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Gift of Capezio, Inc.) Heavenly Soles, Mary Trasko, p.26.
7. Lace embroidered shoe by Yanturni, from Lydig's evening trunk. (Ibid.)
8. Vogue, Paris, August, 1990.
9. Sam & Libby, Footwear, October 1990, Tenth edition, FFANY magazine.
10. List of Fashion Footwear Association of New York, Membership list.
11. Nicole, Footwear, 1990, (Supplemented to Footwear News, July 30, 1990).
12. Computer Aided Design (Lineapelle, Italian Fashion, 1990.)
13. Vogue, Paris, December 1990.
14. 'The Boot' - 1969 Advertisement for the 'Stretch Boot' by B'Allman & Co. (FFANY, New York.)
15. The 'Oscar' of the Shoe Industry awarded to Dick Jacobson for

- the 'Stretch Boot', January 1975; (FFANY, New York.)
16. One of the many versions of the Levine Stretch Boot, 1967
(Beth and Herbert Levine, New York) (Heavenly Soles - Mary
Trasko, Abbeville Press, New York, 1989. p.96.
 17. Stacked and rolled heels by Herbert Levine, mid-Sixties (Beth
and Herbert Levine, New York) (Ibid.)
 18. Comfort Pump, 1990 (FFANY Magazine - Ninth Edition.)
 19. Anne Klein Footwear - 1991. (FFANY Magazine, 11th Edition.)
 20. Advertisement Footwear News, p.20, August 1990.
 21. Traditional brown lizard skin boot by Paul Smith, 1989,
(Shoes, Fashion and Fantasy, Colin Mc Dowell, p. 82.)
 22. Roy Rogers, p. 80, Shoes, Fashion and Fantasy.
 23. High Fashion Doc Martens in patent leather by Johnny Moke,
shown in Vogue, 1986, photograph by Demarchelier.
 24. DV8, Dublin, Doc Martens, 1991.
 25. Brogues, the traditional Irish shoe.
(Shoes, Fashion and Fantasy, p 125.)
 26. Platform sheeps by Ravel, shown in British Vogue, 1972,
photograph by Jouvella.
 27. Vivienne Westwood, 'Rocking Horse Shoes' 1987, (Shoes, Fashion
and Fantasy, p 212.)
 28. Traditional Ballet Slipper (Ibid. p. 145.)
 29. Pumps by Dolcis, British Vogue, 1954, photograph by Cecil
Beaton, (Ibid. p. 148.)
 30. Pumps by Norma Kamali, 1989 (Ibid. p. 148.)
 31. Athletic Footwear by Nike, 1990. (Footwear News, August, 1990.)
 32. Athletic Footwear by Tretorn, 1990, (Ibid.)
 33. Christen Ahrens, contemporary designer (Shoes, Fashion and
Fantasy, p 45.)

34. Delmanette, 1959, innovative but did not catch on!
35. Giovani Stilisti, Spring Collection 1990.
36. Amano, Handmade Shoes.
37. 'A Chorus Line' Gacci, 1980.
38. 'The Cast of "Ain't Misbehavin"' Gacci, 1980.
39. Andrea McArdle in 'Annie' - Gacci, 1980.
40. Al Pacino for 'Richard III' - Gacci, 1979.
41. Composite for self-promotion - Gacci, 1980.
42. Illustrations for Footwear Companies used in 'W' and Vogue.
43. 'In Focus' Magazine, First Edition & 60's artists who drew shoes - Warhol.
44. Cichtenstein, Dine.
45. Performance Art in the window of Mario of Florence, illustrating shoes.
46. Advertisement for the shoe that is battered.
47. Ferragamo sandal with platform sole and heel in cork layers, covered in suede, 1938 (Shoes, Fashion and Fantasy, p 110.)
48. Roger Vivier, 1988, with his creations from Musée des Arts de la Mode Exhibition, Paris.
49. Exhibition at Musée des Arts de la Mode 'Miniature Memories, Paris, 1990.
50. Advertisement for John Moore shoes, 1987, (Shoes, Fashion and Fantasy.) p.67.
51. Manolo Blahnik, Sketch for the Siamese Twin Shoe, 1989. (Ibid.)
52. Manolo Blahnik, Sketch for the Gloves Shoes, 1982, (Ibid.)
53. Pierre Cardin's Mens' Shoes, 1986.
54. Schiaparelli's Shoe Hat, 1937.
55. The Red Model, by René Magritte, 1935.
56. Salvatore Ferragamo, Lasts stroed of all his famous clients.

57. Ferragamo.
58. Ferragamo.
59. Ferragamo.
60. Ferragamo.
61. Ferragamo.
62. Ferragamo.
63. Ferragamo.
64. Ferragamo.
65. Ferragamo's Materials (Sheos, Fashion and Fantasy) pp. 106/7.
66. Roger Vivier at the Musée de la Mode.
67. Roger Vivier measuring a client's foot, an archetypical image of the sculptured working method of Vivier.
68. Drawing by Vivier of Platform Sandal, 1937.
69. Shoe by Roger Vivier, 1964.
70. 'Marly' by Vivier, 1986-1987 (Musée des Arts de la Mode, Paris.)
71. Sheo by Roger Vivier, 1987.
72. Manolo Blahnik.
73. Manolo Blahnik Sandal, 1989.
74. Vogue, September, 1989.
75. Boot for Raquel Welch by Manolo Blahnik, 1974.
76. Sketchs of designs by Manolo Blahnik.
77. *Sketches of Boots, Blahnik, 1987-88.*
78. *Shoes by Andrea Pfister, 1970-72.*
79. ENZO ANGIOLINI; FISHE CAMUOTO GROUP
80. ENZO ANGIOLINI IN HIS NEW YORK APARTMENT - HIS OWN WORK DISPLAYED.
81. STANLEY SILVERSTEIN'S - NINA FOOTWEAR

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I am most grateful to each designer I spoke with, who were so generous with their advice on my career and gave me so much insight to their thoughts and inspirations: especially Stanley Silverstein and Enzo Angiolini of New York; Manolo Blahnik of London and Andrea Pfister of Italy

A number of other people have given me advice, assistance and encouragement during the creation of this project including: Vivian Infantino (Editor of Footwear News); Kim Kellogg and Gail and Bistro Theilig of the FFANY office, New York; Mr. John Pickering of Edenderry Shoes; Brian O'Neill of Skipper Shoes, Dublin (who taught me so many technicalities of shoemaking); and the National College of Art and Design, Library, for their help and cooperation.

To them, and to other friends who have helped and encouraged, my thanks.

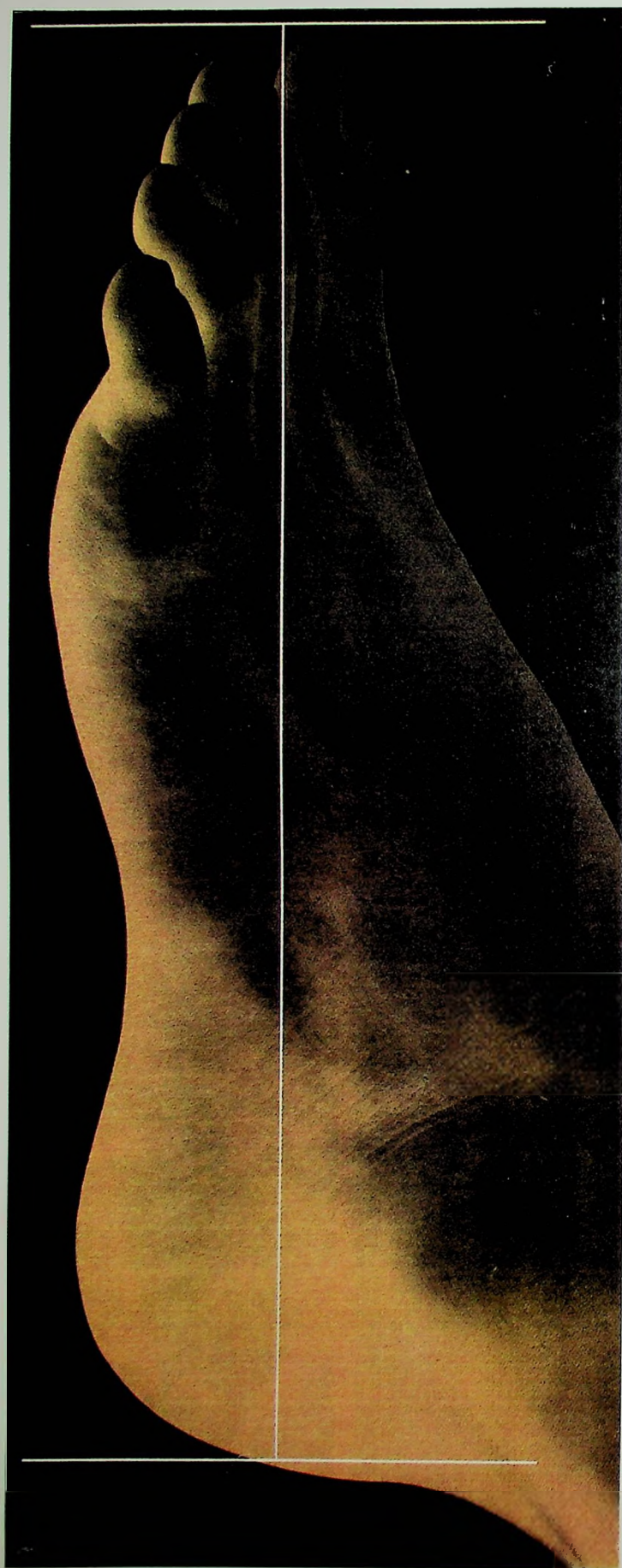


FIG 2.



FIG 3

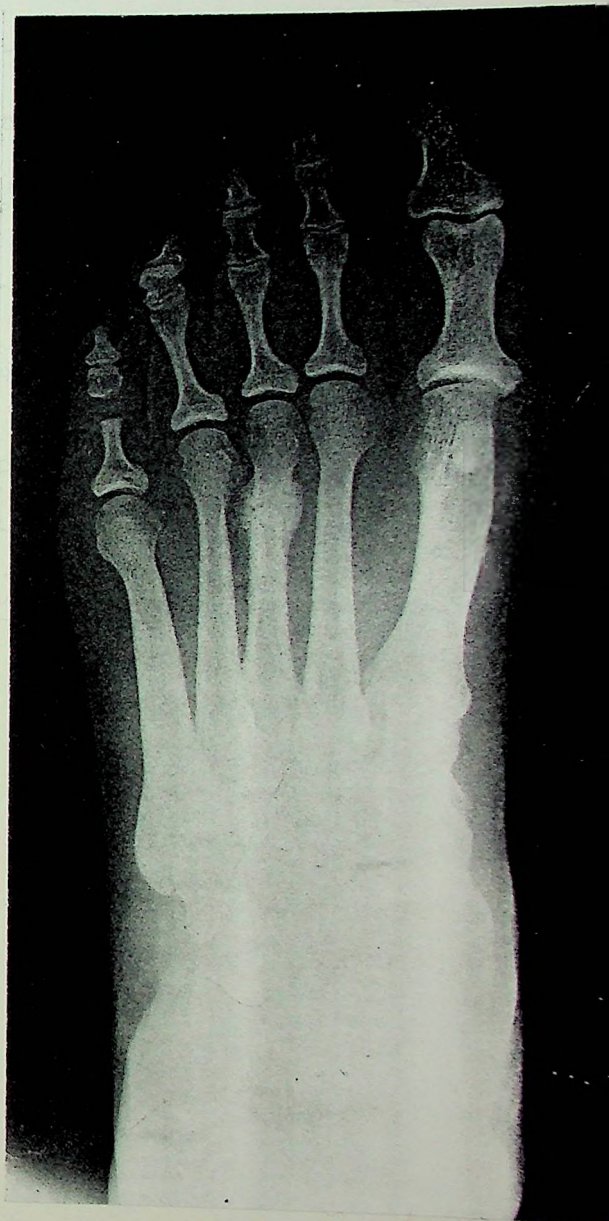


FIG 4

INTRODUCTION

"When you are describing
A shape, or sound, or tint;
Don't state the matter plainly
But put it in a hint
And learn to look at all things
With a sort of mental squint."
Lewis Carroll, 1869. FFANY Magazine.'

A good designer requires artistic and scientific skills - his shoes must look and feel right. The balance between comfort and beauty is not always easy to achieve, but when it is right the shoe will be as ergonomically satisfying as a suspension bridge, and as delicate as an orchid.

There are a few important aspects of footwear that need to be outlined in order to understand the importance of the study which I have undertaken. The extensive labour, and the outstanding number of hands that are involved in one single shoe, must be acknowledged and appreciated. Certain aspects of the actual technicalities are extremely important to really appreciate how artistic and exclusive footwear really is. (For full details on the making of a shoe see Appendix A.)

Shoe designers love fantasy - indeed, they are bound to. The very idea of designing shoes other than as basic protection for the foot is a fantasy in itself. The early Irish brogue (see Appendix A), and similar styles are really the only styles of footwear that

mankind needs in order to get along. Fortunately, peoples' creativity demands much more than the bare essentials of life to keep it fed and functioning. For that reason the history of footwear is one of endless conceits and fantasies, some wearable and some not. Many of the least practical are the most exciting.

This century has been especially productive as far as artistic shoes are concerned, because technical advances and new materials have made the wildest dreams of shoemakers realisable even if, once made, they are not always wearable. When they are wearable the more bizarre creations not only satisfy the artistic taste of the wearers and possibly their most secret fantasies, but they also bring joy to the onlooker.

Having worked with the Fashion Footwear Association of New York since July of 1990, I have been exposed to a lot of major footwear companies and their designers' work from around the world. It is through these people that I have analysed footwear as sculptural works of art. To justify my concept I have gleaned from designers their thoughts and studied their work with them to see how much art really is injected into footwear. I have spoken with some of the most influential people in the world of shoe design, including the President of FFANY (Fashion Footwear Association of New York), leading designers such as Manolo Blahnik and Andrea Pfister, and some commercial creative designers such as Stanley Silverstein and Enzo Angiolini.

There is one woman, Gacci, who has had an enormous influence on my thoughts and concepts. She is one of the most emotionally

artistic people I know, and her beautiful art of shoe portraits is an enlightening and most interesting form of footwear art. Her thoughts and aspirations are invaluable to my study of the art of shoes.

With all these people I discussed footwear and how we know it is a fashion accessory as part of the fashion industry, and then I delved deep into how I see it as an amazing sculptural art object. Having discussed this idea in depth with the artists I chose to speak to, I found some of their insights and imagination invaluable to my chosen career - to become a shoe designer.

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CHAPTER 1

SHOES AS FASHION

The 'shoe designer' is a twentieth century innovation purely because it was not until the early 1900's that the shoe designer (as opposed to the shoemaker) came into being. As a designer, he worked solely as a creator of shoes. Initially, with a new idea which he then transformed onto paper, he was an inventor rather than a shoemaker. In previous centuries, even with exquisitely designed footwear, the creator of the shoe style was also the skilled shoemaker. In many countries, particularly Italy, he was required to carry out an apprenticeship of nearly seven years. Indeed, it is only a relatively recent occurrence that young aspiring footwear designers who enter the industry, study shoe-making with the single intention of entering the fashion world as shoe designers.

What has made this century, the century of the shoe, is the rise of couture and the birth of the shoe as a fashion accessory. Its importance is partly due to the rise in skirt lengths, making the foot more visible. A fine shoe is now an essential part of fashionable dress. It can provide an accent to an outfit - whether witty, solemn, provocative or simply elegant. Dress designers know that the right shoes are a crucial ingredient of a successful look. If confirmation of the importance of shoes as fashion accessories is needed, this can be seen precisely during the 1991 summer,¹ where the accessories in fashion are taking a leading



Dolce e Gabbana



Missoni



Gianfranco
Ferré



Gianni
Versace



FIG 6.



FIG 7.

role - surprising in their innovative shapes and materials. Shoes, those accessories which are everything other than accessories, take a domineering lead, recalling that no true elegance exists without the right choice of what to wear on our feet. I must point out that I do not agree with shoes being described as an accessory to fashion, as they are really such a necessity - they are a health product for our foot, not an extra embellishment of style.

But the shoe designer did not always have the status in the fashion world that he has achieved today. The first shoemaker to achieve any fame at all was a designer named Pietro Yanturni (c. 1911). He worked from an upper floor salon just off the Place Vendôme, one of the smartest shopping areas in Paris. At street level a placard announced: 'Le Bottier le Plus Cher du Monde' ('The World's most Expensive Custom Shoemaker')² His exclusive shoes, with their long narrow shapes and splendid toes were shown by appointment only. He exhibited a level of craftsmanship that seemed to belong to another century. Using already established shapes, his artistry was such that the silhouettes became recognisably his own.

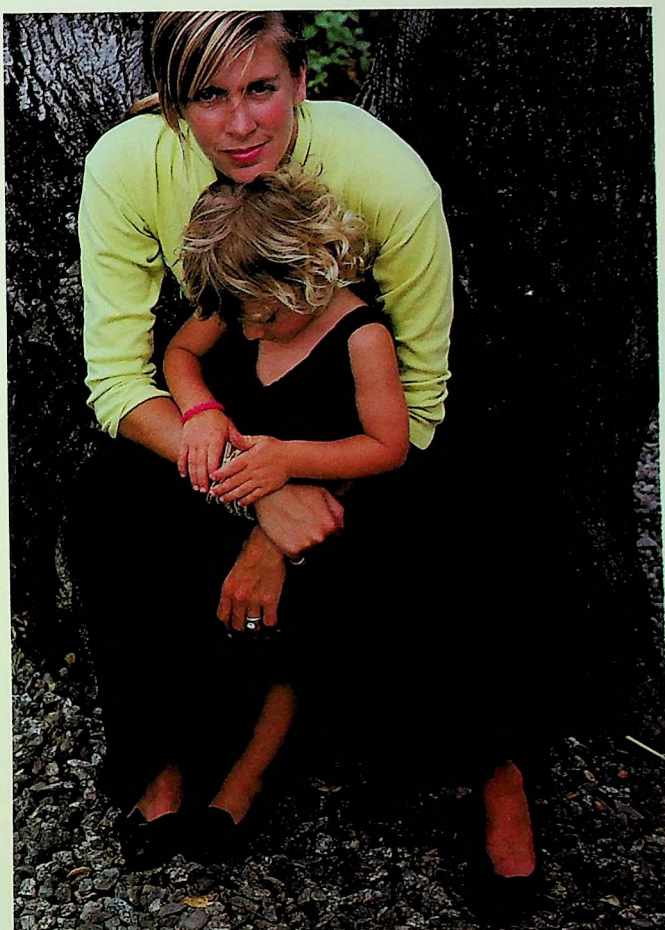
Although Yanturni created some of the most exquisite shoes of this century, very little has been written about his life or his work. All that is known is that he was of Asian extraction and was a curator of the shoe collection at the Cluny Museum. He was selective about his clientele - requiring a deposit of over £500 to begin work³ - whose results a client might not see for a year! But his shoes were of incomparable elegance and fitted beautifully, as he measured every inch of the foot and made a plaster cast of

it. He would also observe his client walking barefoot, so he could see where the weight was placed.

