



**18 MONTHS, 3
PUBLICATIONS, 1 SMALL
STAFF**

**ARE WE CRAZY TO PUBLISH IN
THIS DIGITAL AGE?**



Elizabeth Semmelhack

A close-up, rear view of a bright red, patent leather high-heeled shoe. The shoe is positioned centrally, showing its pointed toe and the back of the heel. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the glossy texture of the leather and the sharp point of the toe. The background is dark, making the red shoe stand out.

heightsoffashion

A History of the Elevated Shoe

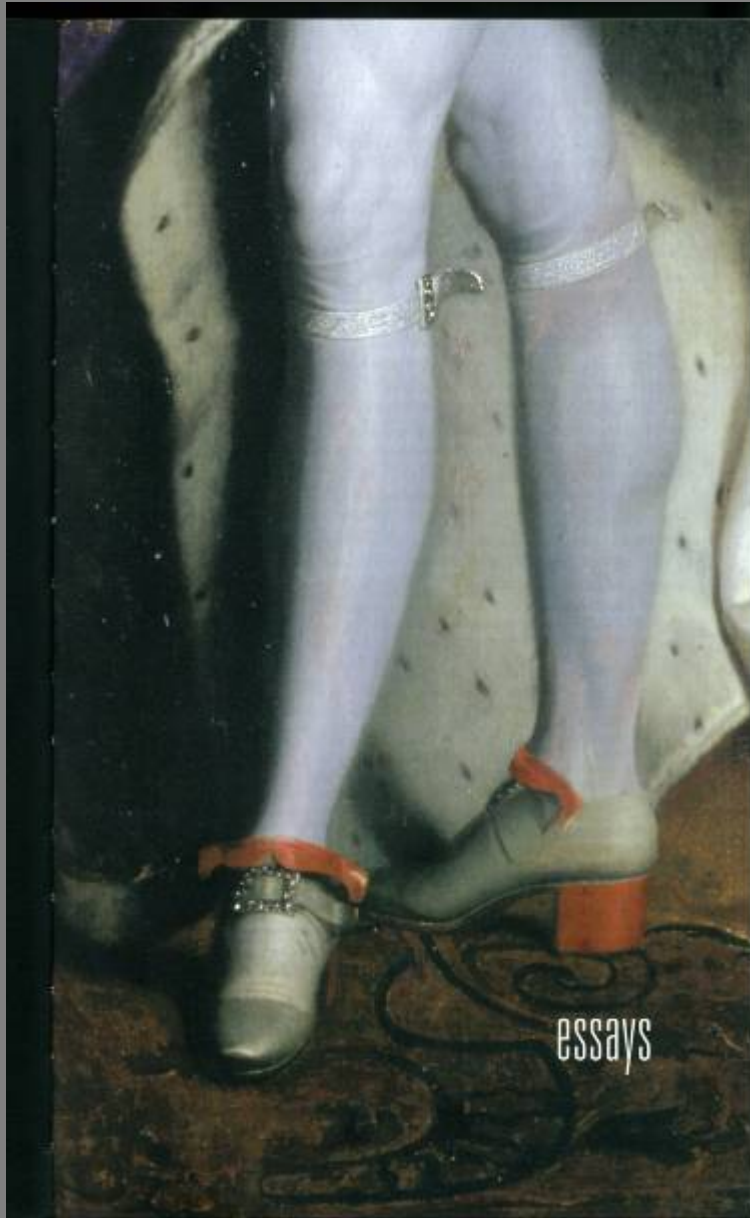




Figure 1 The *terracotta* ancient Greek female figurine from near Athens, represents a richly dressed matron whose femininity and exuberance are heightened by her loose, wavy hair, silk garment, and high platform sandals. In her right hand, she holds a pomegranate, a symbol of fertility. *Redes Kato, Attic, c. 570–560 B.C.E.* Auction photograph, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz/Art Resources, NY



