

# The Bata Shoe Museum



## THE BATA SHOE MUSEUM'S PERMANENT COLLECTION

*The Museum's unique collection of over 12,500 artifacts ranges from the earliest civilizations on earth to the catwalks of today's leading designers.*

The mission of the Bata Shoe Museum is to contribute to the knowledge and understanding of the role of footwear in the social and cultural life of humanity. Through acquiring, conserving, researching, communicating and exhibiting material evidence related to the history of footwear and shoemaking, the Museum illustrates the living habits, the culture and the customs of people. Its international collection of over 12,500 artifacts spans 4,500 years of history.

The Bata Shoe Museum is home to the world's largest, most comprehensive collection of shoes and footwear-related objects. Primarily funded by the Bata Shoe Museum Foundation, the mandate is to operate an internationally recognized centre for footwear research which maintains and displays the Bata Shoe Museum's collection, sponsors field research, publishes findings and promotes education.

At present, the permanent collection contains artifacts from virtually every culture in the world. Where else could you find French chestnut crushing boots under the same roof as delicately embroidered Chinese silk shoes, bear fur shoes for Japanese samurai and footwear made from human hair?

A rare and well-preserved velvet-covered platform mule from 16th-century Venice is one of the treasures of the comprehensive collection of historic and contemporary fashion footwear, ranging from the Italian Renaissance to the catwalks of today's designers. The Venetian velvet *chopine*, so tall that the wearer could not walk unaided, provides an interesting complement to other outrageous styles endured by many over the centuries. In other words, Salvatore Ferragamo and Vivienne Westwood weren't the first designers to think of platforms. Nor, if history teaches us anything, will they be the last.

One of the most important aspects of the Bata Shoe Museum's holdings is an extensive collection of Native American and circumpolar footwear. This collection and the field trips sponsored to study indigenous shoemaking have greatly contributed to the scholarship of shoemaking.

Among the collection's most popular features is an extensive assortment of celebrity footwear, including Queen Victoria's ballroom slippers, Robert Redford's cowboy boots, Elton John's monogrammed silver platform boots, Terry Fox's running shoe, Elvis Presley's blue patent loafers, Karen Kain's ballet shoes and John Lennon's Beatle boot.

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The museum's archaeological collection includes footwear from some of the earliest civilizations on earth: ancient Egyptian sarcophagi with painted sandal designs, leg-shaped perfume vials made by an ancient Greek potter, and Roman bronze lamps representing sandal-clad feet. The collection also includes intriguing examples of Medieval footwear.

But the collection doesn't stop at shoes. Enhancing the actual footwear collection is a companion collection of shoe-shaped ornamental artifacts such as Majolica hand warmers and inlaid fruitwood snuffboxes, as well as all sorts of graphic materials, from 14th century woodcut prints through 19th century caricature lithographs, to original paintings and sculptures, all illustrating aspects of the history of footwear.