Such personal excellence is something that is still as highly respected and expensive today. Yanturni chose to make his shoes for very few hand-picked clients, but it is not possible to do this today, as shoe designers have to produce for a market, however small it may be, in order to make a living. It is an artistic craft that has been industrialised, following similar steps to those of the clothing industry.

There are millions of people who see shoes as nothing more permanent or important than an item of clothing destined to last for two or three years at the most and then to be forgotten like any other fashion. Of course, fashion is fugitive; at the very moment that a style becomes fashionable it begins to die. And yet, how many of us keep shoes that we know will almost certainly never be worn again, but which we cannot bear to part with? What is it that makes shoes often seem so much more personal than other articles of clothing? Obviously, for many people, it has to do with comfort, which brings with it a sense of wellbeing. These days we take comfort for granted, but for the majority of people well-fitting footwear became possible only with the advent of mass-production, which evolved in its modern sense in the United States at the end of the nineteenth century. Life is not only a matter of comfort however, and it is not the fit of shoes but their style that can give us the feeling that we have wings on, even if, in reality, we are being crippled. Like all clothes, shoes affect our self-esteem; if they are stylish we feel stylish, and to hell





SAM & LIBBY

FIG 9.

with comfort! I think most people have been guilty of that at some time in their lives.

Today, in the 1990's, the search for style has taken over from the desire to be fashionable. The ultimate effect of fashion is to make everyone look alike; having style means accepting the broad flow of fashion, but making it individual to oneself. One way in which people have tried to 'personalise' their appearance is to have shoes made uniquely to their own specifications - a luxury reserved only for the very rich. But everybody requires comfort in their shoes, and they do not usually wish to sacrifice too much style and fashion awareness to this. They feel that it should be possible to have smart footwear and still be able to walk with ease. Apart from shoes that are badly made, or which do not fit, the greatest cause of discomfort is the high heel, which forces the foot forward in the shoe. This discomfort has been happily ignored by men as well as women in the past, as the fashion of high heels has hovered between the sexes over the centuries.

Since the 1960's men have become a lot more adventurous than before, as social and sexual stereotypes have become looser, but the men still lack the originality shown by twentieth century women, as modern fashion has predominantly been a female affair. Shoe designers have taken styles from every period of history and developed them to blend with contemporary fashion moods, embracing more variations than in the whole previous history of dress.

Never before have people been shod in such well designed shoes that give comfort as well as style, at prices affordable to

nearly everyone. It is incredible how high the general level of shoe design is for the mass market of today. But although women enjoy much greater freedom of movement with footwear perfected for fit, comfort and balance, recent studies by U.S. researchers ⁴ show as many as forty five percent of American women sometimes wear shoes that hurt in order to look fashionable! (see Appendix C).

By speaking at length with the president of the Fashion Footwear Association of New York, Mr. Dick Jacobson, ⁵ I learnt a great deal about the fashion footwear industry. Eventhough shoes and clothes of a season come out together, they do not originate together. Shoes are designed at least five or six months in advance of other apparel. Shoe designers tend to keep abreast of current clothes designs, observing what is being worn and consciously having to predict what way trends are going to sway.

Shoe designers have an instinctive feeling about what is going to happen. It is not unusual for dramatic changes to occur from one season to the next. Trends tend to lean on one another; so designers build on what happened the previous season and what direction it seemed to be moving in. But only the best - the chosen few - will assert themselves with leadership and take a sense of direction that they feel will be appealing to the market and will become fashionable. The general public is usually quite prompt to follow.

Shoes are a very basic commodity - people literally have to wear them as protection for their feet, therefore, all designers have very important responsibilities to the people; they need to

The FFAN Club

A.N.C.I.

Alpha International
Amber Sung
American Eagle
Andre Assous, Inc.
Andrea Carrano/Eliot Co. Inc.
Marino New York
Arche Shoe Co.
Aradia International
Arche, Inc.
Arlene La Marca
Arnold Dunn, Inc.
Arpiedi
Bally of Switzerland
Bastien of Canada
Bellini
Bergmann Imports, Ltd.
Bernardo
Bernie Mev Inc.
Biarritz Fashions
Bill Blass
Bruno Melli
Cardone & Baker
Caressa Inc.
Carmen Salas

Champagne

Charles David of California
Charles Jourdan
Cherokee
Chinese Laundry
Ciao!
Cole-Haan
Colonial Shoe Co.
Connors Footwear
Corsina/Hippopotamus
Cougar U.S.A.
Cristiano of Italy
Danelle/Danexx
Dexter Shoe Company
Diesse Shoes, Inc.
Diverti Shoes Inc.
Dyeables
Easy Street
Ecco Diffusione
Eclisse Shoe Corp.
El Greco
Elano Shoe Corp.
Encore Shoe Corp.
Erica Shoes
Esprit

Etienne Aigner

F.E.S. International
Famolare Inc.
Fierra
Fisher Camuto Corp.
Florsheim
G.H. Bass & Co.
Garolini
Genfoot America, Inc.
Gian Carlo
H & M Rayne Ltd.
Hana Mackler Inc.
Harlequin Shoe Corp.
Henschel Shoe Co.
Hirica USA
Impo International
Inspirit
Inter-Global Trader, Inc.
International Shoe
Intershoe
Ipanema Shoe Corp.
Irix
Isadora S.L.
Italian Filigree
Italmood

*"My country is the world; my
countrymen are mankind."*
WILLIAM LLOYD GARRISON,
1803.

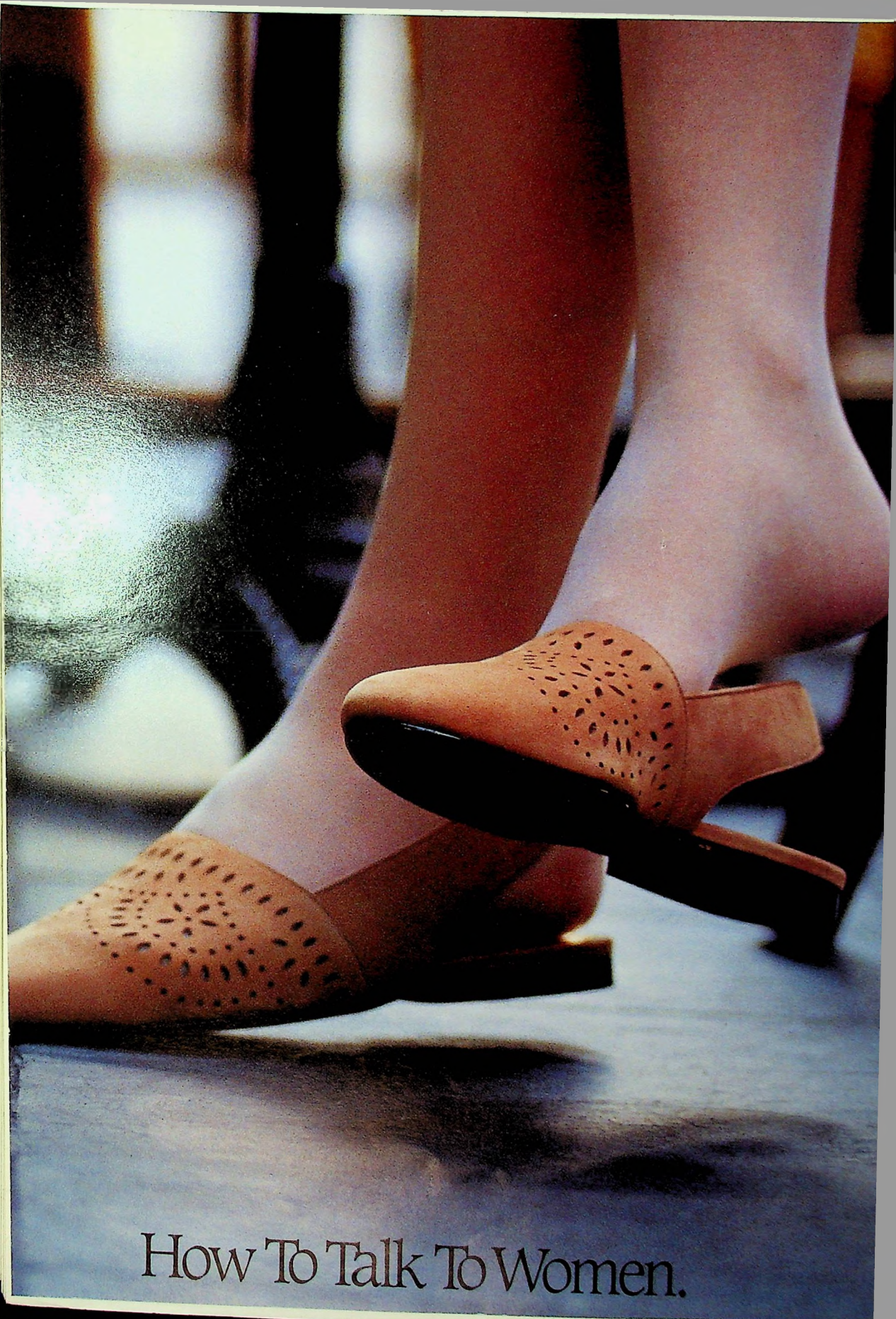


a directory of the FFANY Membership

Jasmine Ltd.
Joan and David
Jones NY
Julianelli, Inc.
Kenneth Cole Productions
L.A. Gear
L.J. Simone
Maine Woods
Maraolo/Giorgio Armani
Marc Alpert
Maria Pia (USA) Inc.
Marval Imports Co.
Marx & Newman
Matake New York
Mauri, USA Inc.
Metaphors by Reebok
Mia Shoes, Inc.
Middletown Footwear
Milano Vende Moda
Mootsies Tootsies
N.Y. Transit
Nina Footwear
Oldmaine Trotters
Onex Imports
Paco Gil Shoes

Pancaldi
Pappagallo
Parigi/Moda Blu
Perage International, Inc.
Perfecto Mas
Perry Ellis Shoes
Pertti Palmroth
Peter Fox
Peter Kaiser, Inc.
Phyllis Poland Shoes
Pierre Shoes Inc.
Polly Bergen Shoes
Poppies
Portofino Footwear, Inc.
Prima Royale Collection
Prima Shoes Inc.
Remack, Inc.
Robertina
Roberto Gil
Rockport Co.
Roger Vivier International
Sacha London
Samuels Shoe Co.
Santana Canada
Schwartz & Benjamin

Selby Shoe Co.
Seven Star
Seychelles
Skye King Designs Inc.
Snakers
Sobel Bernstein & Greene Co.
Spanish Creations
Sperry Top-Sider, Inc.
Sporto Corp.
Swital Export
Taha Company, Inc.
Terra
Terra Australis
Thom Brown Shoes
Totar, Inc.
Two City Kids
Two Lips Shoe Co.
U.S. Shoe
Unisa
Via Shoes Inc.
Vogue Shoe, Inc.
Walter Chase
Wild Rice Shoes
Wohl Shoe Company
Wolff Shoe Co.
Wolverine Worldwide, Inc.



How To Talk To Women.

be excellent technicians - designing for the foot first and fashion and style second. A truly talented designer will know exactly how a shoe is put together and how the foot works; designing for the foot will come so naturally to him or her, that is why they can be so creative.

All design is based upon the attitudes of the general public and what is going on in the world around them. Jacobson always looked to other industries to observe particular trends:

'I was very moved by silhouettes that took place, especially in the automobile industry. They are very forward and technically far more advanced than most other industries, and, much like shoes they have to re-tool, so it is an enormous investment every time they make a new line. We have that in shoes too, because we put in new lasts, new dyes - new everything, even half sizes in the lasts. So, technically we have to tool up just like the automobile industry. In ready-to-wear they can cut fabrics and garments, it is a much easier process, you can get them out quicker. Shoes - you cannot do that.'

To elaborate on this and explain it more clearly, he continued:

'and as I look at automobiles today - and see them becoming more streamlined - I know shoes are going to become that way too; open up at the toes, they are going to be less round and they are going to get shaped a little easier and more bullet-like, and very soon it will begin to filter into garments and shoes.'

The age of the computer is upon us and the importance of the catcan process of computer-assisted design is having a very big influence on designers. With footwear it is difficult to picture the finished product from a single sketch - particularly a flat sketch on a piece of paper. A good artist may have great technical lines, but somehow when this is tried out in three-dimensional form it may be wrong. Sometimes a two-dimensional drawing, in particular, may never be able to represent an unusual design. This is where the computer-assisted design is so valuable, because when it is used as a drawing board you can create a three-dimensional design directly on the computer screen.

Eventhough computers may take over all design, purely from the point of view of the drawing board where the cutting of patterns is concerned, the technician's hand will always be the master. The raw materials for shoemaking come from animals and every piece of leather is distinctly different, because every animal is different. Eventhough the same shoe design is being made, each piece of leather may not mould and last the same way; some are flakier than others (containing more fat.) Only hands can really feel, tell and judge that difference, and so a good laster working on a lasting machine basically has a special touch - physically within his hand - something that can never really be replaced by machines, unless using synthetic kinds of uppers where the medium is uniform in quality.

Leather is used because it is most like the human skin - a second skin protecting the foot. It breathes and stretches to the contour of the foot and it has elasticity; it goes back into shape

unlike plastic, which will stretch but will stay stretched. Leather tends to be the most comfortable off media used in footwear and remains the most expensive.

As I spoke with Dick Jacobson, the inevitable was itching to be discussed - his famous 'Stretch Boot' known as 'The Boot' of its time (1969). This was a creation of Jacobson's that was the most successful shoe promotion at regular prices in the history of the art movement of the late Sixties. The general fashion at that time was for shiny, vinyl ankle-and knee-high boots. It was a really plastic look. Some of the most provocative designs of the Sixties came from the American shoe designers Beth and Herbert Levine. In 1967, developing D.J.'s original idea, they designed their most influential model, the 'Stretch Boot', for which they won a Coty Award.⁸ The fabric used came about by accident. The raincoat industry had already developed a material called 'Trico', which is a cotton material which has a rubberised back lining and a stretch that is very soft. Jacobson began to develop shoe products using that as a lining first, calling it 'Angel Touch'. This was because it made the leather feel even softer as the lining was so soft underneath, having a sort of foam that penetrated through to the top leather when it was touched.

Designers follow certain waves in designing, and fashion is motivated by a lot of things. That crinkled look of the 'stretch boot' was the beginning of the era that is still going on today, where the casual and wrinkled look in much clothing has become very fashionable. In 1969, the emotionalism of the general public was very influential in the fashion industry - the emphasis was on



FIG 12.

L'ESPRESSO

Domani sarà
la prima volta
che il mondo
vedrà...





FIG 15.

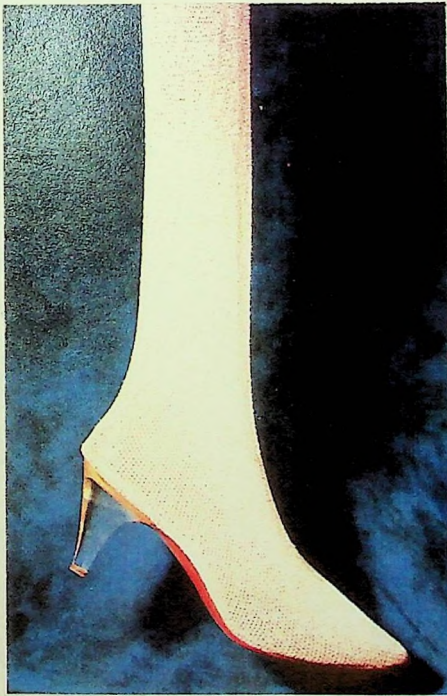


FIG 16.



FIG 17.

all things natural. So that is why the patent leather - hard, shiny, dressy firm substance became the crinkled, wrinkled much softer and more comfortable look. It worked rather miraculously in the stretch boot.

'You had to try new things as a designer - so you had to be daring - it had a brand new look that people happened to like.'⁹

The stretch boot was made over a couple of lasts, trying to get the right fit at the back heel - it started off too straight (this straightness being a natural aspect of a boot) and it fell off, but the silhouette was working correctly.

'I remember taking a shoe to a factory and doing a very simple centre seam boot. With combination of the shoe and boot last we succeeded - the first sample was made the very same day.'¹⁰

This sample was kept and dipped in bronze and presented to Jacobson as an award for his outstanding contribution to the world of the footwear industry (see Figure 15). It was beautifully simple and an innovative contrast to the hard shiny look. It was shown for the very first time in October of 1969, and by December 12 it was out in New York. Because of its ability to stretch it was an easy product to sell, fitting almost everybody. It was sold in enormous quantities at a very commercial retail price. It was also easy to make and could be made in domestic factories in America and temporarily saved the footwear industry that was going


through a crisis. Everybody copied the idea and many millions of pairs were sold - everybody had to have a stretch boot. It was a phenomenon as the sales figures still stand up against those of today's market place.

There will always be 'rages' like the stretch boot, which will happen again. In fact, there is one happening now in America, involving 'sneakers.' Athletic Footwear at the moment is almost forty per cent of the whole shoe business. ¹¹ It is hardly motivated by fashion as we know it, but in reality by our lifestyles. American people, and indeed people worldwide, are very comfort- and physical fitness-orientated. By mass marketing the athletic footwear, companies have had an opportunity to reach a lot of people. This is unlike the regular fashion shoe industry which has very narrow pipelines - only being sold in the special shops with particular styles and ranges available; they cannot sell to everybody but then that is why they call it fashion!

