

The Bata Shoe Museum



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CELEBRATED SHOE DESIGNERS LEND A HAND IN NEW EXHIBITION, *ICONS OF ELEGANCE*

TORONTO, ON, September 6, 2005 – **The Bata Shoe Museum welcomes the participation of several of the world’s most innovative, prominent and internationally recognized shoe designers in the new exhibition, *Icons of Elegance: The Most Influential Shoe Designers of the 20th Century* which opens to the public on September 23, 2005.**

As part of the Museum’s 10th anniversary celebrations, the exhibition marks the first time in North America that shoes with such significance in the history of design and Western culture have been brought together. Some of the celebrated designers include François Pinet, André Perugia, Salvatore Ferragamo, Roger Vivier, Beth Levine, Charles Jourdan, Andrea Pfister, Jimmy Choo, Manolo Blahnik, and Christian Louboutin.

“Some of the most outstanding shoes in Western culture have been created by the shoe designers of the 20th century,” says Mrs. Sonja Bata, Founder of the Museum. “To celebrate our 10th Anniversary we assembled an exhibit of the most dazzling examples of women’s shoes from the last century. Originally we planned to select only ten designers, but we soon realized that the 20th century was so rich in fashion changes and innovation that it was impossible to make such a narrow selection.”

Icons of Elegance features over 100 artifacts selected from both the Bata Shoe Museum’s collection and international collections. These include New York City’s Metropolitan Museum of Art, Fashion Institute of Technology, the Charles Jourdan collection and the Musée de la Chaussure, both in Romans, France. Due to the delicate condition of certain artifacts, they will be changed every three months, thus providing an enhanced experience for repeat visitors.

One of many exciting components to the exhibition is that some of the distinguished designers including Christian Louboutin, Manolo Blahnik, and Andrea Pfister personally handpicked their shoes to be displayed in the exhibition. “Of the myriad shoemakers creating footwear at any given time,” says Museum Curator, Elizabeth Semmelhach, “only a few shoe designers capture the imagination. To have such celebrated designers put their own touches to their display is such a thrill for the Museum and for the visitors who will walk through our doors.”

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The Bata Shoe Museum is thrilled to welcome master shoe designers Christian Louboutin and Beth Levine to the Museum to celebrate the exhibition's opening at a special 10th Anniversary gala event on September 22, 2005. As two of the world's most prominent and innovative shoe designers, Louboutin and Levine's curiosity and imagination translated into fresh design and innovation.

Louboutin's trademark red soles began to capture international attention in the late 1990s. His fascination for shoes began at the age of 13 when he noticed a sign outside a Paris museum depicting a high-heeled shoe with a slash through it warning women to not harm the wood floors with their stilettos. At the age of 18, he pursued his interest in shoemaking by apprenticing with Charles Jourdan and then went on to freelance for Chanel, Maud Frizon and Yves St. Laurent. A master at creating footwear that strikes a balance between amusement and elegance, Louboutin opened his first boutique in Paris and two years later the Metropolitan Museum of Art purchased a pair of his *Love Shoes* for their permanent collection.

As one of only a handful of 20th century shoe designers who were women, Levine never received formal training but continually impacted fashion with such ingenious designs like the stretch boot. Having begun her career in journalism and advertising, Levine dreamed of designing and making shoes. Her edgy designs included the 'topless' shoe that is merely a sole held onto the wearer's foot with pads of adhesive, panty-boots which are shoe soles sewn into the foot area of wildly patterned pantyhose, and the white boots worn by Nancy Sinatra for her hit single, "These Boots were Made for Walking."

To compliment the work of *3rd UNCLE design inc*, the Museum is excited to announce that it has also retained award-winning *Concrete Design Communications* as the graphic design firm of choice for the exhibition, as well as the accompanying catalogue. Concrete Design Communications has achieved international status for its creative vision and style for a variety of clients in the public and private sector.

This exhibition has been financially assisted by the Ontario Cultural Attractions Fund, a program of the Government of Ontario through the Ministry of Culture, administered by the Ontario Cultural Attractions Fund Corporation.



Sponsors of *Icons of Elegance* include FLARE, Holt Renfrew, The Fashion Group International® Toronto, Holman Exhibits and City of Toronto Economic Development.

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About the Bata Shoe Museum

The Bata Shoe Museum is a centre of knowledge about the role of footwear in the social and cultural life of humanity. The Museum's growing international collection of over 12,000 objects touches on 4,500 years of history. A varied programme of events and exhibitions lets visitors discover the stories behind footwear from many lands and cultures.

Currently on exhibit: *Appeasing the Spirits: Alaskan Coastal Cultures*; *Paths Across the Plains: Traditional Footwear from the Great Plains*; *Beads, Buckles and Bows: Four Hundred Years of Embellished Footwear*; and *All About Shoes: Footwear Through the Ages*. Coming in September 2005: *Icons of Elegance: Influential Shoe Designers of the 20th Century*.

The Bata Shoe Museum is located in downtown Toronto at 327 Bloor Street West, at the southwest corner of Bloor and St. George Streets. For more information about the Museum, please visit www.batashoemuseum.ca.

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