Figure 2 Small terracotta figurines of Aphrodite wearing high platform footwear were made in great quantity in the Eastern Greek area of Myrina. This 5th century B.C.E. example depicts the goddess wearing an ornate strophos on her head and exceptionally high platforms on her feet. The cloth created between the big toe and the rest of the foot was a common design element and creates a heel-like appearance, although platforms appeared to be

designed to increase the woman's height, stanzas such as the were typically depicted sitting, suggesting that the elevating footwear had multiple functions. Figure of seated Aphrodite with strophos. *Hellenistic Period, 1st century B.C.E.* Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. 37.266 Photograph © 2008 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

ries in 490 and 480 B.C.E.³ The formation of Athenian democracy around this time and its enfranchisement of privileged adult males brought to the fore long simmering tensions over women's role in society.⁴ For the citizens of Athens, women's desire to participate in public life could be disregarded because of their supposed lack of self control.⁵ Excessive personal adornment was frequently offered as evidence of this deficiency in women and came to be a failing also associated with Persians—the other threat to Greek men. Greek men were even warned, mostly through farce, that extremes in dress had the power to erode Greek masculinity. The historian Herodotus wrote in 440 B.C.E. of the satiric advice given to the Persian ruler Cyrus that he could make his Lydian captives “woman instead of men” by forcing them to wear *ankomai*.⁶

Greece was not the only place in the ancient world that adopted elevating footwear. Etruscan women wore a type of platform sandal that featured hinged soles and golden laces (fig. 3).⁷ Roman women wore stilted wooden footwear in the public baths to protect their feet from the heated floors and in the winter, they put on cork-soled shoes to insulate their feet from the cold.⁸ A Roman wall painting from the Villa of the Mysteries at Pompeii depicts Dionysus—a “foreign” god long associated with the “excesses” of the East—laughing in the arms of a woman who wears a high multilayered platform shoe.⁹ Perhaps the platform retained its “oriental” connections into Roman times.¹⁰

After the fall of Rome, elevating footwear appears to have vanished from Western dress, although the Byzantines may have retained a version of the stilted shoe for use in the bathhouse. The “Orient,” however, continued to be represented in European art through fanciful dress and, in a notable instance, elevating footwear. In the Romanesque church Sainte-Madeleine at Vézelay a relief on the archivolte of the central tympanum portrays three Assyrians wearing raised footwear.¹¹ Given the stereotyped attributes used to illustrate the apostles preaching to “all nations,” the footwear of the Assyrians was probably chosen because of its established associations with the “Orient” in the European imagination. When Europeans readopted elevating footwear—perhaps as early as the twelfth

Figure 3 A style of elevating footwear popular with Etruscan women was the platform sandal called the *sandolus*. Examples have been discovered in Etruscan tombs, and they frequently appear in manuscript. This one, from the necropolis of the *Urn Tomb at Cerveteri*, has thick wooden platforms with hinged soles to give the wearer greater mobility. Etruscan, late 6th century B.C.E. Museo Nazionale di Villa Giulia, Rome, Italy/Art Resources, NY



the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the Spanish word for "cork," *corko*, can be linked to the Arabic term, *qunq*, meaning high platform-soled shoe.²⁸ In addition, the English word *chopine* is derived from *chapin*, the Spanish word for elevating shoe. Whatever its inspiration, as the stilted clog and the poulaine were falling from favour, the chopine was becoming a provocative and gendered item in the wardrobe of those women who could afford to dress ostentatiously.