Once you can sell something to everybody, it becomes a rage or a fad, it is not fashion anymore, it is just what is happening at that time. Athletic Footwear is more related to lifestyles than to fashion. Something has to be new to be branded fashionable - otherwise it can be called a commodity. Athletic companies have tended to be guided by business rather than by artistic design. Marketing and advertising a casual athletic look can prove difficult for a company long renowned for its performance shoes. These companies are experiencing the reality that the fashion business is not the mass market and that the athletic business is. They are two different businesses and cannot market in the same way.

UNSTOPPABLE™



Michael Jackson™ 

Discover the magic of L.A. Gear's new line of Michael Jackson shoes. Come to our booth in the Skyline/Manhattan Suite on the Mezzanine level and you'll see why this season's line-up is truly...

UNSTOPPABLE.



TM

L.A. GEAR®



YVES SAINT LAURENT



SUITE SPOTS

In business, there's always room at the top for a proven performer. And that's exactly what Soft Spots' attractive, new Performance Pumps™ are. Because these are the first women's dress pumps that actually feel as good as they look. To see them, as well as our entire new Soft Spots line, just stop by.

Park Suite
at the Omni
Park Central.

SOFT SPOTS
feel beautiful

8 Hampshire Drive, Hingham
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FIG 18.

Fashion markets itself on the pride of possessing something special or unusual, whereas the athletic market relies on technology and celebrities to sell products.

We are just beginning to get into that period again , where shoes will get more exciting. In the womens' fashion footwear industry the plain pump has been predominant for too long. For economic reasons companies have been staying with their same lasts and basic shapes, having the versatility only to change the shape of the heel for a new season. European factories have been producing heels made of resin, which are less expensive as they are moulded products, the work effectively being water resistant and hard wearing, with a great ability to make creative new shapes and looks. Unfortunately for companies, it is time to change - basically, everybody has a pair of pumps at this stage. People are beginning to get bored and will soon have enough of the plain pump and athletic footwear, and will want something completely new. People will be less affected by gimmicks in shoes. For example, having cushions here and there in shoes like 'Suite Spots' do all for the 'comfort syndrome',¹² it just psychologically sells more shoes - it is so ironic as manufacturers have always cushioned shoes in one way or another. But it has created a new kind of fashion mentality called 'comfort.' The evolution of that comfort will bring back real fashion again - more creativity, more artistic fashion footwear. People always need changes to occur, so there will be more silhouettes with a difference.

More design principles will come out of the imagination and the creativity of the designer, and what already comes natur-



ANNE KLEIN FOOTWEAR

FIG 19

In comfort tests, Sperry Top-Sider® Neptune™ beat the competition nearly two to one.

In an independent test against five major competitors, combined results showed that consumers preferred the comfort of the



These are the most comfortable boat shoes in the world. In fact, the only people they've ever made uncomfortable is our competition.

Neptune™ nearly two to one. That's because the Neptune has a number of comfort features the others simply don't.

Your foot rests on a specially designed comfort bed that always keeps its shape and feel. There's a felt-like lining that wicks moisture away from your feet and a state-of-the-art sole with three different



densities of rubber strategically placed for grip, flexibility, and durability. An ingenious lacing system with brass eyelets and unbreakable brass-tipped laces pulls the shoe snugly around your ankle.



Basically, when you put as much time and as many features as we have into a shoe, you know it's going to be the most comfortable one of its kind.

We just held the test to humor ourselves.



SPERRY TOP-SIDER®
QUALITY BORN AT SEA.

© Sperry Top-Sider, Inc. 1990

ally to him - that shoes can be made both fashionable and comfortable - will excel, as shoes instinctively to the best designers have to be both.

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the general public's attitude.

CHAPTER 2

I feel it is important at this stage to establish and recognise some of our most fashionable contemporary styles, which have emerged in this century and achieved such deserved fame.

THE COWBOY BOOT

Working boots have always been crude and tough, but it was not until this century that they began to assume an aura of glamour. The first workboot to be romanticised was the cowboy boot. The modern concept of the cowboy as a working, honest and true hero is a myth perpetuated in Hollywood. The tough, hardworking cowhands who were employed in the early years of the nineteenth century to drive cattle across the plains to the slaughterhouses of cities like Chicago, were anything but romantic heroes and had little in common with the icons of masculinity in Hollywood films of the 1920's and 1930's.

Early cowboy boots had no ornamentation. They evolved from the riding boots of the Mexican 'vaquero', but, for control in the saddle, the shoe portion was made so tight that walking was difficult and painful. As both boots were made on the same last, they needed breaking in, and there are stories of cowboys standing in troughs of water to soften the leather so that it would take the shape of the foot. The cowboy boot of inlaid leather with decorative stitching did not become the fashionable archetype until Tom Mix made it popular in his films of the 1920's. It is ironic to

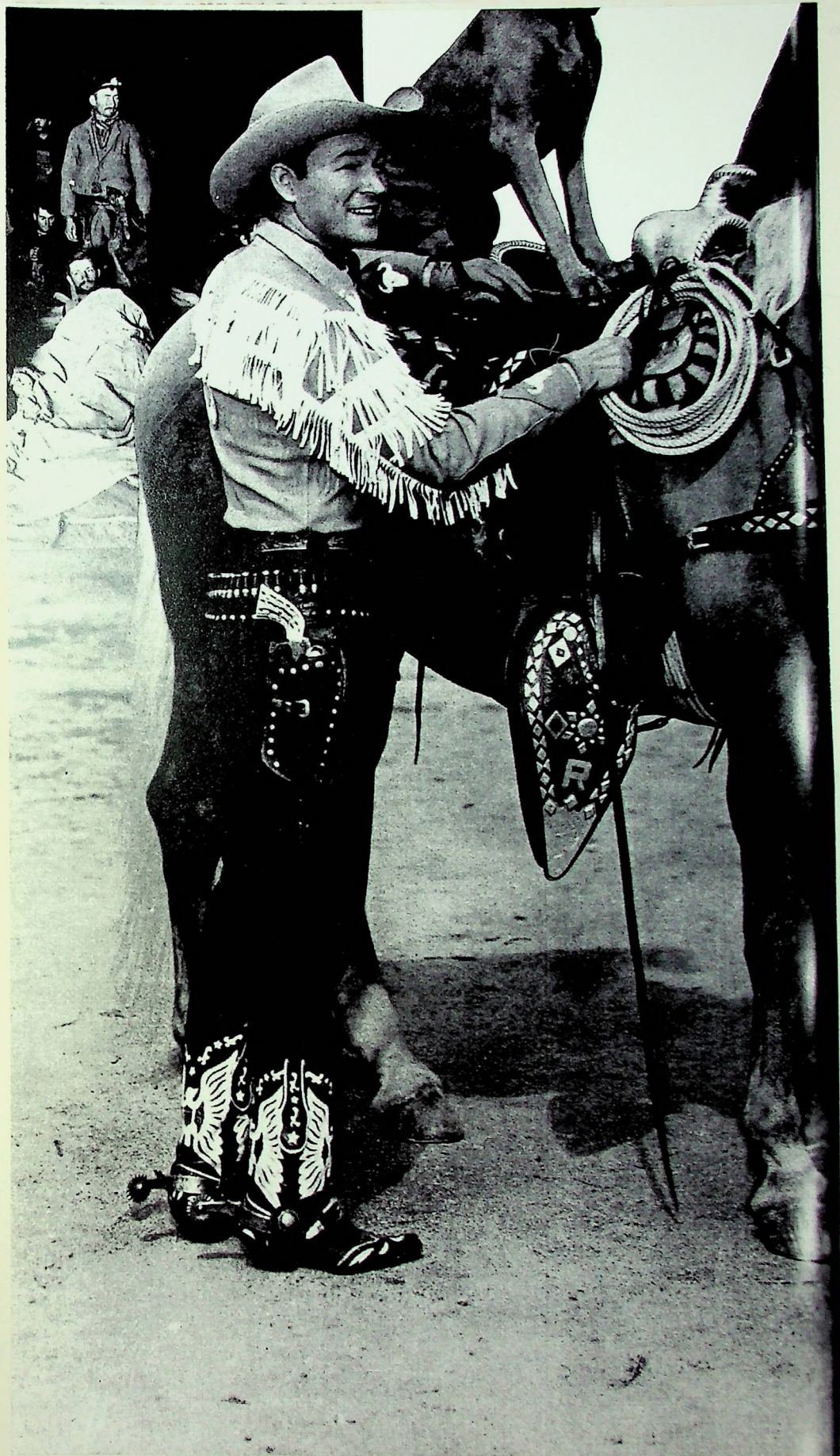




GUESS
footwear



FIG. 21.



see Gene Autry and Roy Rogers in films from that time, dressed like fashion plates to ride the range - no sweat or dust was allowed to spoil their immaculately pure image.

The boots worn by Roy Rogers represent many hours of skilled work by master craftsmen (see Figure 22). The fashion for these boots soon caught on, from the real cowhands who performed at rodeos, to the 'fancy' boots worn by men on the street. By the 1950's the common decorative devices, which required a high level of hand-craftsmanship, included abstract Indian patterns, long horns, cacti, panoramic desert pictures, and maps of the Lone Star state.

Many U.S. presidents have felt it expedient to have a pair of cowboy boots made. In 1948, Harry Truman started the fashion when he ordered his pair from Tony Lama (one of the most famed manufacturers of cowboy boots), who called the design 'El Presidente.' This fashion was followed by Dwight Eisenhower, Lyndon Johnson, Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan.

In the 1970's, and again since 1989, there has been an increased upsurge in cowboy boots and fashionable footwear for both men and women. The cowboy shoe is a recent phenomenon, and the shape of its last has been copied by many contemporary designers in the last few years (see Figure 21).

DOC MARTENS

Doc Martens have brought the aggression of the storm-trooper to the suburbs in a way that would have horrified Dr. Klauss Maertens,



FIG 23.




FIG 24.

who invented the boot in 1945 as nothing more sinister than a step forward in comfort. Its air-cushioned sole was the important thing for him. He started to produce the sole commercially in 1947, but it was not until 1960 that Bill Griggs persuaded the German parent company to let him manufacture workmens' protective boots, designed for comfort, at his factory in Northampton in England. They evolved into Doc Martens, and he could have had no idea that they were destined to be used in violence as a uniform boot for aggressive 'young' urban warriors.'

British skinheads made Doc Martens their own in the 1970's but, as all fashion turns around, the boot itself became tamed into an almost universal footwear fashion, turning into the predominant sort of shoe worn by all young people, and no longer the aggressive symbol of the Seventies. The paradox of the Doc Martens is the way in which it has made statements in the late Eighties far removed from those of the original skinheads. This is evident with the exploitation of mis-matched items of clothing that has been prevalent recently. Young girls can be seen wearing frilly net skirts and lace tops with mens' dinner jackets, and on their feet - Doc Martens in some shape, make or form. They temper the message of feminine frailty and vulnerability with a degree of toughness and self-reliance. The summer of 1990 saw every teenager on Grafton Street, Dublin, with Doc Martens on their feet (see Figure 24).

BROGUES

I have to mention the most famous shoe to come out of Ireland



Men's brown calf
semi-brogue by
McAfee, 1988

Greta Garbo, c. 1930

Mahogany
'Renoir' brogue
by McAfee, 1988

and achieve world status - it is the brogue. Originally, a brogue ('bróg' in the Gaelic language meaning 'shoe') was one of the simplest, but most effective of peasant styles, created with nothing more in mind than protecting the feet with the maximum of efficiency. That is why they were made with holes in the skin; it seemed the easiest and quickest way to drain away the water that collected in the shoes as they forded the Irish sodden bogs.

The brogue withstands all weathers and having crossed over to England it climbed the social ladder, until it could be seen to be worn by the Prince of Wales by the 1930's.⁴ It was a style worn by both sexes and is still extremely popular means of formal yet basic footwear. Brian O'Neill, of the Dublin Winstanley family, still produces excellent mens' style brogues in the best leather and craftsmanship.

PLATFORMS

Time has not dealt kindly with platform soles. They almost always manage to look ugly and ridiculous, as they were during their fashionable peaks. In this century there have been only three revivals of the platform sole. In the '30's they were often made of cork, and were used with wedge heels to make casual sandals for the beach. It was Salvatore Ferragamo's 1938 style that has won a place in the history books (see Figure 47).⁵ World War 11 had an effect on shoes, in that shortage of materials meant that traditional leather-soled shoes were hardly available. Apart from the fact that skilled craftsmen were being drafted, material limitations forced designers to find something new. But shoe designers



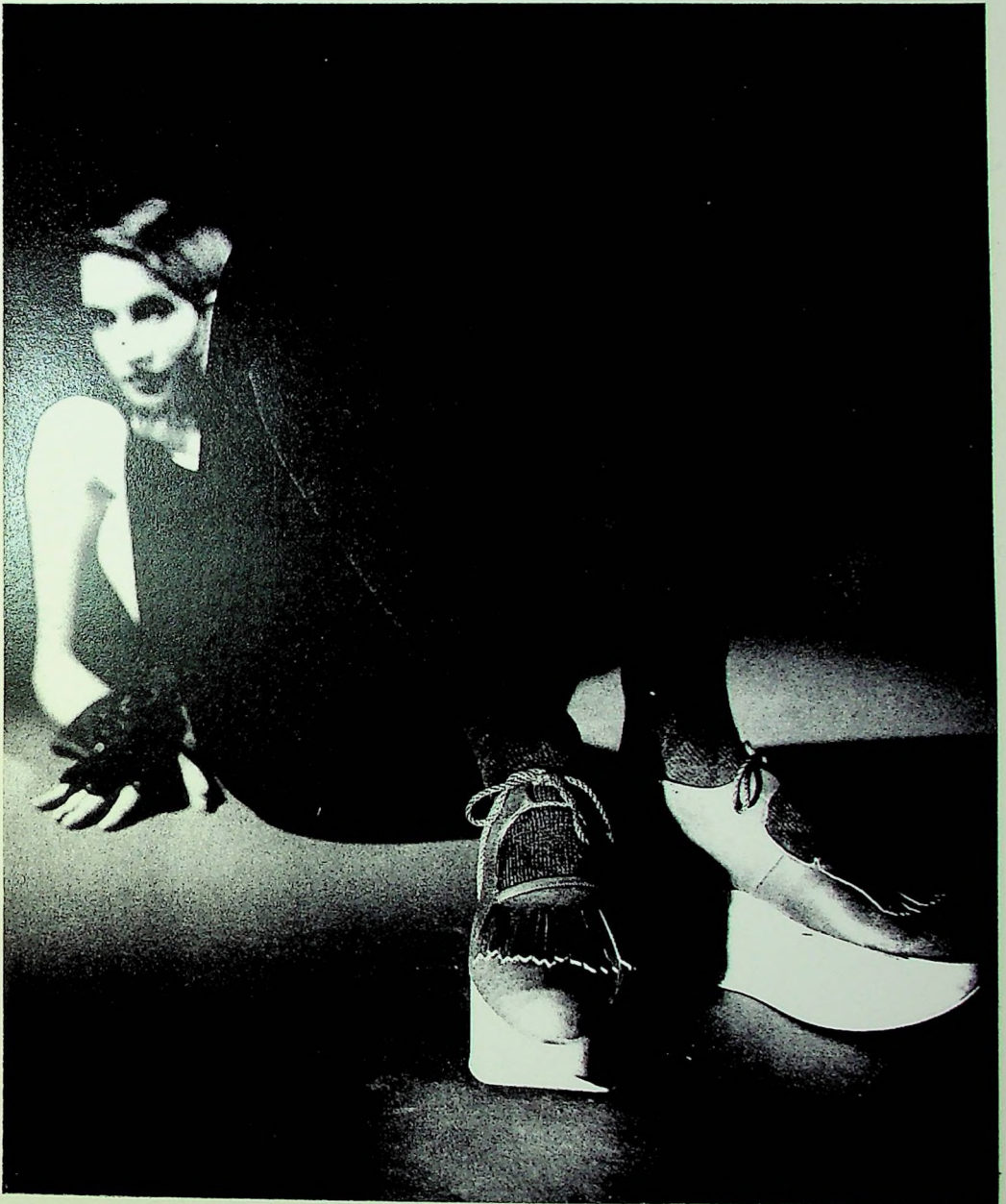


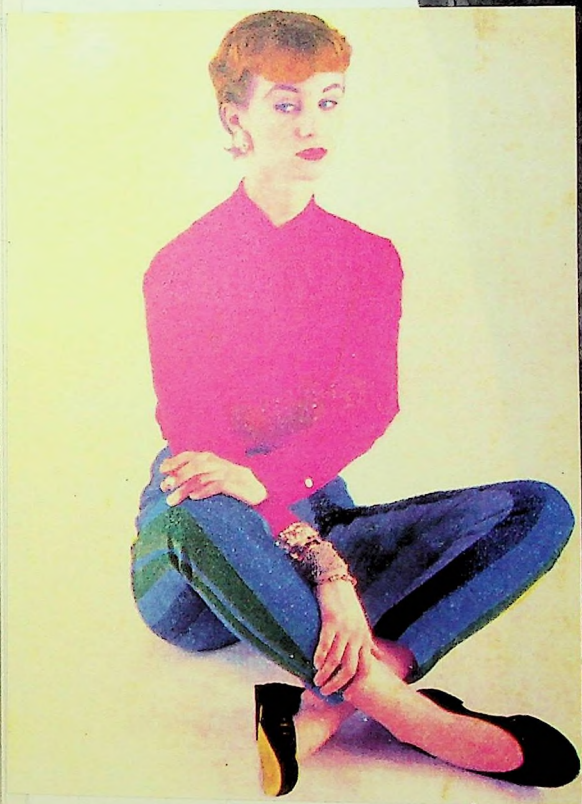
FIG 27

love platform heels because they give them the space to play decorative games.

In the 1940's the leather shortage continued and so did fashion ideas, as shoes were made with platform front soles made of wood, and higher back heels. But it was in the Seventies that they became a full-blooded pedigree fashion, made and covered in every material under the sun. The unifying element of that decade was found in footwear. Heavy platform soles came and went, but the clumpy shoe or boot with a solid stacked heel remained. Designers, and individual craftsmen, played every possible decorative variation with materials and trims in order to explore all avenues of bad taste and vulgarity. The Seventies was a desolate decade for fashion because judgement was constantly overridden by enthusiasm. In the scramble to express individual personality, the perimeters of disciplined design were constantly breached and most results were completely lacking in style.

