



THE WORLD AT YOUR FEET

BATA
SHOE
MUSEUM

*RIZZOLI*Electa



foreword

CHRISTINE BATA SCHMIDT, CHAIR

As Sonja Bata's daughter, I grew up in a home where the prized possessions, beautifully displayed on the shelves in our front hall, were shoes. No ordinary footwear, these were exquisite platform sandals from India with delightful jingling bells; intricately carved silver stirrups and spurs from Chile that fascinated us as children, as we could imagine the gauchos galloping across the pampas wearing them; accordion boots from Czechoslovakia that almost danced the polka by themselves; as well as a collection of whimsical shoe-shaped snuffboxes.

Why shoes? As my mother would simply respond, "I married a shoe man." When she was nineteen, she and my father, Thomas Bata, embarked on an extraordinary sixty-year partnership that took them around the world, expanding the Bata Shoe Organization. She was not an anthropologist, but her design background and innate curiosity led to a fascination with the uniqueness of each culture she encountered, its history, and how this was expressed through the footwear she began to collect.

Traveling with my mother on business trips was the most exciting thing in the world. She always found time in her hectic schedule to dive into the local markets. Talking to the stall owners would inevitably lead to someone who knew someone who had a fabulously interesting pair of shoes. More often than not, we would end up in their homes while they taught us about their treasures and their lives. For one of the museum's first exhibitions, *The Spirit of Siberia*, we spent an unforgettable week in Saint Petersburg shortly after the Soviet Union collapsed. We

were visiting with professors Jill Oakes and Rick Riewe of the University of Manitoba, who had made field trips on behalf of the museum to study and collect footwear made by nomadic peoples across Siberia, from the Nenets to the Chukchi. We met with curators from the Russian Museum of Ethnography both to deepen our research knowledge and to persuade them to lend us artifacts that had never before left Russia. Undaunted by the complexities of post-Soviet bureaucracy, my mother succeeded.

Sonja Bata was an extraordinary, multifaceted person who never did anything halfway. Once she had decided to create a museum to share the stories of the collection, she hired the best team to assist with the research and conservation and set out to create the most exciting exhibitions in a jewel of a building designed by Raymond Moriyama. She reveled in superb craftsmanship and helped open our minds to an understanding and appreciation of cultural and historic differences. She rejoiced in these differences, regardless of whether they were found in a pair of minimalist sandals from ancient Egypt, exquisitely opulent eighteenth-century brocade mules, or sneakers made with cutting-edge technology. Her passion was contagious and her dedication to excellence was inspiring. This book, which features a carefully chosen selection of shoes, celebrates the outstanding collection she created and the twenty-fifth anniversary of the museum she founded.

OPPOSITE *Paduka, or toe-knob sandals, India, 1775–1825.*

This pair of red suede ankle boots was made for the Canadian department store Eaton's in the late 1920s or early 1930s. Boots that closely hugged the contours of the lower leg were popular in women's fashion from the nineteenth century well into the twentieth, but after hemlines rose in the 1920s, leg-concealing boots fell out of favor. The designer of this pair seemed determined to make the boots conform to a new aesthetic by folding the boot shafts back on themselves to increase visibility of the lower leg and by using gilded kid to frame the leg. From the gilded heels to the Art Deco-inspired bow, this pair is a feast for the eyes.

CANADIAN • LATE 1920s





*On his head he wore a tall black hat,
supernatural in its glossy shine, and his
large feet were encased in a pair of highly-
polished boots, so much too tight for him.*

—LILLIE DEVEREUX BLAKE, *FETTERED FOR LIFE,
OR, LORD AND MASTER: A STORY OF TODAY*, 1874

Modern conceptions of nineteenth-century Western fashion often focus on images of women in tight corsets and hobbling heels, but much of men's clothing of the era was very restricting as well. Fashionable men's boots were especially notable for the tight cylinders of highly polished leather that encased the calf, not only suggesting male vanity but serving as a reminder that the nineteenth century was an age of military imperialism and conquest. This pair of boots is said to have belonged to the *grand écuyer* (the person in charge of the royal stables) under Napoleon III. Despite his high station, we can imagine he certainly experienced discomfort wearing these fashionably slender boots.

FRENCH • LATE 19TH CENTURY



The uppers of this pair of shoes were most likely created by a Wyandot (Huron) woman in the first half of the nineteenth century for the Euro-Canadian market; once purchased they would have been taken to a local shoemaker to be made into Western-style women's footwear. The upper was made of a black woolen textile, but rather than embellishing it with the expected silk embroidery, the maker used exquisite moose-hair embroidery and delicate porcupine quillwork. The quillwork used to create the morning glories on the vamps is so finely done that only under magnification is it revealed that every single quill that forms the flower is actually knotted.