Beginning in the fifteenth century, sermons and sumptuary laws began to take aim at the chopine.²⁹ The Venetian Major Council of 1433 forbade chopines greater than nine centimetres (three and a half inches) in height and declared that women who broke the law be subject to fines.³⁰ Chopines were condemned as an insult to God and injurious to their wearers' souls as well as their bodies. Yet the sermons, laws, and fines were in vain; chopines continued to rise.³¹ Some texts describe chopines as high as twenty-eight centimetres (eleven inches) but this is modest when compared to the fifty-one centimetres (twenty inches) of the tallest surviving pair. However, the public censure of chopines was not simply about excess. High chopines had an air of impropriety about them because they were the favoured footwear of many Venetian prostitutes, a point illustrated by numerous images from the period (Fig. 8). Despite the taint of vice—or perhaps because of it—many respectable women in Venice continued to wear this erotically charged fashion, albeit in more modest versions (Figs. 10 and 11).³²

The Well-Heeled

Although the chopine lingered as an important form of female footwear well into the seventeenth century, it was the heel, introduced at the end of the sixteenth century, that would dramatically alter the course of Western footwear.³³ The invention of the heel is frequently explained simply as a modification of the chopine, but gender bias and details of the early heel's design suggest another story. The enthusiastic adoption of the heel by upper-class men argues against regarding it as a variant of the highly gendered chopine. Men typically spurn dress identified as female. Instead, the origin of the heel lies in the Near East where heeled footwear had been worn for centuries as part of male equestrian and military attire.

During the sixteenth century, Europeans became increasingly interested in the customs and clothing of the "Orient." This curiosity was fed by numerous books, including Peter Coecke van Aelst's *Moeses et feshans des Turks* (*Customs and Fashions of the Turks*), published in 1563, and Nicolas Nicolay's *Navigations et Pérégrinations orientales, avec les figures et les habillemens au naturel, tant des hommes que des femmes* (*Navigations and Pilgrimages in the Orient with Natural Figures and Customs, Both of Men and Women*), printed in Lyons in 1567/68 (see Fig. 5). Agents on diplomatic and trade missions were another key source for observations on Near Eastern dress, frequently returning with items of clothing.³⁴ Europeans clearly had ready access to information about the



Figure 8 In this 16th century print, a public prostitute from Venice is shown ostentatiously pulling her skirt to reveal a pair of chopines and her *scarpone* (a form of undergarment), another Ottoman-inspired garment. From Cesare Vecellio, *Historiarum et modernarum exoticarum gentium et Artium Costas* from Venice (Pages of the World), 1548.

Figure 10 Although her shoes are hidden from close scrutiny here, the Genoese noblewoman in this portrait by Anthony van Dyck is most likely posing in a pair of moderately high chopines. One may would help explain the unusually elongated proportions of her lower body, which are further emphasized by the vertical embellishment decorating the skirt. Portrait of a Genoese Noblewoman, Sir Anthony van Dyck, 1622–1623. © The Frick Collection, New York.

Figure 11 The noblewoman in van Dyck's portrait is probably wearing a pair of chopines similar to those, which date from later in the 16th century. By the middle of the 17th century, the chopine had fallen from fashion. Venetian, late 16th century. Collection of the Bata Shoe Museum, P91.80.





The Well-Heeled

7

LEFT

The footwear of upper-class men and women shared many features in the 17th century; however, women's shoes tended to have tapered toes and narrower heels. This shoe was probably worn by a nobleman at mid-century France, mid-17th century. ROM 10.1

8

TOP RIGHT
In the 17th century, privileged children wore shoes with high heels. This elaborately decorated, distinctive shoe may have been made for a boy since the heel is quite sturdy. The red paint on the heel signified the wearer's aristocratic status. Possibly French, mid-17th century. ROM 10.1

9

BOTTOM RIGHT

This high-heeled shoe may have been made in the 19th century as an example of "pique work" done by a shoemaker to demonstrate his skill. It is based on typical upper-class men's footwear, fashionable at the end of the 17th century. The heels worn by men at that time were often quite high, in contrast to the conservative dress and low-heeled footwear they would adopt later in the 18th century. English, 19th century. ROM 10.1





and Bernard Stuart around 1528. The hats of Bernard Stuart, shown to the right, seem to have been adapted into flat-topped hats or overcoats.
Lord John Stuart and His Brother Bernard Stuart, Sir Anthony van Dyck, c. 1628. By kind permission of the Trustees of the National Gallery, London. © The National Gallery 2008.