The late Eighties saw another upsurge for the platform sole, and Vivienne Westwood of London exploited the expression that is still happening early into the 1990's. In 1987 her 'Rocking Horse Shoe' was worn with all her clothes. It is a full platform wedge sole carved out of wood, and functions similarly to that of a child's rocking horse (see Figure 29). Her latest style exploits the 1940's shoe where there is no wedged sole but a platform sole and in her shoes a nine inch back heel. It is an amazing experience just to try on these shoes - the world is seen in a completely new perspective - nearly a foot taller.





#1G 29/30



BALLET IN FASHION

Ballet shoes are the simplest of all forms of footwear. Their flexibility and ease of movement have appealed to women for almost two hundred years. The elegant woman dancing at a public ball in the early 1800's wore heelless slippers equivalent to the ballet pump of the period. In the 1940's Claire Mc Cardell - a shoe designer working in New York - asked 'Capezio', New York's top manufacturers of ballet shoes, to make her flat pumps suitable for the streets, and they have been popular ever since. The plain black pump shown by Norma Kamali in 1989 demonstrates that their simplicity still makes pumps the most elegant of shoe styles.

Enzo Angliolini, from the Fisher Camuto Group, has a particular trademark shoe which is the plain flat ballet pump. It was his biggest seller of the Eighties, and even in his last two or three seasons. It is so simple and so beautiful to touch, he will only use the softest of leather for them. They have beautiful comfort and when I tried them on that phrase was personified 'It fits like a glove.'

ATHLETIC FOOTWEAR

As I have already mentioned, the phenomenon of the athletic shoe as fashion is a very important aspect of the 'comfort lifestyle' that is happening right now. The 'ath-leisure' fashion, as it is sometimes known, is aimed purely at the young, so it is linked with both music and sport in order to capitalise on the twin culture forces of the market. The market aimed at is the most volatile in

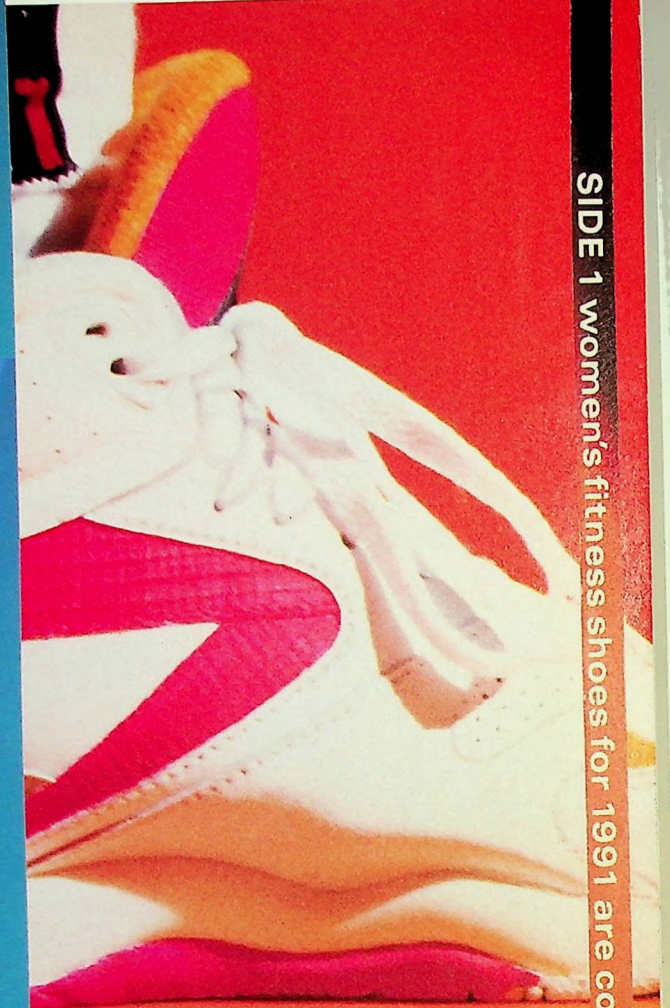
SIDE 1 women's fitness shoes for 1991 are coming. Clear the shelves.

SIDE 1™



From Nike

FIG 31





the world; inner city youth, mainly black, Hispanic or Asian, who now account for more than twenty per cent of the sales in the ath-leisure field.

The turnover for this product is quick; shelf life of a new product can be as little as three weeks and rarely lasts for more than two and a half months. Anything that the youth market deems not to be 'fresh' dies. The market has been dominated by 'rap' dancing and 'hip pop' artists. The famous rap group 'Run D.M.C.' had a hit in 1987 with a song entitled 'My Adidas' - proof indeed of the cult status of athletic footwear.

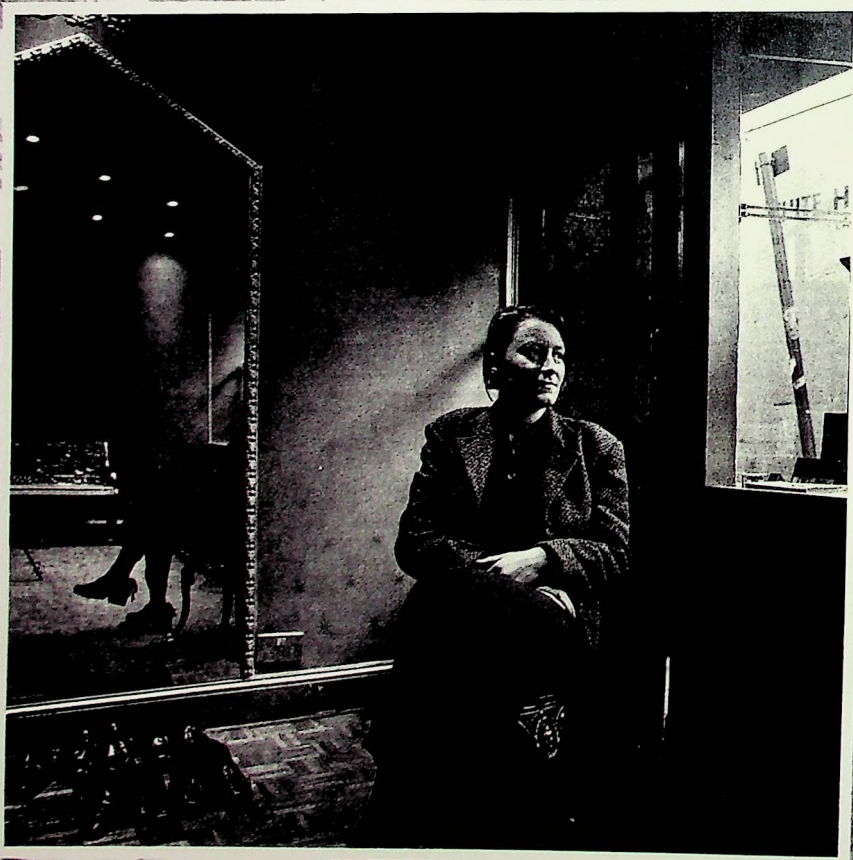
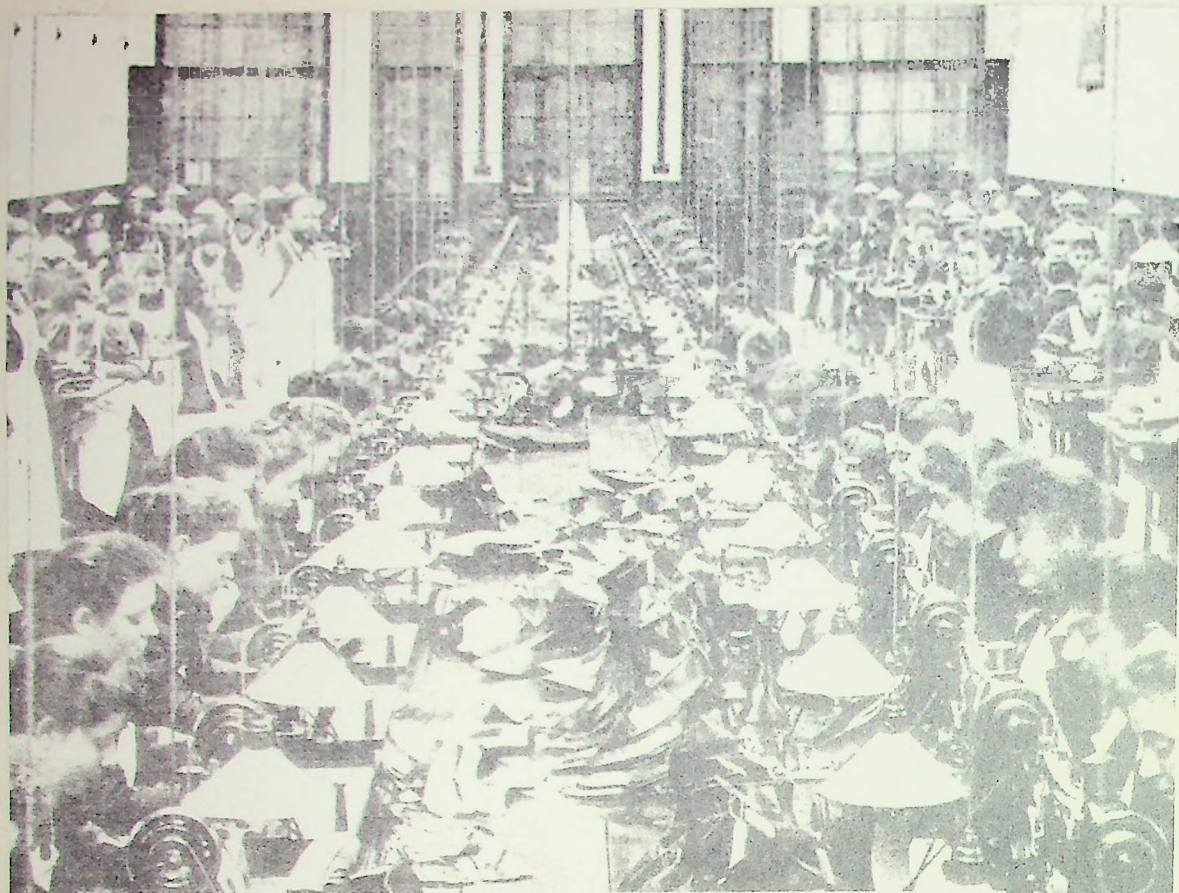
CHAPTER 3

SHOES AS ART

Besides any of the technical aspects of footwear, from the craftsman to the marketing of a creation with the fashion industry, there is the creator himself. What of his mind and his work? How has he been inspired to be an artist of footwear?

As anybody would create any piece of art - drawing on a canvas or using colour in various ways - each person who designs shoes sees them differently. It is very hard to say why some designers choose shoes rather than something else, except for the fact that the foot is a very sensitive part of the body, as an appendage and anchor. It is a sensual part of the human body; there has always been a connotation of emotionalism about footwear. Feet do so many things for the body; this has been recognised by many artists, and this sensuality and emotional aspect has fascinated people.

Some designers see silhouettes. Men have often designed womens' shoes merely to create female sex symbols. They learnt how to develop a certain stature in a woman through their designing. It is just like an artist creating a statue or a beautiful object; so the good designer creates a beautiful woman, if he is designing womens' shoes. Even technically, it is possible to change the posture of a woman, depending upon how the last is developed and how quickly the shank of the shoe is brought up (this refers to the curve of the arch) to the heel, or even how slowly it is brought up to the heel.





Shoes made for a more mature woman tend to have a shank that is brought up very slowly, allowing the woman to sit back more on the heels, which is more comfortable and easier to walk in. But if a designer wants a more youthful look, bringing out some of the physical aspects of the younger woman, the shank is brought up very quickly. This tends to pitch the woman forward so she has to sit back in a different way. It usually brings out the natural form of the woman in a more pronounced way - the bottom and top stick out more than usual. So women walking in high heeled shoes have to carry themselves in a certain way, just to maintain their balance, but with a physical stature that is elegant and also has sex appeal.

There are a lot of young designers who have found a sense of creativity but are still maintaining the balance between comfort and style, realising that comfort is a very important part of fashion today, in the 1990's. (Emma Hope and Christine Ahrens are perfect examples of these shoe designers, based in London, England). It is part of the mentality of everyone and this is having a big influence on the designers of the nineties.

It is the emotional system of the consumer that dictates what is going to be seen as fashionable during any given season. A designer can create all kinds of new products, but if somebody does not visualise them as creative or artistic and does not like them, then success will not happen for that designer, no matter how talented he or she is. Each designer has his or her own approach, but it is up to them to explore their art in such a way that people will appreciate it. They have to know what may, or may not, end up in peoples' minds as fashionable or stylish. Some-



FIG 34



GIOVANI STILISTI

FIG 35

times a designer is extremely talented and very creative, but this does not mean what is created currently will be appreciated and accepted when it comes to the market place. Whereas a painting, if not appreciated when created, may be considered a masterpiece, for instance in fifteen years from now. Unfortunately, this does not apply to shoes. They must be useful and accepted as soon as they are created. Therefore, creating just for the art of shoes has certain limitations because they may be beautiful pieces of sculpture, but not useful for the current lifestyle of people.

There have been various designers working on shoes, seeing them as sculptural pieces and creating them as an art object, to the extent that their work is extreme. Many of them started out in footwear doing very unusual things with shoes, and have ended up going into the ready-to-wear business of clothes.¹ But designing shoes on such a high level of fantasy could be classified as the purest form of art in footwear. But then they are really not shoes, because if nobody has to wear them or is able to wear them, they are not what artistic footwear really is, being a functional, stylish and aesthetically beautiful shoe.

Footwear is an art that has to be useful; it is an art that is a three-dimensional sculpture, but a foot must be fitted comfortably and be able to function within it. Shoes not only have to look good, but they have to feel good when your foot is inside. A shoe also has to have a sixth sense to make it special. The touch and feel of a shoe creates an entire atmosphere and aura. It is part of the design and almost the art of the making of the shoe. So this aspect takes it away from other art forms rather

by hand

A. MANO

shoes
these
made
of hands
pairs

dramatically, leaving it as a unique skill and talent.

Good designers will never lose that extra sixth sense of feel and touch in shoes, no matter what. It is a very important part of designing shoes to know that they even have to look as though they feel good. This is a definite part of the art in designing shoes; so somebody can look emotionally at a shoe and feel that it is very beautiful. This is how the art is captured. Therefore, shoe art and design are sensual, with a certain feeling about them that makes creating shoes a process which involves the emotional system in the body and being described as such itself. All art is similar to that, but for a different reason as regards shoes, because they are a product that cannot simply be hung on a wall as a painting can, they are more useful than that, not just to be looked at but to be lived in as well. That experience is something the designer in footwear must appreciate and understand. For this reason, the technical aspects should really come first, so that the designer will have a deep understanding of the shoe before being creative. The good person in any field is the good technician. Stanley Silverstein of Nina Footwear is a perfect example of this. Jacobson believes that 'He's one of the best technicians I ever met in my life, and one of the most creative men.'²

He began his life in footwear - it has always been a part of him. He understands not just all about the shoe, but about the fabrics and materials, what potential strength they have and how they can be used. Until a designer solves the technicalities, it is impossible to be an extremely good designer. In most cases, the most creative artists are the best technicians.

CHAPTER 4

SHOES IN THE WORLD OF ART

At this point I have got to mention the person who, solely and wholly, personifies all the emotions and aspirations that I have in this study of the art of shoes. Her entire life is based around all the thoughts that I have tried to glean from designers; her every word on the subject explains and intrigues every feeling I have on the art of footwear. Her ideas and feelings go much deeper into the philosophical explanations that are attached to the art involved in footwear.

Her name is Gacci. She may be the only professional shoe portraitist outside the footwear industry. She doesn't design shoes and she doesn't work for a shoe company. Gacci simply loves to draw and paint shoes, especially when they are being worn. Gacci's understanding of the art of the shoe, and especially the foot, is a lot deeper than many of the designers I have spoken to or know.

Gacci had already trained formally as an actress in England before coming to New York in the late Seventies. At that stage she was one of the millions of young struggling newcomers to Manhattan. Between apprenticing with a film editor and waitressing at Sardi's Restaurant, the famed New York city hangout for Broadway celebrities, Gacci saw every Broadway show she could afford.

To amuse herself during slow periods in the editing room, she began doodling colleagues' feet. She got a concept together

about painting peoples' shoes - their actual footwear. She recognised the beauty of the atmosphere that a foot has. She was tuned into the art of every foot and shoe. She then took a second look at the endless caricatures of celebrity faces that hang in Sardi's. It occurred to her that caricatures of performers' feet could be just as revealing as facial portraits. So she took a drawing pad along with her to the theatre and bought front row centre tickets. 'It cost me plenty' she admits 'and all I did was watch the footwear, looking for the perfect pose to sketch that would clearly show the role, and therefore identify the performer.' It was worth the price.¹

Within three and a half years she had filled the walls of the second floor of Sardi's Restaurant with portraits of Broadway's most famous actors' and dancers' feet! - as she says 'giving the faces feet!' These portraits included people such as Liza Minelli & Henry Fonda. The display legitimised this new talent in the eyes of both her customers and the stars whose good graces she required. These pieces cost over \$1,000 each. Gacci has drawn the feet of virtually all the Broadway hits ever since, and each portrait is signed by the subject. (see Figure³⁷⁻⁴⁰).