WYANDOT • MADE FOR THE EURO-
CANADIAN MARKET • 1840-60



BLACK

Disney released the film *Maleficent*, starring Angelina Jolie, in 2014. To promote the film, Jolie wore bespoke shoes by Christian Louboutin that were inspired by her title character, the misunderstood fairy Maleficent from Charles Perrault's famous story *The Sleeping Beauty in the Wood*, now known simply as *Sleeping Beauty*. The shiny black patent-leather and nude-mesh shoes feature sculptural heels patterned after Maleficent's dramatic horned headdress. A limited edition of this design called Malangeli was made available to the public after the film opened, with the proceeds going to SOS Children's Villages, an international non-profit supported by Jolie that provides humanitarian aid to children in need around the world. Only ninety-six pairs were made, including this one, now in the collection of the Bata Shoe Museum.

FRENCH • DESIGNED BY CHRISTIAN LOUBOUTIN •
2014 • GIFT OF CHRISTIAN LOUBOUTIN

By the end of the nineteenth century, mass production had radically democratized Western fashion, and the enfranchisement of the lower classes into the culture of privileged fashion dismayed much of the upper class. In response, the wealthy began to reject aspects of mass-produced clothing and to demand expensive dress and accessories decorated with detailing such as beading and embroidery that could only be done by hand. A select few also sought out bespoke footwear, like these boots. This pair was designed to look like stockings with feet slipped into golden shoes and reflects the infusion of erotically charged references into women's dress at the end of the nineteenth century. Although the majority of the calf-hugging shaft and elaborate gold-kid appliqué would have been hidden under the wearer's skirts, a glimpse of these boots, offered by lifting the skirt, would have tantalized onlookers.

SWISS OR GERMAN • 1890s





In a tradition that dates back centuries, a Turkish bride often bathes in a hammam, or Turkish bath, before her wedding. In earlier times, the accoutrements required for the hammam included Turkish towels, a bowl for pouring water, and a pair of tall sandals called *nalın*. These stilted bathhouse clogs were descendants of the wooden *sculponea* worn to bathhouses in ancient Rome. Under Roman rule, their use spread across the Maghreb and Near East where they became part of the female wardrobe. During the Ottoman Empire (1298–1922), wealthy brides were frequently gifted silver *nalın*, often accompanied by matching bowls. This set was given to a bride in Istanbul more than one hundred years ago.

OTTOMAN • c. 1900



In the 1930s, fashion flourished despite the dire economic impact of the Great Depression. Those who could afford to purchased complete ensembles, while consumers on tighter budgets turned to accessories such as shoes to update their wardrobes. Just as 1920s fashion exposed women's legs, 1930s fashion exposed women's feet, and sandals became a means of instantly refreshing one's look. Evening shoes often featured complex cut-outs and strapping, as seen here, while some designers went so far as to create true sandals for formalwear that all but revealed the entire foot. This elegant blue evening shoe was made by the luxury Swiss shoe brand Bally.

SWISS • DESIGNED BY BALLY • 1935-36

These monochromatic shoes designed by Roger Vivier for the house of Dior are streamlined in their simplicity, yet the small rosettes that hover above the instep by means of thin transparent plastic tabs still have a touch of romance about them. Of all the designers who worked for Dior, Vivier alone had his own name added to the Dior label for the items he designed. This exceptional honor reflected the close professional relationship between Christian Dior and Vivier, who was eminently sympathetic to Dior and his commitment to the architecture of fashion.

FRENCH • DESIGNED BY ROGER VIVIER
FOR CHRISTIAN DIOR • 1961





This pair of Lakota (Sioux) women's moccasins dates to the nineteenth century and features both fine beadwork and exceptional quillwork. The woman who made this pair used three different shades of blue beads, as well as smaller numbers of red, pink, and white beads to create a band around the uppers. She also beaded the forked tongues. The vamps, however, feature rows of red quillwork. These unbroken lines of quillwork are said to express the desire for a long life and healthy children. Porcupine quills were used as embellishment across North America for centuries; colorful European-made glass beads were introduced through trade starting in the seventeenth century.

LAKOTA • 1880–90



In northern Afghanistan, highly decorated leather socks were designed to be worn indoors without shoes, while out-of-doors they were worn with overshoes. Together, the knee-high socks and overshoes functioned like a boot and would be worn for horseback riding, as well as other activities. This pair features traditional Uzbek embroidery. Hallmarks of this work include the use of bright colored embroidery thread worked in dense geometric designs.

POSSIBLY UZBEK • LATE 19TH CENTURY



American Beth Levine was one of the most innovative shoe designers of the twentieth century. She started out in journalism and advertising before her “perfect” size-four-and-a-half feet landed her a job as a shoe model. Levine spent her nights dreaming about making shoes, and her dream came true when she and her husband, Herbert Levine, established their own company in the 1940s. Together they went on to win many of fashion’s most prestigious accolades, including the 1967 and 1973 Coty Awards. Her wit found expression in almost everything she created, including this playful pair inspired by race cars, complete with windshields, tires, and racing numbers.