is shown over the skirt with a new pair of slip-soled shoes; the low chopines that she wore into the 1600s can be seen beneath her skirt. At a glance, we can witness the shift from chopines to high-heeled women's dress. The Shoemaker, plate 4 from *The Trades*, Abraham Bosse, 1632-35. Collection of the Beta Shoe Museum, F78.508.

Figure 10a. Detail of slip-soled shoes from Figure 10.





Figure 21 In *Hyacinthe Rigaud's* painting of Louis XIV, the King is depicted in the diversity of his wardrobe of France. Everything speaks to his authority and status, including his white ermine-trimmed cape and his ornate, gold-embroidered robe. A detail is provided for the French aristocracy, Louis XIV, King of France, Hyacinthe Rigaud, 1701, Musée de la Ville de Paris, *Royal des Modes* (National Art Museum), 1932.

Figure 22 These shoes have all the hallmarks of 17th-century fashion: a slight heel covered in red leather, an upper of ornate red silk, and a glittering buckle. The placement of the heel close to the front of the foot reflects the difficulty of walking in them, increasing the demand for height. Before the creation of the reinforced shank, these shoes did not have far from the middle of the shoe could cause the uncomfortable steps to collapse. *Detail*, c. 1700. Collected in the *State Shoe Museum*, 1932, 198.

Figure 23 Strong distinctions between men's and women's footwear had emerged for the mid-17th century. Distinctions between men's and women's footwear were made and improved when their construction and details. The wide square toe enhanced the look of balanced strength. When this style faded in the 18th century, the term "square-toed" became slang for awkward men. *English*, 1710-1720. Collected in the *State Shoe Museum*, 1932.



Figure 24 Gilt the sharp point of the shoe can cause walking and from under the foot's arch. In this engraving, the narrow toe suggested a small, refined and wealthy woman. The term for the shoe is *à la mode*, popular in the second half of the 17th century. *The Modes, à la Mode*, French, second half of the 17th century. © Bibliothèque des Arts et Métiers, Paris; Archives Charmes/The Bridgeman Art Library from the *State Shoe Museum*, 1932, 198.



of women's legs were to increasingly reveal the details of dress. At closer look, they indeed appear to have been designed to conceal, yet manage to seem to expose the leg. Like the *Alceste* sketches with *Silence* of Jean-Claude Martin, 1880, Musée de la Mode, Paris, *Revue des Modes* (Paris) or *Revue* (New York), New York, NY.

Figure 39 The virtuous quality of these boots lies in their construction. They were designed to look as though the viewer was catching a glimpse of a stocking as well as a shoe. The gears of gilt foil would have also attracted attention. Swedish, 1800–1805. Collection of The Ethnographic Museum, P83.12



Figure 40 The classic "French pointed" form that was at the 18th century is typical of the type of exotic fringe that incorporated the high "French" heel. French, c.1800. © Susanna Corbis





The shift of the platform sandal from an article of beachwear to an item of high fashion would have a profound impact on women's dress in the late 1930s through the 1940s. Italian shoe designer Salvatore Ferragamo deserves much of the credit for this transformation. Although his most iconic platforms were custom-made for Hollywood starlets, he offered versions for retail as well (fig. 47). Ferragamo also invented the wedge heel. Obsessively concerned with the comfort and fit of his shoes, his original intention for the wedge was that it be orthopedically correct, but his design sparked a fashion trend that remains in vogue today (figs. 48 and 49).