Gacci beleives that 'shoes are an integral part of the character they portray .. a shoe portrait can tell everything about a person's life .. it gives something of the essence of a person.'² It is definitely a unique artform to be a shoe portraitist. 'It's completely eccentric!' she admits as she describes how she used to get backstage (because she knew someone) and just sit in the middle of the chaotic floors of the changing rooms, sketching her 'heart out.' She became uninhibited and developed to achieve very detailed

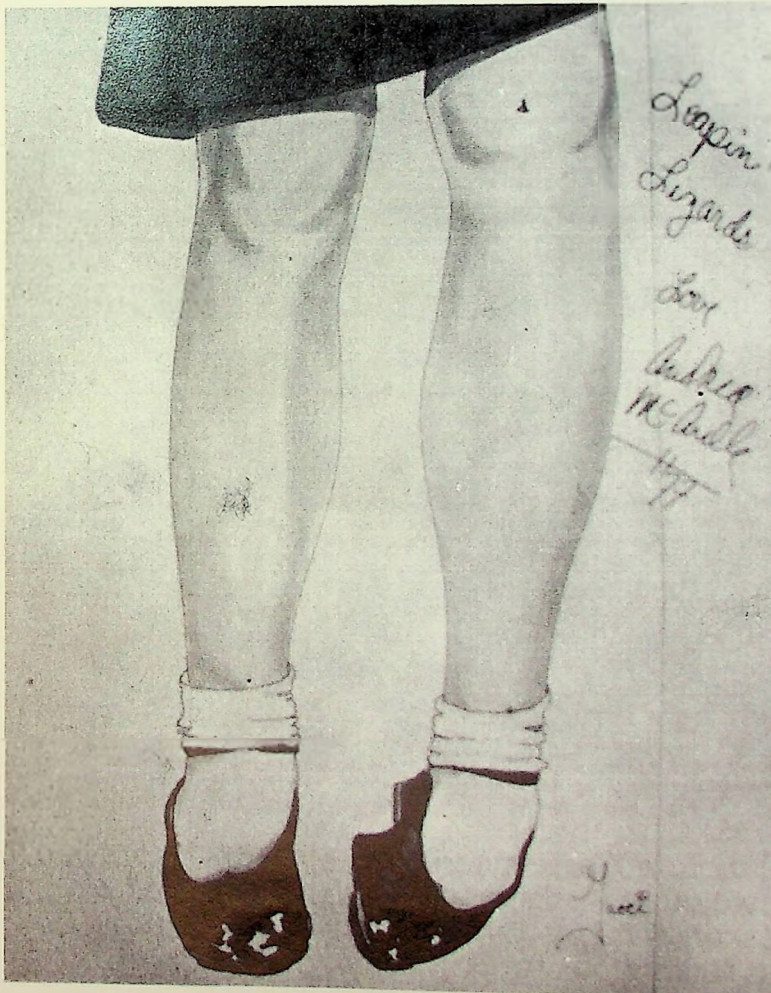
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FIG 37.



The cast of Ain't Misbehavin' © Gacci.

FIG 38.



Andrea McArdle in Annie
© Gacci.

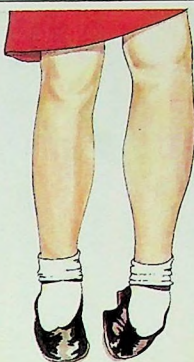
FIG 39.



FIG 40



PETER PAN



ANNIE



GEMINI



SUGAR BABIES



OKLAHOMA



SWEENEY TODD



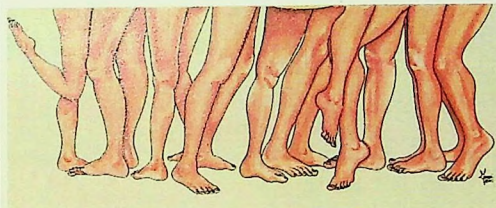
THEY'RE PLAYING OUR SONG



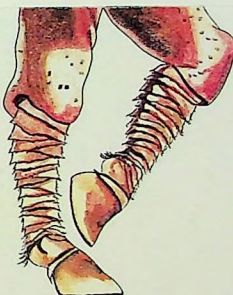
CHILDREN OF A LESSER GOD



THE BEST LITTLE WHOREHOUSE IN TEXAS



OH! CALCUTTA!



STRIDER



WEST SIDE STORY



BARNUM



A CHORUS LINE

Gucci

SHOW SHOES 1980

Seven - All the Best to You! - Gucci 1980



AIN'T MISBEHAVIN'



EVITA



GREASE

drawings and paintings. 'Everybody has to have a shoe portrait done,' she says, laughing.

From 1977 to 1980 she went to nearly two hundred and fifty shows on Broadway, constantly painting peoples' feet, portraying their characters. In 1980 she did a composite of some of these portraits. It was put together as a self-promotion to publicise her work. It was sold immediately. It included 'Oh! Calcutta' and other famous musicals on Broadway. She began to market her drawings as posters, postcards, and even porcelain mugs.

Loving her work so much, her entire life revolved around it -

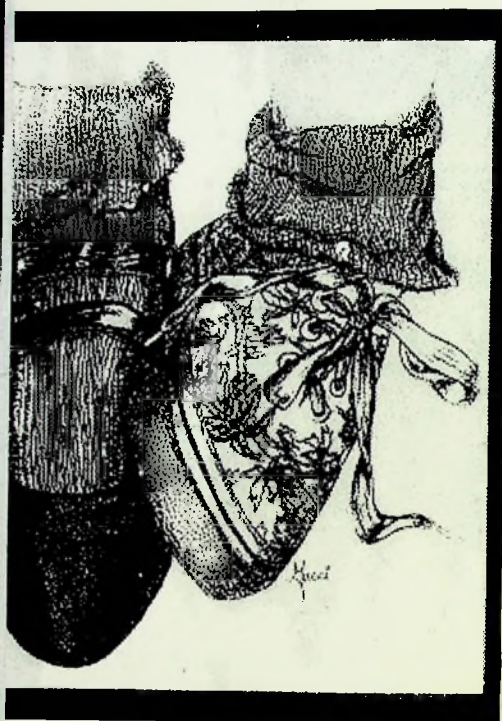
'I was having an affair with it! It's really just the persistence of a dream .. it's something that you really have to be committed to .. this persistence and commitment will carry you through .. and you really have to love doing it. Your work will show it - this is when you will achieve excellence.' ³

She began illustrating fashion footwear around 1980 for some of the bigger companies in the United States, for their promotions and advertisement campaigns. She has illustrated for Mario of Florence, handmade shoes for Nina, Stanley Silverstein's company of New York, and Capezio of New York (see Figure⁴²).

Gacci started making magazines when she went on to become publisher and writer for 'In Focus' magazine, which was a pull-out booklet inserted into 'Footwear Focus', an American footwear magazine. She designed, photographed, wrote and put the entire magazine together. When FFANY emerged in 1983-4, Jacobson decided to have



#1G 42



Mario & Eugenia
of Florence

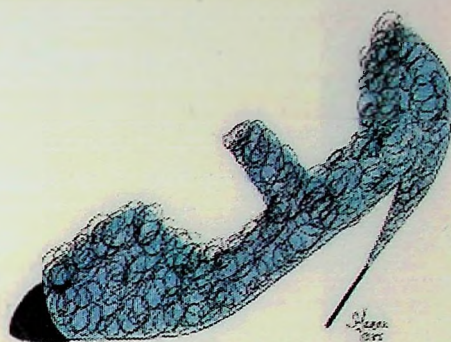
Pewter, Gold & Silver Kid • 5235 • 767 Fifth Avenue • GIM Bldg • NY • 10019

ON THE OTHER FOOT

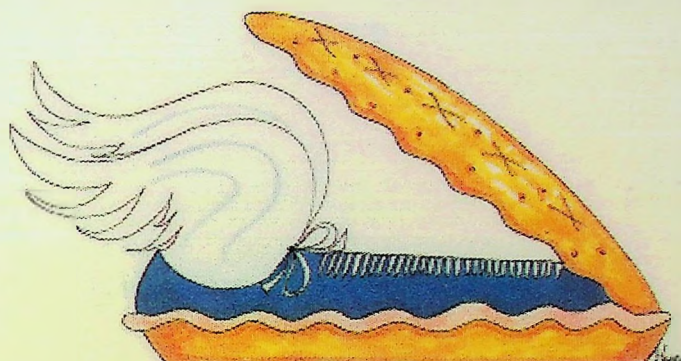
28



A PEAR OF SHOES



LAMB SHOE WITH PUMPLINGS



SHOE FLY FLY

FIG 43 + 44

ART & SOLE



Ray Walker — "Diamond Dust Shoes" — "The Country Line Gallery, NY"

With the influence of the '60's upon us in art and des we have chosen some of the major painters of that who interpreted the shoe as part of the POP ART c



Jim Dine — "Shoe" — "The Country Line Gallery, NY"



Ray Liberman — "Shoe" — "The Country Line Gallery, NY"



Jim Dine — "Shoe" — "The Country Line Gallery, NY"

22

"If I were an artist,
I'd draw a shoe."
"Why?" he asked curiously.
"Because they're such
neat things to look at.
There's so much going on—
all those lines and stripes—
look at that wrinkle!"
"Oh, I see," he said
but didn't really.
"They ALL draw shoes,
you know."
He looked puzzled.
"Why?" he asked again.
"Sometimes I want
to get into an school,
and..."
she nodded.
"It's been said
if you can draw a shoe,
you can draw anything."
She looked at her shoe.
He looked
at it, too.

Where would we be without our shoes?
Barefoot—
and talking about our toots.

a magazine publication twice a year and Gacci was chosen for this. Gacci is still editor of this magazine, which gives great foresight into the footwear industry. Currently the theme is the 'White Album' and all the photographs are duo-tones. This is as yet unpublished.

Gacci has been hooked on the theatre all her life and she expressed a concept that was linked emotionally with it. When I speak to her I find her to be one of the most emotionally artistic people I have ever met. I got her to tell me more about her thoughts on peoples' feet:

'To draw a shoe, or someone's foot with their shoe on, is incredibly revealing. It is like drawing a fine painting, especially if the shoes are worn, they tell everything. Every little line is like a line of a face - it reveals the character of the person - it is a true indicator of all that goes on within the person.'⁴

Gacci finds that a new shoe isn't as effective as after it has been worn - when it is worn it becomes another artform - 'I think it's beautiful' - it has a total imprint of the person wearing the shoes. It expresses their taste in art and in actual design details. It also expresses their need for quality or style. The shoe moulds the foot, becoming like an extension of it, or a second skin - hiding nothing. The art goes from the designer to the wearer - it takes on a whole new dimension of aesthetic beauty when worn.

'I see shoes as a piece of artwork that assumes the personality of the wearer. The colouration of it expresses their life, their taste - it tells everything about the person who wore it.'⁵

Gacci once did an advertisement campaign where she wrecked the shoe - threw it in a pot of water, looking discarded and unwanted. She photographed it like that, to promote the shoe! 'I like them old, they say more, they have real depth.'⁶ She finds the shows being exhibited in the market week shows very sterile items, having no character yet!

All the endings of the body's entire nervous system gather in the foot. A person's whole body resides in the shoes - they are our foundation and anchorage. Gacci sees shoes that are skin coloured as extensions of the body, like an extra; and black shoes, rather as signatures, like an artist's signature. The sole of the foot is so important. This is where reflexology is based in the body. Not enough thought is put into the concept of reflexology and the shoe. It is amazing to think that a shoe may control certain organs of the body due to certain pressures it may put upon the base of the foot.

Salvatore Ferragamo looked for a balance between the shoe and the body. His shoes are entirely comfort-orientated. The comfort concept and theme is striving to have footwear that is aligned to the body, the toes and the ball of the foot, cushioned and supported in such a way that they give strength to the upper body. All the energy that rushes to the face through the nervous

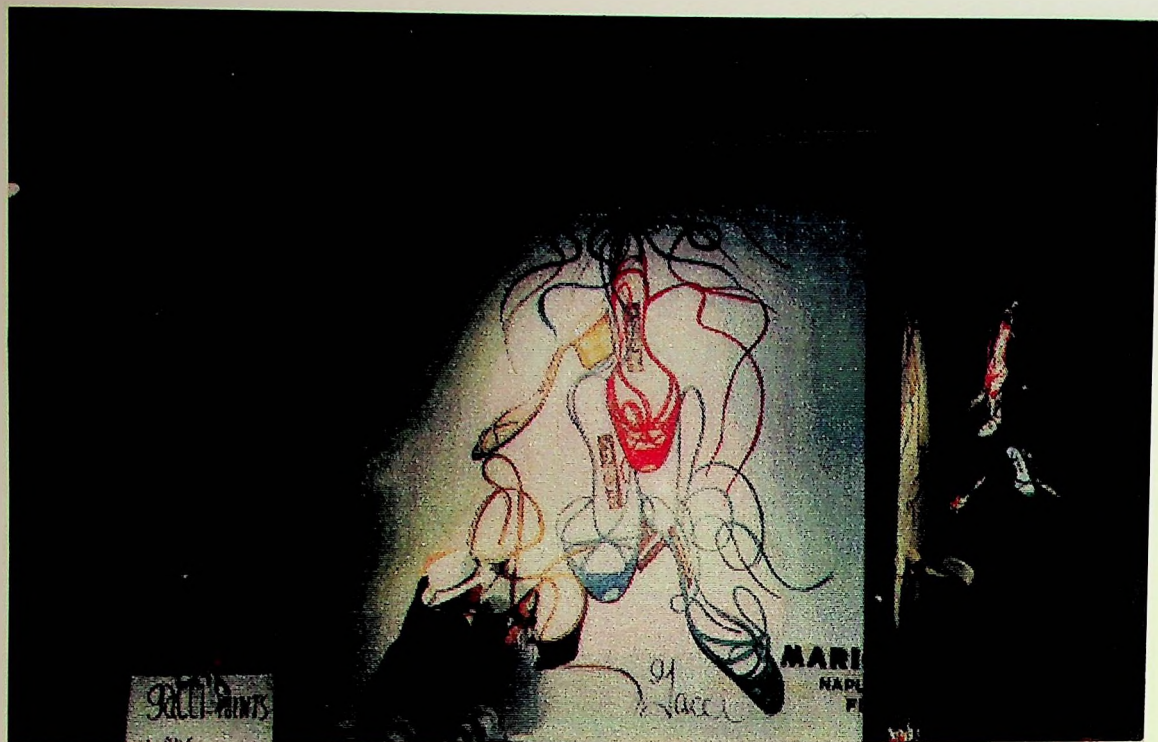


FIG 45.



FIG 46 .

system is all cosmetic - comfort is essential to transmit positive energy for a healthier looking person.

It was difficult for Gacci sometimes to draw peoples' feet because they really are a very private part of the body. People never want to reveal them, they are kept covered most of the time as they are very intimate and personal. It is amazing how many people have inhibitions about their feet.

Gacci was also famed for her performance art. Her best story was about the display window she did for Fiorucci's of New York. It was called 'Xmas of Foot at Fiorucci.' It was a bizarre window display. It was set up like a 1950's-style kitchen and Gacci was in it, cooking away, but all the food made different puns about shoes. There were different types of heels protraying certain foods. She said it was the funniest thing she ever did. There were always at least fifty to a hundred people watching her at any given time during the day, but they couldn't hear her at all! This happened in 1979. She often illustrated in shop windows 'live'. In Figure 45 we see her drawing for Mario Laccarino.

THE VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM

Specialised museums located in traditional shoemaking regions, and a number of world famous companies including Salvatore Ferragamo SpA, have extensive and important shoe collections. In recent years growing interest in the history of shoemaking has generated shows and exhibitions investigating the place of these functional works



FIG 47

works of art within twentieth century high fashion.

Often, when the V.&A. is exhibiting they will have selections of authentic shoes taken out of context (being worn by a mannequin in period dress) and elevated from ground to eye level; they reveal stylistic and technical developments and perhaps, more importantly, become appreciable as aesthetic objects in their own right. At this level, they achieve a new status, and, seeing them close up, it is possible to see how complex they are and really appreciate them as works of art made by master craftsmen in a variety of rich materials and skins.

The Victoria and Albert Museum gave us the chance to study over two hundred of Salvatore Ferragamo's unique and often avant-garde works of art, in 1983. His creations represent a pinnacle in the art of shoemaking. The skill with which he combined highly decorative forms, with essential elements of function, protection and comfort, is outstanding.

MUSÉE DES ARTS DE LA MODE

In 1987, a stunning exhibition at the Musée des Arts de la Mode in Paris, marked the fiftieth anniversary of the opening of the great master Roger Vivier's first atelier in Paris. Of the four hundred models shown, more than two hundred were new creations! Some were masterfully simple, but in other opulently beaded models, Vivier displayed the classic fantasy and finesse that made his shoes for the designer Christian Dior in the Fifties some of the

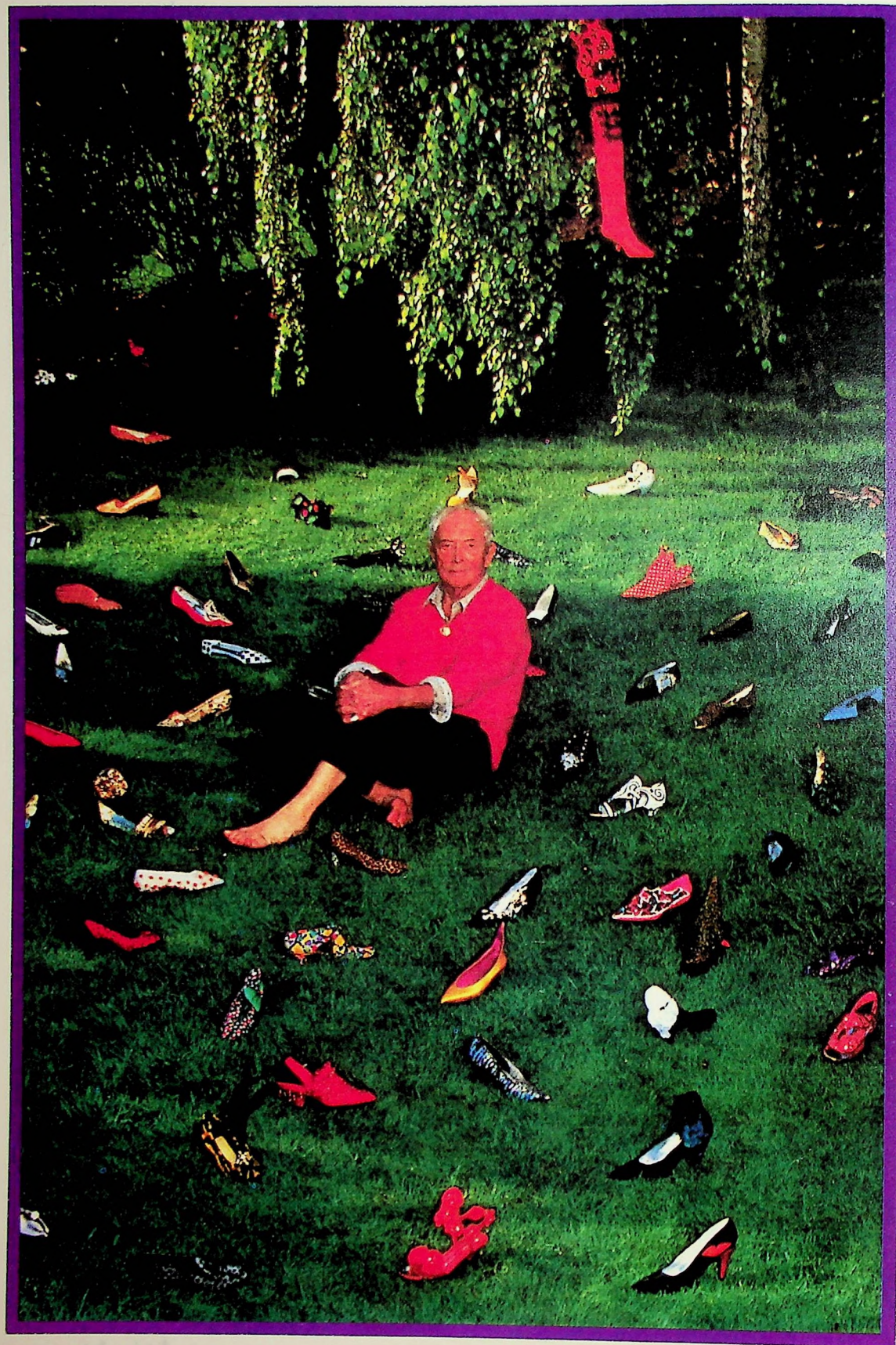


FIG 48.



most astounding pieces ever created.

