

## Fashion Victims:

### The Pleasures and Perils of Dress in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century

Open until April 2018

**French, late 19th century.** Highly polished footwear was the obligation of the well-dressed man in the 19th century and the cities of Europe and North America were littered with ragged shoeshine boys who offered a shine for a pittance. This pair of boots is said to have belonged to the Grand Écuyer of Napoleon III in charge of the royal stables who certainly didn't shine his own boots.

Collection of the Bata Shoe Museum

**Photo credit: Image © 2013 Bata Shoe Museum, Toronto, Canada (photo: Ron Wood)**



**French, late 1870s – early 1880s.** François Pinet manufactured some of the most exquisite footwear worn by the most elegant during the second half of the 19th century. Much of his footwear was factory-made but he also employed seven hundred embroiderers who labored in less than comfortable conditions creating botanically accurate floral embroidery.

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**French, 1880 – 1885.** The high heel was reintroduced into Western fashion in the late 1850s as part of the nostalgia for the 18th century dress that captured fashionable imaginations of the period. Along with this interest in 18th century came the specter of the licentious woman, this pair of boudoir slippers which features many hallmarks of 18th century mules, would have been perfect for this highly charged image of femininity.

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**Austrian, c. 1850s.** Empress Elisabeth of Austria was considered by many to be the most beautiful woman in the world in the 19th century. Her long hair and slim figure attracted the attention of many setting the standard for constricted beauty and became an obsession for her. This pair of almost impossibly narrow Adelaides and gloves were given as a gift to Colonel Louis de Schweiger one of her many admirers.

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**English, c. 1860s.** In the middle of the 19th century just as shoemaking was being transformed by industrialization from craftwork to factory production a craze for shoemaking gripped genteel women. By the droves, women of privilege began to make elaborate needlework uppers that were made into slippers for their husbands. These labours of love were time-consuming to make but many of the extant examples so little evidence of wear.

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**English, early 1860s.** In 1856 when William Henry Perkins accidentally invented mauve, the first synthetic dye, a new age of colour in fashion was born. Soon vibrant and often gaudy synthetic colours were the toast of fashion but many of these hues also came with risk to wearer. Arsenic and picric acid to name a few were just some of the toxic chemicals used in create coloured clothing. This pair of mauve boots shows the brilliance of the new synthetic colour.

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**French, 1875.** This boot was made by the Parisian shoe manufacturer L.P. Perchellet and was found in an estate in Santiago, Chile, suggesting the reach of mass-produced French footwear. The original shoe box are edged with arsenical tape.

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**French, late 1840s.** The fashion for straights was advantageous to shoemakers. Without the requirement to make shoes with lefts and rights, shoemakers only needed a single last per shoe size.

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**European, c.1840s.** The dark green satin used to make these “Adelaide” boots tested positive for arsenic-based dye. Their deep colour was just one of the many shades of green that could be produced using arsenic.

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**Swedish or German, c. 1890s.** This pair of handmade, bespoke button boots reflects the infusion of erotically charged references in women's dress that emerged at the end of the 19th century. These boots were designed to look like a stockings leg in a shoe. Although the majority of the calf-hugging shaft and elaborate gold kid appliqué would have been hidden under their wearer's skirt, any glimpse would have tantalized the onlooker.

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**French, c. 1855–1865.** With the aid of new aniline dyes, Victorian entrepreneurs invented “ancient” clan tartans in brilliant new hues that became the height of fashion for dress and accessories. Despite the tartan's Scottish associations this pair appears to have been made in France.

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**Swiss, c. 1885–1925.** The desire for beaver fur hats in European men's fashions dates back centuries and spurred the development of the 17th century North American fur trade. However, it was not until the 1730s that mercury began to be used in the making of beaver top hats. This hat, which dates to the end of the 19th century, still contains small amounts of mercury.

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