The platform might seem reminiscent of the choice to some observers, but it was a markedly avant-garde rather than anachronistic fashion. Platforms became potent markers of up-to-the-minute stylishness, an intentionally striking display of the wearer's active participation in fashion. By the 1940s, women were said to be "possessed of a mild shoe fetish."⁴⁷

Socio-economic shifts and the popular media were not the only forces changing norms for women's dress. Avant-garde art movements, Surrealism above all, had begun to attract the attention of innovative designers such as Elsa Schiaparelli. She was the most prominent couturier associated with the Surrealists in Paris and the designer most willing to incorporate the licentious humour of Surrealism in her clothes. One of her most famous designs, the *Shoe Hat*—a soft sculptural hat in the shape of a high-heeled shoe—was made in collaboration with artist Salvador Dalí. Many of the shoes created for her by shoe designer André Perugia were equally daring in their subversion of the codes of female dress (fig. 50). Although fashion-forward women welcomed new types of elevating shoes, men gave women's platforms a cool reception. Men's strong preference for the high heel attracted public comment. In 1940, an article in the *New York Times* stated that "men are almost unanimous in disliking the wedge. Those delicate high insteps peering along on spindly heels were

Figure 47. It is believed that Salvatore Ferragamo made his iconic "Rubber" platform for Judy Garland in 1936. His innovative and excessive design was popularized by Surrealists, stream-lined Modernists, and post-war Italian designers. Salvatore Ferragamo, 1936. Collection of the Ferragamo Museum, Florence.

Figure 48. Salvatore Ferragamo was to fame in the 1930s making shoes for Hollywood movie stars. The shoe worn by the actress Ruth Gordon, features an exotic "corkle" sole and an F-shaped wedge, a variation of the wedge heel designed by Gossard Toy in 1920. The flourishing of new wedge designs in the late 1930s reflects the popularity of this style. Fashion, designed by Salvatore Ferragamo, 1940–1945. Collection of the Bata Shoe Museum, FSCM.

Figure 49. Platforms and wedges were often paired with beachwear. Platforms in particular were allied with play and leisure culture before they were adopted by high fashion. The original model for this image describes the garment draped over the model's arm as an evening dress, suggesting that she can go from beach to night wearing her wedged shoes. Harri P. Harri. © Corbis News Archive/Getty





Figure 64 The peccol, thick sole, and chunky heel of these shoes were the height of 1950s male fashion. The neo-hip design is a nod to more traditional men's business shoes. © Hulton-Deutsch Collection/Corbis

Figure 65 The look between Eddie Cochran and Jerry Lee Lewis in *Alamo* (1960), 1972, drew heavily from African American fashion as part of the new look of 1950s rockabilly. The mass media quickly adopted the style as a signifier of African American hypermasculinity. © Bettmann/Corbis

Figure 66 Gene Simmons of KISS is known for the point of his lips, but he also is early on in making his shoes more aggressive in keeping with his hypermasculine persona. © Alan Prance/Corbis



Figure 67 This boot was designed by Antonio Loati (aka) Master Jans. The shoes were done to the needs of a band how to live were then to clubs and used them to "kick the shit" out of other guys, Canadian, designed and made by Master Jans, 1973. Collection of the Rock Star Museum, PSL111





High Fashion

32

LEFT
The gold-leaf shoe worn in the episode of *Mad Men* is the epitome of Marcel Blahnik's design and was so popular that Blahnik reissued it in the early 2000s. *Blahnik, Shoeaholic*, designed by **Manolo Blahnik, 1989–1993**. [www.manojoblahnik.com](#)

33

TOP RIGHT
Tom Ford designed these high-wedge-heeled shoes for Yves Saint Laurent. Ford's design is more architectural than elegant. The wide straps, which allude to bandage restraints, are dark bronze finish, and the shoes' edgy sleekness, *Yves*, designed by **Tom Ford for Yves Saint Laurent, 2001**. Generously donated by **Bruno's Shoes**. [www.brunosshoes.com](#)