Working with the House of Lesage, which fabricates the embroidery for Chanel and Christian Lacroix, Vivier created a magnificent group of high 'cuissarde' evening boots in velvet and satin - a level of haute couture unsurpassed in the realm of contemporary footwear. It is a telling sign of the times however, that these exquisite models are probably too costly to be ever produced commercially. They were created virtually as museum pieces and were, in fact, donated to the museum.

In the summer of 1990, the Musée de la Mode exhibited an absolutely unique type of show. It was French Fashion from the mid 1940's, only this time the war years' look was represented by such popular French designers as Pierre Balmain and Jeanne Lanvin. (see Figure 49). It turned out to be one of the city's most popular attractions - a display of more than two hundred miniature mannequins all standing about twenty four inches tall. They were all dressed by French couturiers of the 1940's, in the wide-brimmed hats, knee-length skirts and platform-soled shoes that marked French fashion as World War II came to a close.

The intricacy of the designers' work is carried through right down to the elbow-length gloves and detailed replicas of the models' thumb-sized high-heel shoes. The dolls, constructed of light wire and plaster, held court on famous Paris locations. Other designers, featured in the show that occupied three floors in the Musée des Arts de la Mode, were Nina Ricci, Jacques Fath, Jean Patou and Christian Dior. The first floor of the exhibition was filled with

photographs documenting the designs and constructions of the sets and mannequins. The exhibition opened in May of 1990 and moved in December to the Costume Institute of New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art, where I had the fortune to catch a glimpse of it.

SHOES AND SURREALISM

Some of the most amazing shoes seen in the art world have been part of the Surrealist movement. They have a sense of humour. One of the main features of the Surrealist approach is the shock of surprise caused by unexpected juxta-positioning of objects. Schiaparelli's shoe (1937) worn on the head as a hat is a classic example of Surrealist wit. Even more perfectly Surrealist is Pierre Cardin's (1986) pair of shoes which look like feet, and yet are meant to be worn 'on' the feet - the ideal Surrealist double-take (see Figure 54).

Other shoemakers have been influenced by the Surrealist determination to make us look twice and think again about what we see, such as Manolo Blahnik's sketches of fantasies based on gloves and Siamese twins (1982), (see Figure 51+52). The John Moore advertisement (1987) plays on the correspondences between arms and legs, correspondences which the conscious mind prefers to suppress, (see Figure 50).

FIG 54



FIG 53



FIG 52

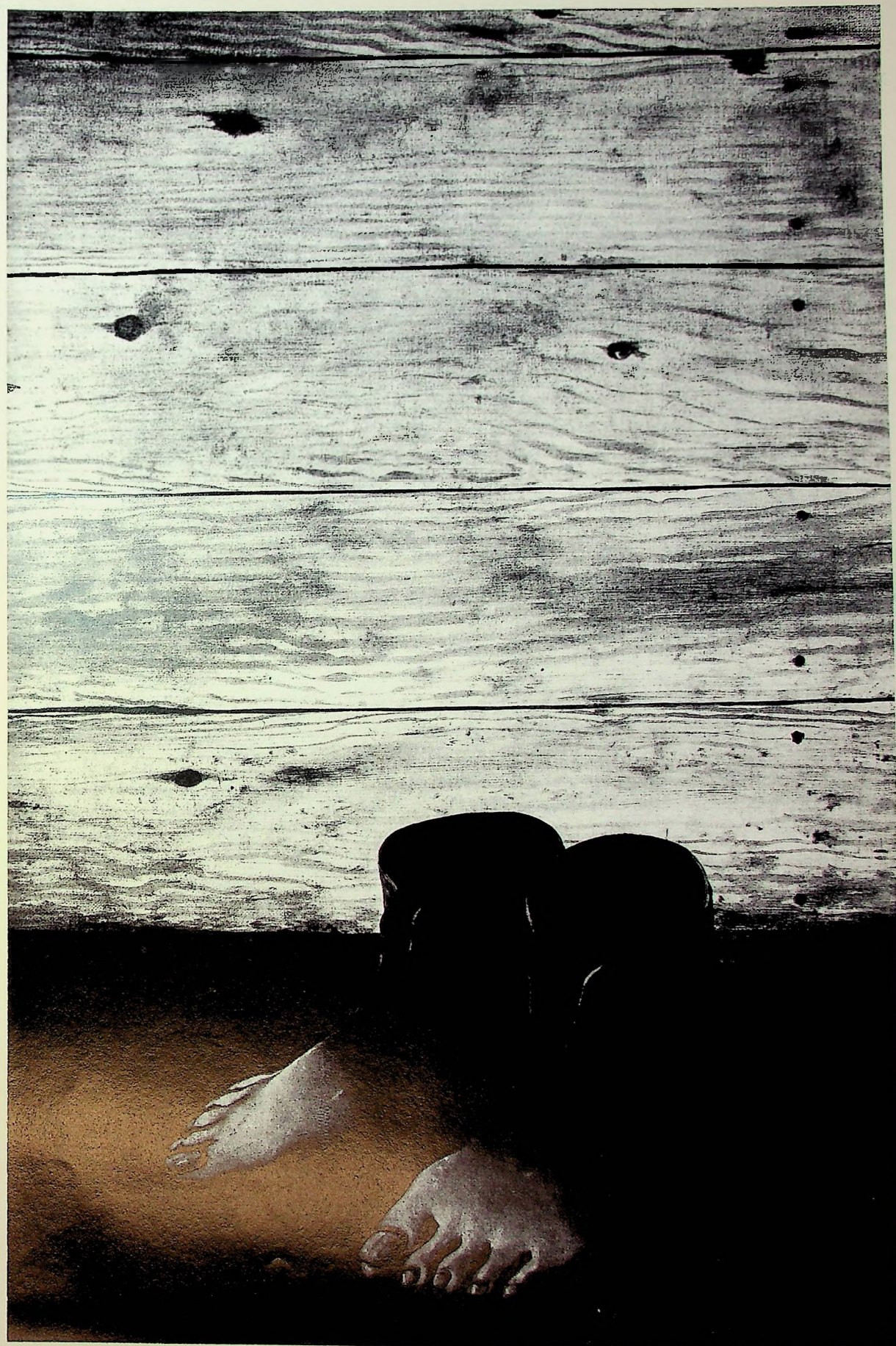


FIG 50



FIG 51





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2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.

CHAPTER 5

SHOES AS ARTISTIC DESIGN: A LOOK AT THE MASTERS

It is not an exaggeration to say that some of the most perfect shoes ever produced have been created in this century by great designers who have no equals from the past.

SALVATORE FERRAGAMO

Salvatore Ferragamo was probably one of the greatest shoe designers of this century. He had a vocation to make shoes. He was born at Bonito, Italy, in 1898, and by the age of fourteen he could boast his own workshop in production, with six employees who were all older than himself. He had a sense of perfection and an entrepreneurial capacity that prevented him from ever becoming self-satisfied. Having travelled to the U.S. in 1914, he made up his mind to reject modern American methods and he opened a shop for custom-made shoes in Santa Barbara. Salvatore found the machine-made shoes to be 'heavy, clumsy, graceless, with points like potatoes and heels like lead.' His shop quickly became famous due to a contract with the 'American Film Company.' He supplied footwear for many historical and costume dramas as well as westerns, and Cecil B. De Mille's 1924 epic 'The Ten Commandments.'¹

Rodolfo Valentino was among his private customers. He came to be known as the 'shoemaker to the stars' and the wooden lasts that were made for his clients are still preserved in Ferragamo's

collection in Palazzo Feroni, Florence. In order to keep pace with the whims of the stars of Hollywood cinema, Ferragamo was continually having to invent original and outrageous styles. But above all, the years spent in the United States allowed him to master the technical processes that were to make his shoes unique. He succeeded in finding a way of measuring feet that enabled his shoes to be not only aesthetically attractive, but comfortable as well. In 1927 Ferragamo moved back to Italy, to Florence, and his already successful career continued to escalate.

It is illuminating to examine a few of his creations which reveal the extent of his skills, and the consummate ease with which he ranged between the extremes of form and function. The most visually arresting shoes are those with decorative detail and extraordinary shape. It is intriguing to observe the ways in which he used the large areas (for footwear) offered by the platforms as 'canvases'-in wood they are carved with a diamond lattice painted in bright primary colours (see Figure 61); this sandal, with its upper composed of red suede strips and adjustable lacing over the instep. The wedge divided between the waist and forepart sole is to facilitate movement. Even the inside is beautiful, with red suede insole edge cover and beige kid lining. The heel is seven centimetres high, and was made in Italy in 1935-6.

In 1947 Ferragamo turned his attention to the near negation of decoration and form in the enormously successful and much publicised 'invisible' sandal with its 'F' shaped slender heel, (see Figure 64). This womens' sandal, in particular, is one of a pair, although he had three or four styles in the same concept.



FIG. 56



FIG. 57

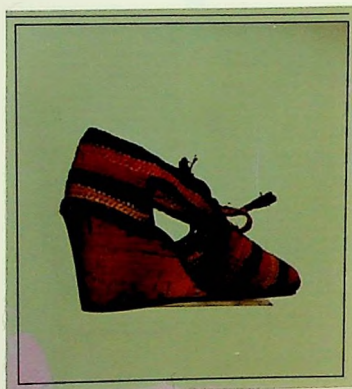


FIG. 58



FIG. 59

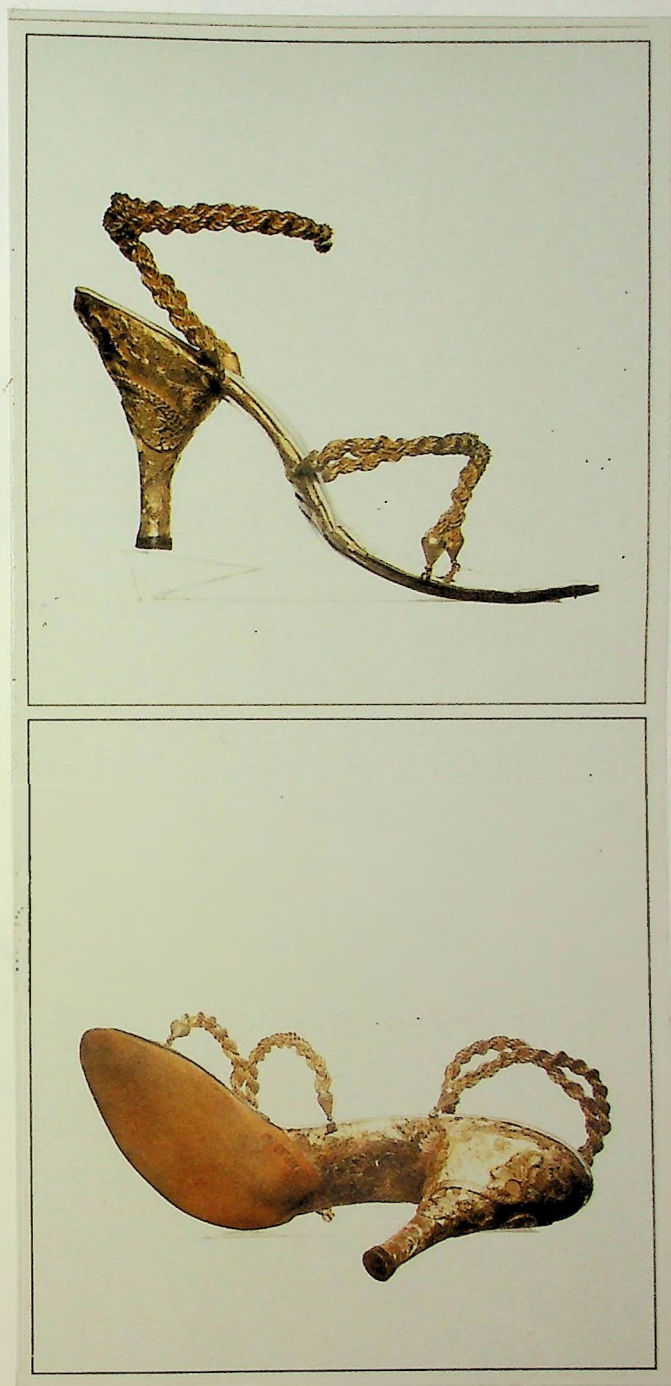


FIG. 60

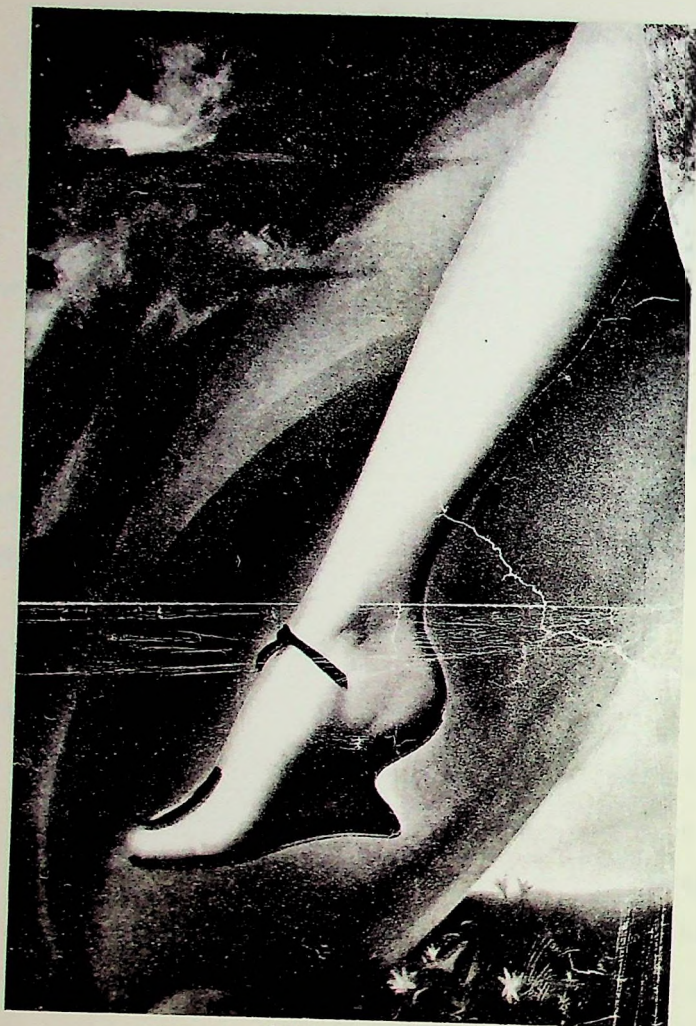


FIG. 63



FIG. 64



FIG. 61



FIG. 62

The vamp is formed of a single nylon thread passed repeatedly between each side of the insole, perforating the red calf strip at the centre. The nylon sling-back repeats the vamp motif. The 'F' wedge heel in wood, covered with red calf, is nearly six centimetres high.

The 1938-9 sandal (see Figure 62) has pronounced architectural overtones in its stepped, columnar and buttressed soles and heels. The extreme design of this model, with its exaggerated platform sole, suggests that Ferragamo created it for the cinema or theatre.

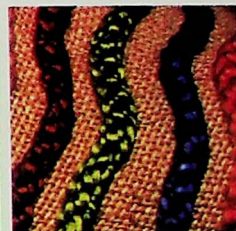
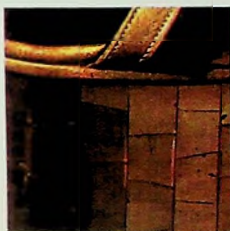
In 1956 Ferragamo realised the most ambitious design in his entire career - a pair of gold shoes (see Figure 60). The sandal, conserved in the collection at Palazzo Feroni, cost \$1,000 in the Fifties. It was made out of eighteen carat gold. The vamp is formed of two interlaced chains, with Roman ankle strap that is attached to the sole with tiny bells. The arch, and the heel of nine and a half centimetres, are covered with engraved gold lamina.

In his autobiography, written three years before his death in 1960, he wrote: 2

'It gives me a feeling of satisfaction that from the time of my return from Hollywood, almost thirty years ago, I have increased the export of Italian shoes all over the world. It makes me very happy to have made the humble trade of the shoemaker respectable, raising it to a position of eminence within the world of fashion. Above all, I am proud to think that Italian shoes are everywhere in great demand. I don't care if foreign shoemakers steal my ideas,

FERRAGAMO'S MATERIALS

Salvatore Ferragamo was a shoemaker of great ingenuity – his delight in breaking the rules is nowhere more apparent than in his work with new materials. Only a master could so confidently exploit many materials that had never before been used in shoemaking. During World War II, for example, when leather was in short supply, Ferragamo substituted cellophane for the body of the shoe. For soles, he triumphantly revived the use of cork and wood. The selection of materials on these pages shows Ferragamo's range in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s.



