



News Release

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Shoes: Anatomy, Identity, Magic

September 1–December 31, 2022

Free and open to the public

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The Museum at FIT presents ***Shoes: Anatomy, Identity, Magic***, an innovative exhibition that explores our physical, social, and psychological relationship with footwear. Curated by Dr. Valerie Steele, MFIT director and chief curator, and Colleen Hill, curator of costume and accessories, the exhibition features more than 300 of the 5,000 pairs of shoes, boots, sandals, and sneakers in the museum’s permanent collection, aka “the closet.”



Manolo Blahnik, evening shoes, 2017. Gift of Manolo Blahnik.

“The ‘embodied turn’ in fashion studies has brought renewed attention to the intimate relationship between body, dress, and sense of self,” explains Steele. “We are inviting visitors to ask themselves, *Shoe are you?* Hence our three, somewhat mysterious-sounding themes of anatomy, identity, and magic.”

The theme of **anatomy** emphasizes how few shoes are shaped like feet. We stand and move differently when we wear, say, sneakers rather than stilettos. Peep-toe shoes and thigh-high boots also draw attention to different parts of our anatomy.



Pierre Cardin, man's shoes, 1986. Gift of Richard Martin.

The theme of **identity** emphasizes how different shoe styles and brands are thought to express important information about our age, gender, social status, sexuality, and taste. Gucci sneakers send one message about the wearer, Dr. Martens boots another. Shoes are arranged in pairs for visitors to compare and contrast.



*Dr. Martens, boots, 2000.
Gift of the School of Graduate Studies at the Fashion Institute of Technology.*

The theme of **magic** emphasizes how we may unconsciously believe that the right pair of shoes will change our lives. Cinderella's glass slippers captured the attention of a prince. Because professional athletes often wear sneakers, we may decide to buy a pair of Nike Air Jordans, hoping, like Lil' Bow Wow in the film *Like Mike*, that they will magically enhance our physical prowess.



Tom Ford, evening sandals, spring 2012. Gift of Tom Ford International.

The exhibition begins with baby shoes to illustrate how shoes accompany us through the journey of life. This is followed in the introductory gallery by a chronology of shoes and a viewing booth that features clips from films and television shows that explore the symbolism of shoes in popular culture. The themes of anatomy, identity, and magic are then explored in the Main Gallery, culminating in the facsimile of a shoe shop displaying high-fashion shoes, many of which are red. “Red shoes can represent wealth, status, danger, and sex appeal, depending on the context,” explains Hill. Shoes are often “objects of desire,” Steele says, and the shoe shop symbolizes the “power and allure of shoes.”

The exhibition will be accompanied by a lavishly illustrated book, *Shoes: The Collection of The Museum at FIT*, edited by Valerie Steele and Colleen Hill, with a preface by Daphne Guinness, published by Taschen. The luxury edition will be available in September 2022.

About The Museum at FIT (MFIT)

The Museum at FIT, which received its second accreditation by the American Alliance of Museums in March 2022, is the only museum in New York City dedicated solely to the art of fashion. Best known for its innovative and award-winning exhibitions, the museum has a collection of more than 50,000 garments and accessories dating from the 18th century to the present. Like other fashion museums, such as the Musée de la Mode, the Mode Museum, and the Museo de la Moda, The Museum at FIT collects, conserves, documents, exhibits, and interprets fashion. The museum’s mission is to advance knowledge of fashion through exhibitions, publications, and public programs. Visit fitnyc.edu/museum.

About the Fashion Institute of Technology

The museum is part of the Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT), a State

University of New York (SUNY) college of art, design, business, and technology that has been at the crossroads of commerce and creativity for 75 years. With programs that blend hands-on practice, a strong grounding in theory, and a broad-based liberal arts foundation, FIT offers career education in nearly 50 areas, and grants associate's, bachelor's, and master's degrees. FIT provides students with a complete college experience at an affordable cost, a vibrant campus life in New York City, and industry-relevant preparation for rewarding careers. Visit fitnyc.edu.

About the Couture Council

The Couture Council is a philanthropic membership group that helps support the exhibitions and programs of The Museum at FIT. The Couture Council Award for Artistry of Fashion is given to a selected designer at a benefit luncheon held every September. For information on the Couture Council, call (212) 217-4532 or email couturecouncil@fitnyc.edu.

couture council

The museum is open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays from noon to 8 pm, and Saturdays and Sundays from 10 am to 5 pm. Admission is free. It is mandatory that all visitors, regardless of their vaccination status, wear a face mask while in the museum. All visitors are requested to [review the latest safety guidelines and protocols](#).

For more information and the latest MFIT updates, [visit the museum website at fitnyc.edu/museum](https://fitnyc.edu/museum); [register for the MFIT newsletter](#); and follow us on [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#), and [Facebook](#).