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BOTTOM RIGHT
Christian Louboutin's famed feature of 1920s shoe design, such as geometric patterning and the instep strap (see above fig. 4), with the modern stiletto heel and his signature red sole is the design of this pair of shoes. Louboutin's revival of 1920s fashion were appropriate in the era of "glamour" French Culture shoes, designed by **Christian Louboutin, 2007**. Generously donated by **Christian Louboutin**. [www.louboutin.com](#)



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Thierry
AGNONE

at the Bata Shoe Museum



Agrone, Thierry
Thierry Agrone at the Bata Shoe Museum

Catalogue of a paper shoe art installation at the Bata Shoe Museum, Sept. 22 - Dec. 31, 2009.

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As far as we know, from the very beginning of art history and civilizations, the artists through their works of art have always helped build the appreciation between different cultures and countries. Through its wide range of objects collected all around the world, from every continent and since Antiquity, the Bata Shoe Museum in Toronto is highlighting the fact that shoes can actually express the wide array of human skills when adapting to climate differences; shoes nevertheless embody at the same time the creative power of humanity's artistic concerns.

Beside the amazing permanent shoe collections, we are happy to celebrate this fall the temporary exhibition of Mr. Thierry Agrone, an artist born in Marseille, France. In his body of work, the artist celebrates the airy lightness of airy teeny-tiny Fairy Queen shoes. It is no surprise that this very appropriate artist was proposed by the Director of the Marseille Museum for Contemporary Art, Thierry Clitz, when he visited Toronto.

We are very grateful to the Museum Chair and Founder Mrs. Sanja Bata, and its artistic director Mr. Emanuele Lepri for hosting such a unique exhibition as the one with Thierry Agrone's pieces. Along with other video-artists from Marseille showcased at the 2009 "Nuit Blanche", and with the collective group « Buy-sell » at the October Toronto Art Fair, this museum exhibition brings to Canadian audiences the diverse and talented gifts of artists from one of the main cities of France and of the Mediterranean sea : Marseille.

At the time when this southern French town is selected as the 2013 Cultural Capital of Europe, it reminds us how important it is for Toronto and Marseille to build on innovation and artistic exchanges to prepare their future. With the Thierry Agrone show, the Bata Shoe Museum makes a significant contribution to their international dialogue.

— Jérôme Cauchard
The Consul General of France in Toronto

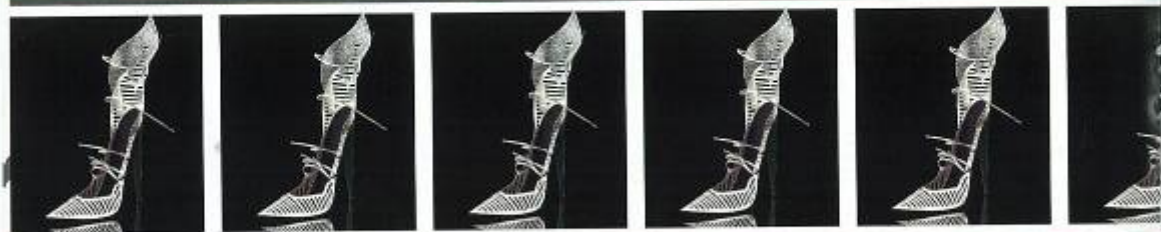


Thierry Agnone's small shoes are like flowers: delicate, light, and precious. They are beautiful poems made of paper, chiselled like the ivory balls that one admires in a curiosity cabinet. They line up just like many pretty debutantes ready to blossom into full-blown personalities filled with imagination: their freshness offsets their complexity; they seem to make fun of the world by never going in pairs.

One may think they are ephemeral. On the contrary their DNA is made of wood. These young girls will never be worn, as they could only fit an elf. They are not fashionable shoes, by not serving any function; they defy mortality and thus become works of art. A stiletto heel, a laced upper, a narrow sole and these tiny naughty charmers seem to jokingly say: We look like our mothers but we are going to last forever.