AMERICAN • DESIGNED BY
BETH LEVINE • 1965–68

This pair of bright sunny yellow *balgha*, also called *babouche*, comes from Morocco. *Balgha* are a type of flat-soled footwear that typically have the back quarters pressed down flat against the insole. They are commonly worn throughout North Africa, in part as a reflection of Muslim faith. Their distinctive design is thought to reflect the wearer's piety, as they can easily be slipped off for *salat*, the five daily prayers offered by the devout. *Balgha* can be unadorned or they can be heavily embellished, as is this pair, which features elaborate leather and silk embroidery. The back quarters of these shoes have been stitched in place, adding another design element.

MOROCCAN • 1980s





French shoe designer Pierre Hardy studied fine art before turning to footwear. His love of art runs through his collections, and these limited edition Poworama sneakers for men were clearly inspired by the work of Roy Lichtenstein. Hardy has designed footwear for many of the French couture houses, including Hermès and Balenciaga. In 1999 he launched his eponymous line of footwear for women and he expanded into men's shoes in 2002. Over the years, his interest in designing sneakers has continued to grow.

FRENCH • DESIGNED BY PIERRE HARDY • 2011

Tokio Kumagai was a Paris-based Japanese designer who rose to fame in the 1980s for footwear that merged fashion and art. Kumagai drew inspiration from a wide range of sources, including nature and the works of Salvador Dalí and Piet Mondrian. He also infused his sense of humor into his creations. This pair features an upper of deep purple suede designed to resemble a bunch of grapes. In the postmodern second half of the twentieth century, as the importance of footwear in the construction of personal identity grew in importance, humor and wit were increasingly embraced in shoe design. Despite the fact that Kumagai died in 1987 at age thirty-nine, his impact on shoe design was far reaching.

FRENCH • DESIGNED BY TOKIO KUMAGAI • 1980s





In parts of northern India, beautifully embroidered shoes called *khussa* are worn for special occasions such as weddings. Elaborate gold embroidery and attenuated upturned toes reflect the impact of the Mughal court on Indian dress, and *khussa* are considered appropriate footwear for grooms. These shoes become the object of attention when grooms remove them before the start of wedding ceremonies and the sisters of brides playfully “steal” the shoes and only return them once their ransom demands are met. This pair features heavily embellished uppers as well as gold embroidery on the purple velveteen insoles. They were acquired by Sonja Bata on her first trip to India in 1950.

INDIAN • 1950



The high heel was banished from women's fashion in the West during the first half of the nineteenth century in part due to its association with aristocratic excess and allegations of promiscuity among upper-class women. It was reintroduced in the mid-1850s as part of a wave of nostalgia for eighteenth-century dress—for example, the term "Louis heel" was coined at this time in honor of King Louis XV. During this fashion revival, the specter of the "licentious woman" was also resuscitated. In work by artists from Édouard Manet to Émile Zola, courtesans and other women of questionable virtue captured the imagination of popular culture. This pair of 1880s boudoir slippers, intended to be worn in an intimate setting, links these two concepts and features many hallmarks of eighteenth-century mules with heels. It is interesting to note that the resurrection of hobbling heels coincided with the development of the women's rights movement and women's desire to make greater strides toward equality.



Designer Miuccia Prada, founder of Prada, turned to 1950s classic car design as inspiration for her Spring/Summer 2012 shoe collection. The tailfins and taillights were translated into patent leather uppers and shiny chrome heels, and the resulting design became so popular that Prada has rereleased it a number of times. This slick sandal was part of the original collection and was gifted to the museum along with two other pairs in 2012.

ITALIAN • DESIGNED BY PRADA •
2012 • GIFT OF PRADA

Fur inlay is a technique used by Inuit seamstresses to create highly intricate designs on their clothing and footwear. Historic patterns tend to be geometric, while more contemporary designs are highly curvilinear. A particular challenge when creating this type of decoration is matching the nap of the different furs so that all the hairs lie in the same direction. Leah Okadluk, an Iglulingmiut Inuit seamstress, made these sealskin kamiks decorated with inlaid designs of polar bears for a 1987 competition held by the Bata Shoe Museum Foundation. Her prize winning boots became treasures of the collection.

IGLULINGMIUT INUIT • CREATED BY
LEAH OKADLUK • 1987





Heels in European women's footwear soared at the end of the seventeenth century in reaction to shifting beauty ideals, which promoted the concept that dainty feet were the most feminine. The classic story *Cinderella*, written by French author Charles Perrault in 1697, reflected this new ideal. When small dainty feet began to be seen as desirable, high heels were pressed into service as a means of achieving the look of small feet by hiding most of a woman's foot up under the hem of her skirt, leaving only the tips of the toes visible. The placement of the heel also helped the ruse. When the heel was positioned under the instep rather than at the back of the foot, the footprint appeared artificially small. This shoe of embroidered white kid demonstrates all these features and would have enabled the wearer to achieve the look of a fashionably diminutive foot.

ITALIAN • 1690s