Above left: Beige 'pilor' with brown grosgrain

Above: Yellow, red and pale green silk threads

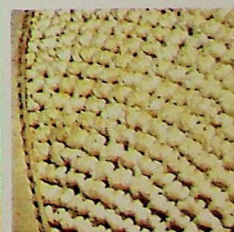
Far left: Gilded glass mosaic sole and satin and calf strap

Left: Natural hemp and plaited cords of polychrome



Right:
Elasticized
white silk with
gold brocade
effect

Below: Woven
polychrome
raffia



Top: Sea-leopard in orange, green, blue and yellow

Centre: Ostrich skin divided by calf strip

Bottom: Synthetic raffia worked in crochet



copy my styles and even the materials I use. They imitate everything except the principle of comfort which has been the foundation of my success. Women must be persuaded that luxury shoes need not be painful to walk in; they must be convinced that it is possible to wear the most refined and exotic footwear, because we now know how to design a supportive shoe modelled to the shape of the foot. Elegance and comfort are not incompatible, and whoever maintains the contrary simply does not know what he is talking about.¹³

ROGER VIVIER

Roger Vivier is the designer who has most consistently achieved the balance between comfort and beauty. His creations combine visual deliciousness with mechanical precision, in a way that exemplifies his belief that successful shoe construction depends upon harmony of form.

He was born in Paris in 1913, and began his studies as a sculpture student at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, and left at the age of nineteen to design shoes for his friends. What he learned at the Beaux-Arts was the foundation on which he built his shoe designing career. Vivier creates shapes which have the strength of a sculptor's armature. Having got the basic engineering right, he has been able to play on any number of fantastically decorative ideas without weakening the structure.

Many fashion experts, such as Vogue's Diana Vreeland, have



FIG. 67



FIG. 68

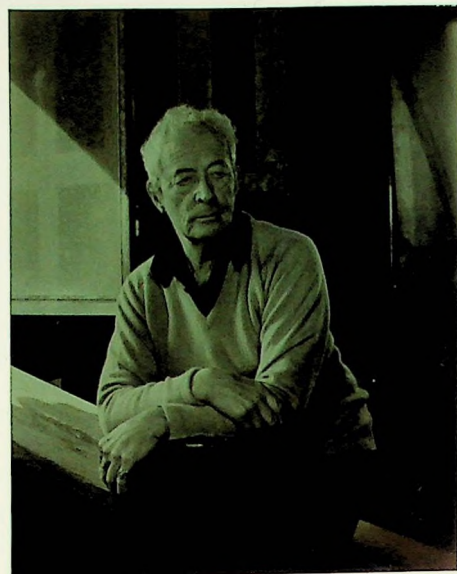


FIG. 66

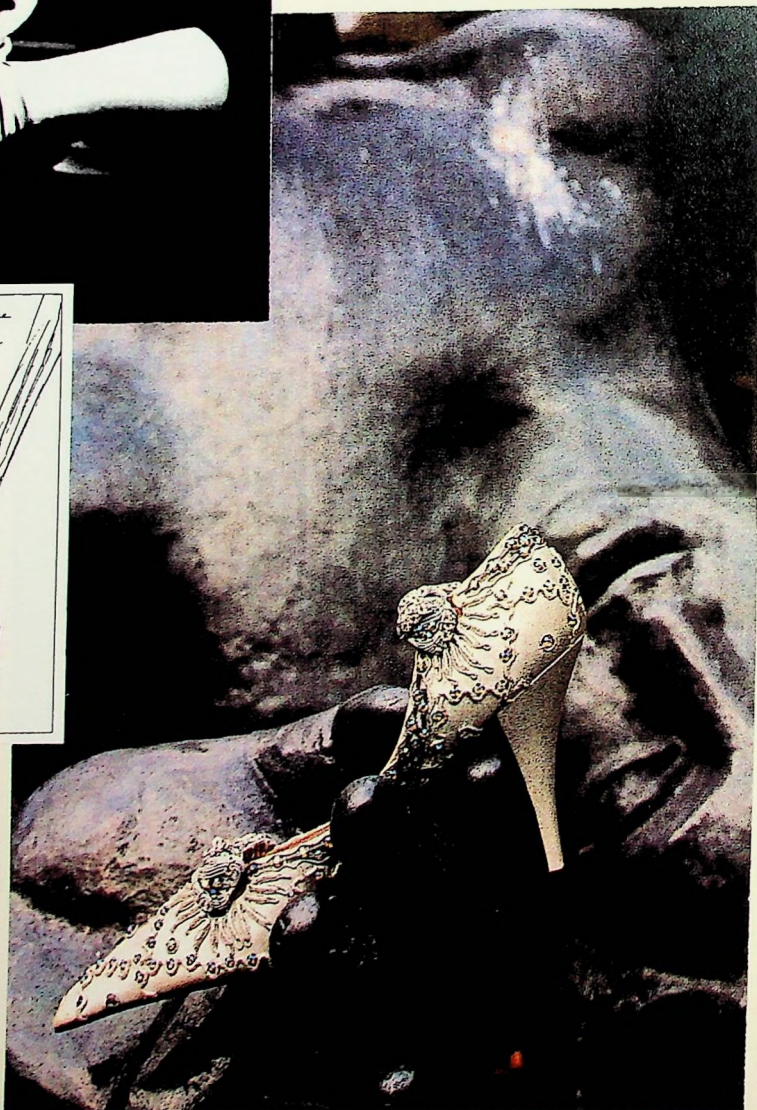


FIG. 69

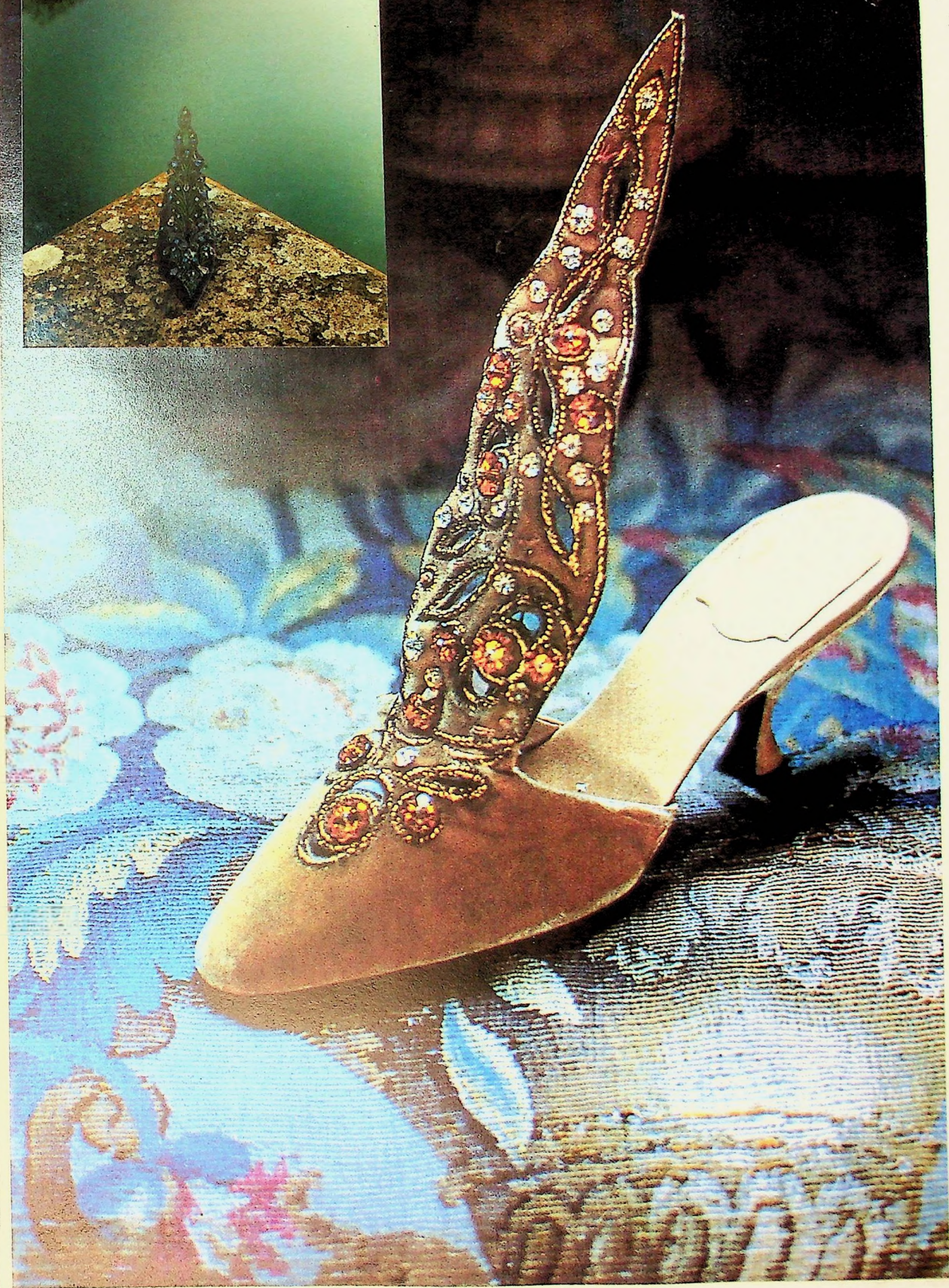
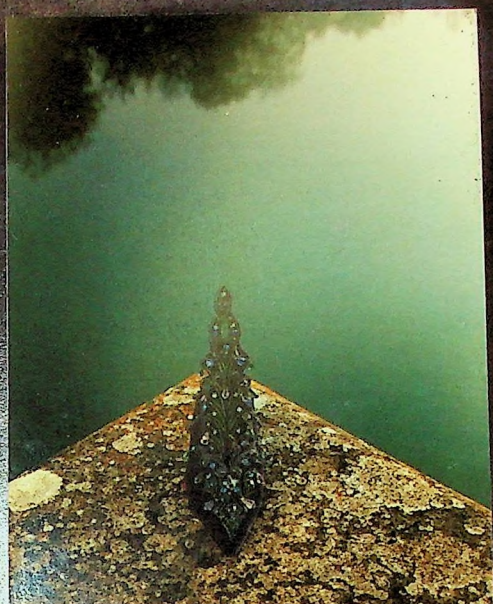




FIG. 70



FIG. 71

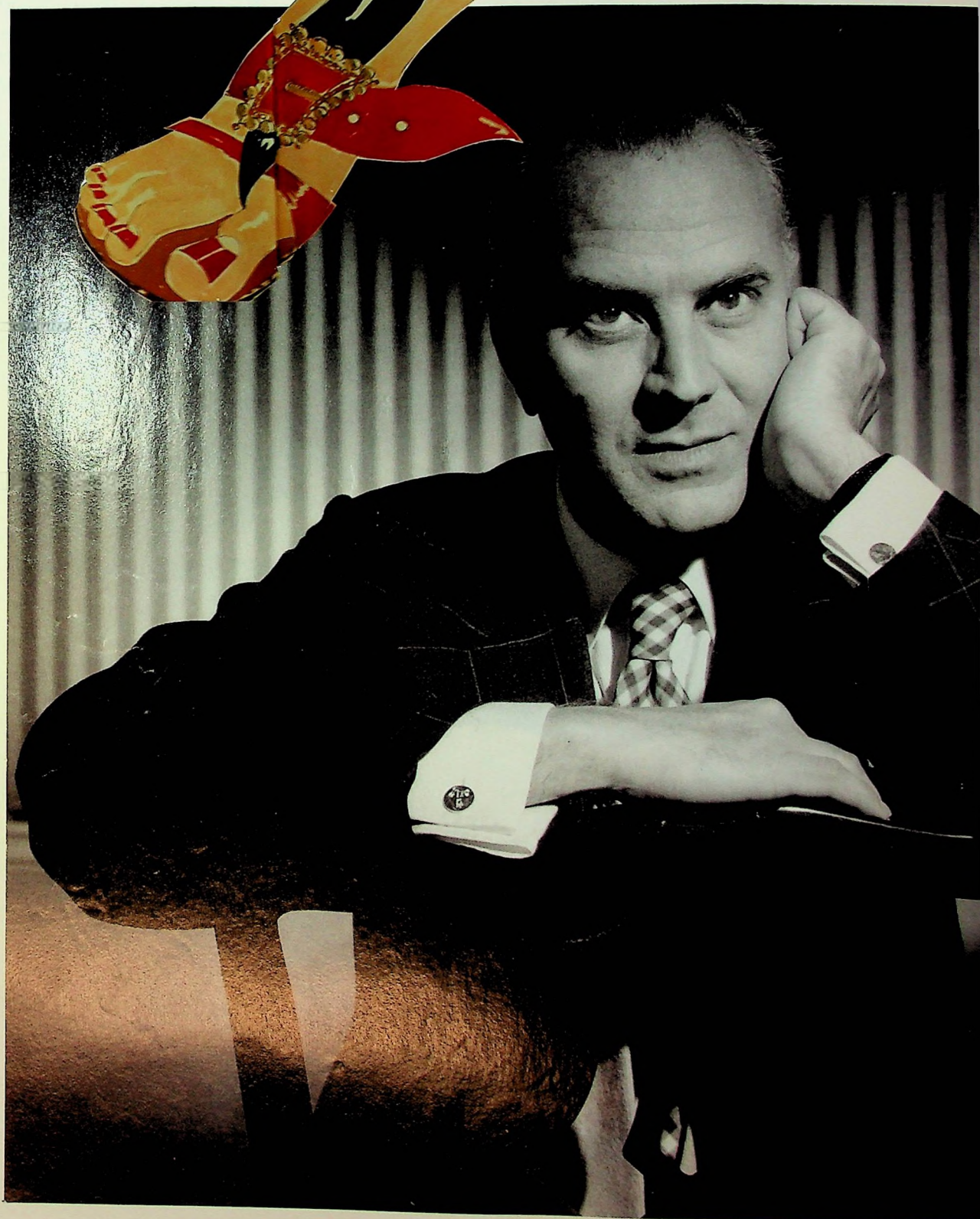


FIG. 72

claimed that Roger Vivier has created the most beautiful shoes of the twentieth century, and it would be difficult to contradict them. ⁴His work in the 1950's, with Christian Dior, marked a high point of the shoemakers' art. Lighthearted and extravagantly decorative, the shoes he designed at that time had an exquisite elegance (see Figure 71).

Vivier is, without doubt, not merely a great shoemaker, but one of the greatest designers of this century. He is the king of the decorative shoe. Although his creations catch the spirit of previous periods, they are completely contemporary; always fashion and never costume. With all their ornamental extravagance they are essentially unique, modern designs (see Figure 72). This particular example from 1987 has all the undertones of a purely modern shoe. The high back has been supported and achieved through modern technology, with recently developed stiffeners and supports that are used between the lining and the top leather. A shape like this is otherwise too difficult to achieve, as the foot and ankle would not fit comfortably if it was too stiff, and the shape would not hold if it was too soft. Finding the right balance is something which Vivier finds simple, showing his true expertise. Even the curve of the arch and the angle of the heel are ultra modern. They could only be the products of this century - not least for their exploitation of the principles of engineering and aerodynamics.

Vivier has been designing shoes for more than fifty years, and his influence on younger shoemakers is unmatched. Where he has led, other designers - Andrea Pfister, Manolo Blahnik - have



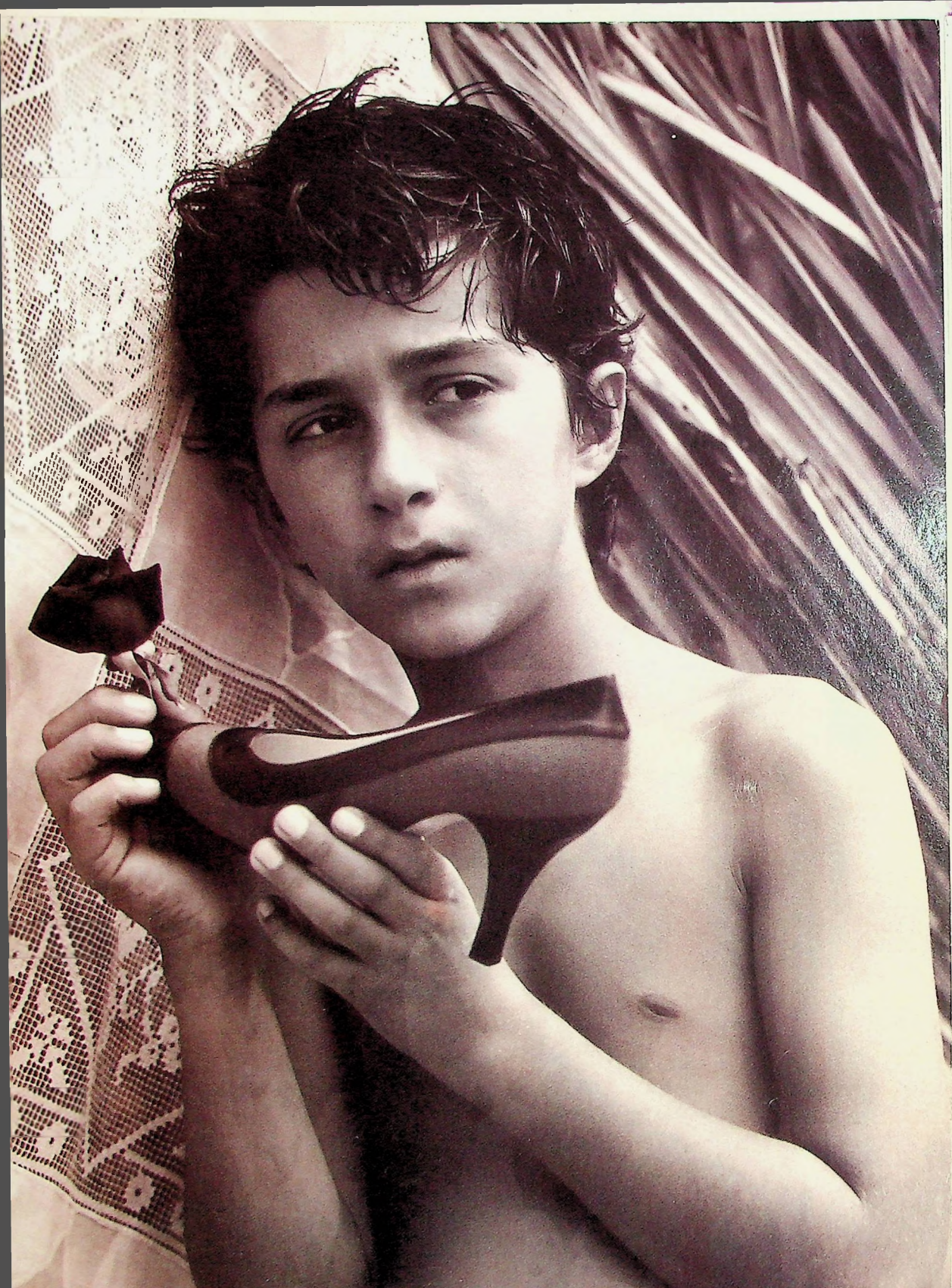
followed. Vivier has always viewed the shoe as sculpture, or architecture and an 'objet d'art.'⁵

MANOLO BLAHNIK

Manolo Blahnik's shoes are theatrical fantasies of the most extravagant kind, completely original combinations of wit, sex and allure. Like Vivier, Blahnik has the ability to take the spirit of past creations and re-create them in modern terms. But his works are no more copies of the past than were Vivier's decorative shoes for Dior. They are original creations of the moment, entirely contemporary and yet catching the Romantic spirit of previous ages.