Agnone, just like Geppetto looks with tender eyes at his camp girls made of paper. He would never want to remind his girls of the grief they cause: they have that heavy yet touching lightness about them; with their elegance and grace they make you smile and think of fairy tales.

— Inès de la Fressange

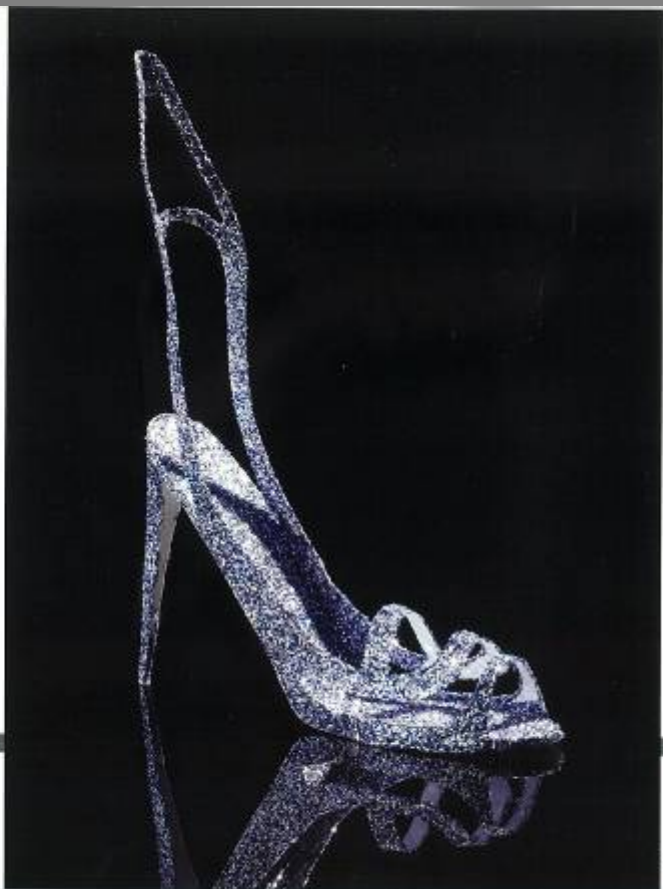


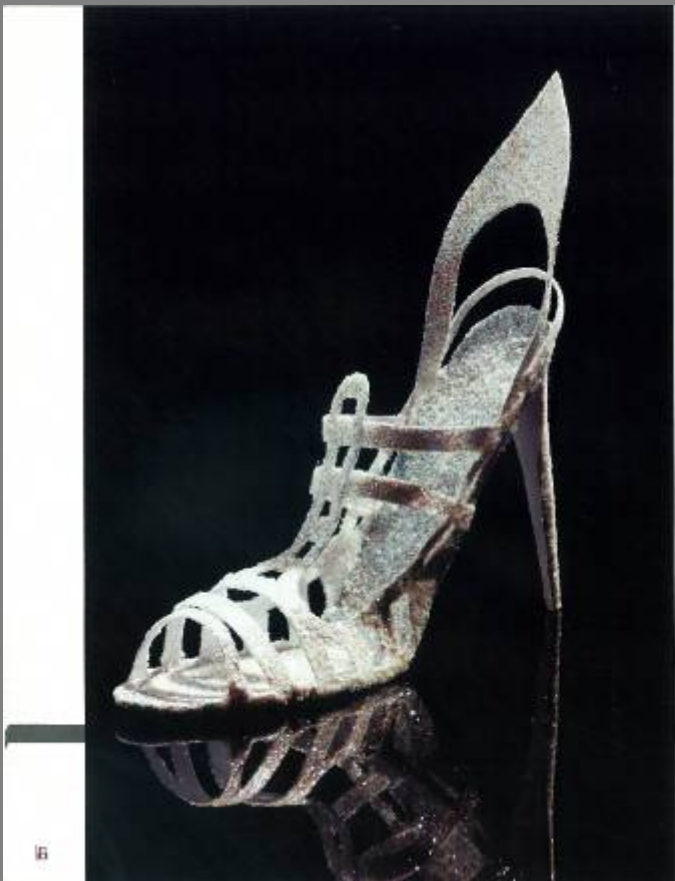
Shoes have inspired artists for centuries all over the world. A shoe frequently is considered something very precious, an object to which you can relate, even if you just hold it in your hand and do not wear it - an object that can speak to you and tell you a story. Looking at a shoe can evoke memories, and their shapes stimulate our imagination.

