

Manolo blahnik



Manolo Blahnik has been designing shoes since 1971 and has received many prestigious awards, including three special awards from the Council of Fashion Designers of America, and the British Council's 'Accessory Designer of the Year' in 1990 and 1999. Despite having had no formal training, he's done it all: backless, heel-less, wedges, stilettos, and kittens, even platforms. Now he is one of the very few brand names that have become a synonym for the product — Hoover, Kleenex, Band-Aid, Post-it and ... Manolo. He studied literature and architecture at the University of Geneva, and art at L'Ecole des Beaux-Arts and L'Ecole du Louvre in Paris.

Originally, he wanted to be a set designer and took a portfolio of drawings to New York in 1971 in the hope of finding work there. Paloma Picasso, a friend from Paris, arranged for him to meet Diana Vreeland, the editor of US Vogue. When she looked at his drawings, Vreeland exclaimed: "How amusing. Amusing. You can do accessories very well. Why don't you do that? Go make shoes. Your shoes in these drawings are so amusing." By the late 1990s when the fashion writer and historian Colin McDowell observed Blahnik at work, he had been in command of his craft for years. The result is the book titled simply "Manolo Blahnik".

The process of creating a Manolo Blahnik shoe begins with Manolo sketching it at home in Bath, his London office or one of his northern Italian factories with a Tombo Japanese brush pen in three minutes of "firm, assured hand movements followed by precise, sharp little jabs as the details are fitted in". "I've been studying the art of the shoe... for over twenty years", says Blahnik. "I know every process. I know how to cut and cut away here (the side of the shoe) and still make it so that it stays on the foot. And the secret

of toe cleavage, a very important part of the sexuality of the shoe. You must only show the first two cracks.

And the heel. Even if it's twelve centimeters high it still has to feel secure – and that's a question of balance. " Blahnik drawings exhibit the design skill and craftsmanship that footwear design demands. His design process begins with color-rich sketches that are so finely executed they are as sought-after as the shoes themselves. Some reflect nature, mostly recurring botanical themes while others are more dramatic and others still verging on the fetishistic. Some are so fragile-looking it's impossible to imagine them withstanding the challenge of being worn; these shoes are the kind that insist you take taxis.

Consider Carrie's unforgettable one liner in Sex and the City, when she was robbed in the street: " Please sir. You can take my Fendi baguette, you can take my ring and my watch, but don't take my Manolos Blahniks," she pleaded. Pathos aside, the scene is testament to the gravitas attributed to Mr. Blahnik's shoes. ' Exquisite design sketches ... Blahnik's richly colored drawings are often exuberantly exaggerated – hyper-arched with impossibly thin heels – which add to the sense of magic that imbues his designs ... Presented here on a grand scale ...'? – Metro

In an interview with aRude magazine, in November last year, Blahnik talks about the technical details involved in his creative process: In relation to your shoe-drawings, are your lines more Ingres, Matisse, Picasso or Aubrey Beardsley? ? Oh, I would love to even come close to one of those geniuses. How can I compare myself to them? Sometimes I can spontaneously get immersed in Ingres and the divine purity of his brushstrokes. Matisse and

Picasso always visit my mind as well. What medium do you typically draw in and why? ? I usually draw in China ink. I love the consistence and feel of the liquid.

What other mediums did you experiment drawing with before arriving at your present favorite? ? I experimented with acrylic and oil paints in the 70s. Later I tried watercolors until I arrived at the ink. I have always also used the Staedtler pencils to sketch. I still use them. 3H Staedtler is my favorite. Do you prefer, in your drawing, sharp or broad lines, or a combination of both and what kind of paper do you use? ? The lines depend on the kind of paper I use. I usually use Cartridge paper. When do you employ colors and what essential role do they play in the overall harmony of your drawings? Colors play a huge role in my design process. By nature I am always inspired by very bright Mediterranean colors. I grew up with nature and flowers and beautiful landscapes, so that is always conveyed through my shoes. In 2003, Manolo Blahnik Drawings, co-authored by Anna Wintour was published. Contained within it, the book lays out his designs as brightly colored whimsies, sketches that deftly convey the essences of his creations. As designs, the shoes are salacious cartoons of themselves, curvy and heeled, bejeweled and shimmery. Celeb quotes, interspersed throughout, heighten the spiraling sense of posturing and play.

Madonna says, they are as good as sex... and they last longer. His sketches are executed with exuberance and deftness that they have become as sought after as the shoes themselves. Inimitable in style, the drawings vividly convey Blahnik's unique vision. References: [www. manoloblahnik. com](http://www.manoloblahnik.com) Wintour, A. & Roberts, M. (2003). Manolo Blahnik Drawings. New York:

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