Historicism is popular with many young designers of the present day, but it is dangerous to attempt and difficult to achieve. What they produce with depressing frequency is a pastiche - at best a good copy of an outmoded style, at worst a bastard which is neither of the past nor of the present. A copy of an eighteenth century shoe is a piece of nonsense at the end of the twentieth century, but a re-interpretation of, for example, the spirit of Georgian grace can be totally contemporary. The one is costume, the other fashion. It is because Blahnik never confuses the two that he can bring off daring feats of historical re-interpretation without a second's faltering.

Manolo Blahnik's background explains his cultural breadth. He was born in 1940 in the Canary Isles. His father was Czech and his mother Spanish. He was educated in Geneva, where he studied literature and art, before moving to Paris in 1968.⁶ His intro-



MANOLO BLAHNIK

49-51 OLD CHURCH STREET LONDON SW3 5BS 15 WEST 55TH STREET N.Y. BERGDORF GOODMAN N.Y.

Maria Yalut Aug 82

Thong with wood stiletto covered



1. 20. 4. 11. 1.

Maria Yalut
Reptile like - color blue



Style Peloma

1. 20. 4. 11. 1.

M. Summer 1974

Hand made thong sandal



Hand made thong sandal

Maria Yalut

- Maria Yalut 1974



1974 -

Maria Yalut in 1974

duction to the world of shoe design came in 1971 when he was visiting New York. It was his lifetime idol, Cecil Beaton, who encouraged him with his shoe designs and put him firmly on his feet.⁷ He moved to London and by 1978 had become an established shoe designer. He is now the most influential shoemaker in the world. He has just been awarded, on 18 February 1991, the title 'Shoe Designer of the Year' by the Fashion Footwear Association of New York.

Blahnik is a master craftsman, a perfectionist whose lasts are beautifully proportioned to ensure that however decorative a shoe is, it is still comfortable. Constantly dissatisfied with his designs, he has been driven since the 1970's to create more and more shoes.

'If I felt I had perfected my craft, I wouldn't be doing shoes anymore.'⁸

The man is a force field of energy, whose inspiration strikes from odd quarters at unexpected moments.

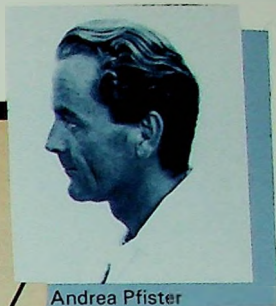
'It could be a smell - I cannot say exactly what it is I have in mind, otherwise that magic would go. Once, for example, I was driving to the south of France with George, my New York partner (Manolo has a flourishing shop in Manhattan as well as in London) and I said 'George, stop the car immediately, right now!' We screeched to a stop and there was this wonderful smell of mimosa mixed with jasmine, and from that I made a shoe.'⁹

— Monolo Blamirle



Saint Gall lace and silk

Satin undrout - winter 1987-88

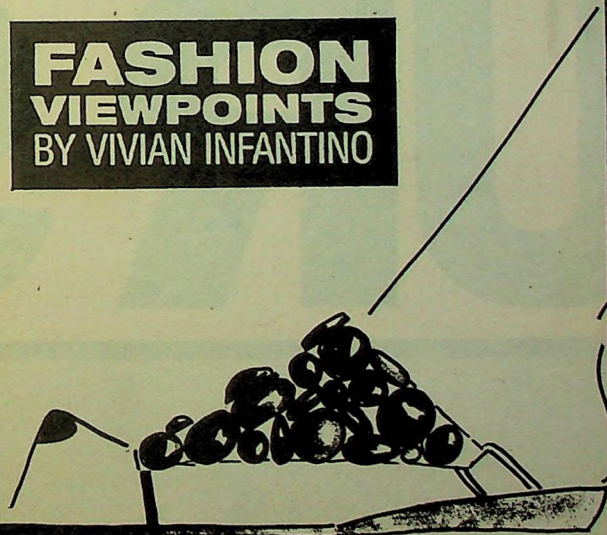


Andrea Pfister



Andrea Pfister

**FASHION
VIEWPOINTS**
BY VIVIAN INFANTINO



Andrea Pfister

ANDREA PFISTER

Andrea Pfister is of Swiss stock and yet his shoes seem so essentially Italian that it is no surprise that he studied in Milan and spends a great deal of his time in Positano, as well as living in northern Italy.


Pfister is first and foremost a colourist. He is also one of the wittiest of shoe designers; his lighthearted sandals, which push the parameters of good taste to their utmost limits, cannot fail to raise a smile. Light, frivolous and inconsequential as Pfister's contribution to shoe design may seem, he is a true original. 'I like the shoes that work .. if they make you smile .. people need humour in their feet.'¹⁰ Pfister believes that a shoe can do so much to a woman:

'If the shoe is ugly, the woman wearing it will become ugly, but shoes can make a woman look beautiful too. If a shoe fits and suits the woman's personality, she will feel good and you can tell this by her face - her face will reveal all, expressing her mood, her confidence, her aura.'¹¹

Among Pfister's favourite designers are Ferragamo and Vivier. He finds that studying their shoes is an absolute joy, very inspiring and exciting, and has always found them great to look back on 'Excellence in design and creativity inspires any designer when seeing great art.'¹²



FIG. 78



The '50s and '60s are back in vogue and so is getting high — on heels, that is. Designers are reaching for the sky again with heels that are slimmed down and made more feminine than their clunkier predecessors. Look for stunning shapes in slings, semi-D'Orsays and pumps made unforgettable with elegant fabrications, materials and jewellery. And while the flat still rules during daytime hours, FN has spied a growing number of those daringly high heels on chic partygoers of the evening social circuit.

ANDREA PFISTER, Vigevano

Andrea Pfister was a joy to speak with and, as a young designer myself, I find him inspiring to study.

'In my shoes I only like the best of materials to be used, the best of everything. This has always been a trademark of mine. It gives the utmost comfort to my shoes which I find as being the most important artform in making a shoe. My lasts are all especially designed, and redesigned if need be - constantly striving to perfect the shape of 'comfort'; it is a three-dimensional sense of comfort that is carefully designed with a personal expression coming from my heart.'¹³

ENZO ANGIOLINI

Enzo Angiolini is the designer for the 'Enzo' division of the U.S., Fisher Camuto Group. This group includes Gloria Vanderbilt and 9West Shoes, with five other more commercial lines.

Angiolini started to work in a shoe factory when he was fifteen years old, that was in 1957, near Florence in Italy. He learned all the processes involved in the making of a shoe during his near fourteen years at that factory. He was good at drawing so he started to design shoes while he was there.¹⁴ When Angiolini designs a shoe now, he knows that it can be made and will often have to teach people in his factories how to make up his shoes - he knows every detail.

Angiolini reckons that if he spends too much time designing



FISHER CAMUTO GROUP

9WEST
ORIA VANDERBILT
ENZO ANGIOLINI
WESTIES
CALICO
SNAP
TOPAZIO
WESTIES JRS.

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FIG. 79



FIG. 80

a shoe, it means that it is not right for him - the idea is ruined. When he becomes inspired with an idea, he expects that if it is good enough he will sketch it out in a minute and be satisfied. He often designs on a shell made from the last and then the pattern maker transforms that with his very skilled hands - 'It has to be so precise.'¹⁵

Angiolini gets his ideas from everybody, from inside himself and from his shoes. He is very inspired when he sees the leather itself. He designs about forty styles in each collection. He admits that his most creative are not made up 'nobody wants to buy them.' But what he has made are extremely elegant, soft, feminine shoes. Their design is complemented even more when it is put on the foot and worn. He knows that his clients are very satisfied, as he admits:

'They always wait for my shoes to be in my store. They go in for the fashion but I give them comfort also, because if they have comfort, then the next time they will come back for more.'¹⁶

Sometimes Angiolini gives public appearances in his stores. He spends nearly two hours just sketching out shoes that his customers ask him to design. They draw a lottery and whoever's sketch wins gets the shoe made for her by hand!

To help keep his hand drawing between collection times, Angiolini loves to paint - his work is wonderful, (see Figure). He is extremely artistic and expresses these emotions in every

way he can. He only paints for himself but every inch of wall space in his apartment has got a painting of his own upon it. 17

Angiolini loves his life and his work. He commutes between New York, Florence and Brazil. He is a contemporary artist who gives his life to his work and also happens to love designing shoes.

STANLEY SILVERSTEIN

I visited Stanley Silverstein, the man Dick Jacobson found to be one of the most creative people he had ever met. I went to the showroom of Nina Footwear- where he is President and Chief Executive Officer. It was not long before I understood what Jacobson meant.

Silverstein's creative abilities as a designer came naturally. He would always draw a lot and eventually he used his intuition for designing patterns. His deep knowledge of the technical side of production was often his basis for design. He began his career as the son of a shoemaker and he has now been designing shoes for nearly thirty years.

'I love keeping things in balance, organising production, and designing to create the product. It is a very, very fulfilling job.' 18

The Nina line is very commercial, yet creative. Stanley has developed a new line called 'Seven Star' which is for the young and

trendy. It has no high heels 'it is for a very special consumer.' 19
I absolutely loved those shoes. They had a 1960's style. The curves
and cut of the heels were so sculpted - the shape of the toe was
unique. It is angualrly shaped as if to look square-toed but the
front line is at an angle accentuating the importance of the big
toe (see Figure). They will soon be copied as all innovative
ideas are, by companies who simply follow the trends. They have so
much potential as a leading style of the spring 1991 range that is
being stocked by the retailers.

Stanley has always seen shoes as three-dimensional sculpted
objects, making the Nina line very artistic, and full of flair,
even with its commerciality. There is something different about
every shoe having details that I have never seen before, like an
indent on a heel where the thumb fits so smoothly when holding the
shoes in the hand (note that the heel is an interesting handle for
taking off shoes.) He told me that he gets a lot of his ideas in
the shower!

Stanley knows that eventhough his line is commercial, the
design world needs the artistic uncommercial designers; they have
so many ideas and the best of these ideas can alwqys be made into
something that people can wear quite easily. 'You need those things
to keep the spirit in the design world.' 20

Stanley asked me to pick out a few styles so that we could
discuss how he created them - amazingly I picked out the four best
sellers of that season!

Fashion
kicks into
Comfort.



Soft, light kidskin
together with technological
advances now make
wearing your shoes
as comfortable as
kicking them off.
When you feel Oh! Nina's,
you hold the
future in your hands.



Oh!
Nina®



Styles: Mandy, Eclipse and Topper

He found it very difficult to explain how he came about the ideas, but we were visually able to appreciate their sculpted feel and no words can express what it is like to feel beautifully made shoes except that it is as if the leather is touching you back.

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CONCLUSION

The twentieth century has seen fashion develop with increasing momentum. In the shoe business, designers and manufacturers have brought about change at an unprecedented speed and volume. As a young designer myself, I have explored the fashion industry from the point of view of footwear as a sculptural type of art. Simultaneously, I have been physically involved in designing shoes for my forthcoming collection (1991). This has enabled me to learn from first hand experience how much artistic talent and technicalities are involved in the manufacturing of a single shoe.

I have looked at shoes in three separate contexts - but all lead to the concept that shoes are not just a functional commodity, but a personalised form of expressing emotional art. I explored shoes as a part of the Fashion Industry; as part of the World of Art including the art movement Surrealism; and also to the source of footwear - the mind and imagination of the creator - the shoe designer.

My passion for shoes has grown even stronger than prior to this research, having studied so much of the contemporary designers' work. Shoes, as artistic sculptural footwear, must fit and be comfortable, and functional also, but beyond that they are supreme works of art which come in pairs!



APPENDIX A

A BRIEF OUTLINE OF SHOE TERMS

THE LAST: wooden mould of shoe. It is generally produced in plastic and its shape varies according to the style of the shoe. It is hinged so that it can be pulled out of the shoe without damaging the shoe shape.

UPPER: is the part which covers the top of the foot. It normally consists of Vamp, Quarters and Lining.

VAMP: covers the front of the foot as far as the back of the joint of the big toe.

QUARTER: part of the back of the upper which covers the heel - the back of the shoe as far as the point where it meets the vamp.

LINING: a shoe is partly, or wholly, lined or left un-lined.

CAP: toe-cap - changes in material and colour according to fashion.

STIFFENER: inside stiffening of the shoe covering the heel and giving the back of the shoe support.

TOP LINE: top edge of the upper.

THROAT: front of vamp.

HEELS: these have different names which have been given to them either for their shape, or after the person of fashion with whom they are associated.

INSOLE: between the sole and the foot there is a piece of leather, or other material, onto which the upper is lasted.

SHANK: in modern shoemaking there is always a piece of metal inserted between the sole and the insole lying along the arch of the foot. This gives foot support and shoe strenght.

WAIST: part of the last and shoe which corresponds to the instep and the arch of the foot.

INSTEP: area on top of foot.

LASTING: shaping the upper to the last.

FEATHER: part of the last and the shoe where the uppers edge meets the sole - the inside and the outside of a shoe are fairly obvious, but it is not commonly known that they are not the same size and shape. The inside of the upper is higher than the outside because the foot needs more support on the inside. Neither is the left foot necessarily the same size as the right. Only in comparatively recent history have there been any differences between the left and the right shoe, and this is most noticeable in the shape of the sole. On a normally arched shoe only the outside touches the ground leaving an indentation under the arch on the inside.

STRAIGHTS: shoe is made symmetrical for either foot - not right and left.

FOREPART: front of the shoe, sole etc.

PASS LINE: widest point at ankle of a boot.

SOCK: material inside of the shoe covering all or part of the insole.

TOE SPRING: elevation of the toe end of a shoe above the horizontal surface on which the shoe stands.

TONGUE: extension of the vamp under the latches.

TOP PIECE: bottom piece of heel.

COURT SHOES: plainest of all shoes, which bares the same name whatever its height of heel, so called because it was a plain shoe, similar to this, that was accepted dress at the Courts of Europe. In the U.S. it is known as the 'pump.'

BROGUE: a laced shoe with many sections, each punched and serrated around the edges. A classic style of footwear.

SANDAL: a sole with straps to hold it on the foot.

STILLETTO HEEL: a thin heel with a tiny top piece.

WEDGE HEEL: a heel extending under the waist of the shoe to the forepart.

APPENDIX B

THE MAKING OF A SHOE

The basis of every shoe is a 'last' - it is the negative shape of what style the shoe will be. The construction of the upper is a very delicate and highly skilled part of shoemaking. The quality, comfort and beauty of the product all depend on this operation. The cutter of the component pieces must be an expert, taking the elasticity of the leather in relation to the stretching forces exerted on it, as well as the aesthetic qualities of the material.

The various pieces of the upper are joined together according to the model of the shoe. Before being used, the leather must be washed in clean water in order to become malleable. Then the sole, counters and toe-caps are cut to fit in accordance with the vamp. The insole, with its in-built shank, is nailed to the last and held in place. The completed upper is then assembled onto the insole, easing the soft leather in order to avoid creases, and to maintain its perpendicular line - this is called the lasting of the shoe. The sole and heel are added according to the style of the shoe.

APPENDIX C

- ° Today's average American family of three purchases fourteen pairs of shoes every year.
- ° According to psychologists, shoe and foot fetishes are the most common forms of sexual fetishism in Western society.
- ° Archaeologists have dug up evidence of shoemaking as early as 10,000 B.C.
- ° You spend eighteen out of every twenty-four hours in shoes of one form or another.
- ° In your lifetime you'll walk the equivalent of three to four times around the earth, or between 70,000 and 115,000 miles.
- ° The human foot contains 26 bones, 19 muscles, and 120 ligaments, almost the same number as in the hand. The 52 bones in your two feet make up about one fourth of all the bones in your body.
- ° You can tell whether a person is left-handed or right-handed by checking the wear on his or her shoes. Since people bear down harder on the dominant side, the sole on that side will be worn down more than the other side.
- ° The human foot doesn't fully straighten out until age five or six. The foot doesn't completely finish growing until age twenty.
- ° Each day, the average person puts nearly 1,000 tons of pressure on the feet, and takes 8,000 to 10,000 steps.
- ° Soccer players take as many as 10,000 steps in a single game, their feet absorbing a cumulative total pressure of more than 1,000 tons of pressure per player. A 100-pound ballerina lands from a grand jeté with a force of nearly a quarter ton.

- ° Approximately 87 per cent of the American population, nearly 200 million people, have foot problems of some kind. Women have four times as much foot trouble as men.
- ° Approximately 63 per cent of Americans think it's normal for feet to hurt.
- ° Blisters, calluses, and corns are the most common foot problems.
- ° Your feet may swell as much as 5 per cent in an average day.
- ° 45 per cent of women and 20 per cent of men wear shoes that hurt in order to look fashionable; 22 per cent of women claim that they would continue wearing high heels even if they knew the shoes were damaging their feet.
- ° Only 13 per cent of Americans view their feet as ugly. The rest think their feet are attractive.
- ° Nearly one fourth of all Americans between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four say they go barefoot most of the time.
- ° There are approximately 7,500 practicing podiatrists in this country. They each earn more than \$42,000 per year. Together they handle more than 32 million office visits each year.
- ° People whose feet hurt spend over \$200 million each year on over-the-counter remedies for aching feet.
- ° Americans spend almost \$7 billion a year on footwear, plus another \$250 million on shoes for running.

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