Different artists expressed their fascination with shoes in many diverse ways, revealing their most personal feelings and thoughts. Vincent van Gogh's painting of well worn work boots conveys a meaningful, human story. Andy Warhol's glittering high heel pumps are elegant and entertaining, reflecting his obsession with beautiful shoes and René Magritte's painting of feet that morph into lace-up shoes stimulates curiosity and thoughtfulness.

Thierry Agnon's beautiful poetic shoe shapes present us with sheer pleasure. His romantic fantasies are like dream shoes with their refined and elegant designs. Although their shapes reflect contemporary fashion trends, they seem to come from another world - a dream world inhabited by ethereal faires. His creativity seems unlimited. Looking at Thierry's refined shapes is a delightful experience.

— Sorja Bata
Chetman, Bata Shoe Museum





Thierry AGNONE

at the Bata Shoe Museum

My interest in shoes dates back more than 20 years. At the age of 19 I became an apprentice with a shoemaker in Marseille. During my 3 years of apprenticeship I learned each and every step of shoe repair along with the basic elements that pertain to different styles of shoes. Later I got a job as shop manager in a shoe store for a year.

My life has since taken different paths, but my passion for shoes has remained the same. In the meantime I decided to become an artist and shoes were a natural subject for my artistic research. Alongside painting and creating sculptures, I worked on shoes in many different ways, using diverse materials such as: lead, wood, polyester resin, tape, earth, etc. I created installations with shoes that looked used, discarded and abandoned; as would be seen at the scene of an accident or a terrorist attack. The shoes revealed a morbid connection to the world, conveying my own feelings towards the world at the time.

Slowly the negative feelings dissolved, and today I work on the poetic side and I dream of shoes.

Lately I have only worked on women's shoes made from paper. This is not because paper is an affordable medium, but instead to underline the fragility and lightness of women's shoes. I want to convey the message that shoes are not only a utilitarian object but also a symbolic one.

Fairy tales, princess stories and magic lands...

— Thierry Agnone

ON A PEDESTAL

From Renaissance Chopines to Baroque Heels



Elizabeth Semmelhack



On a Pedestal: Introduction

The history of costume is less anecdotal than would appear. It touches on every issue—raw materials, production processes, manufacturing costs, cultural stability, fashion and social hierarchy.
—Vivian Boone*

In the 15th and 16th centuries, the European appetite for imported textiles drove global exploration. Economic hegemony was intimately linked to control over textile production and the resulting cloth, when fashioned into clothing, played a crucial role in investing individuals with status, class identity and signifiers of gender. It was in direct relation to the wool of textiles that the chopine, one of the most unusual forms of footwear ever worn in the history of Western dress, reached its ascendancy at the end of the 16th century. It is also because of textiles that the history of the chopine is so difficult to unravel, so much of the chopine's story has concealed beneath women's skirts. However, the glimpses that we are able to gain reveal a fascinating story that stretches back to antiquity and continues to have resonance today.

Platform footwear was one of the types of footwear worn by women in ancient Greece and Rome as complex signifiers of femininity linked to "oriental" adornment and concepts of the exotic. In the medieval period, elevating footwear was worn throughout the Maghrib as an expression of gender but also of religious identity. Early in the 16th century in Catholic Spain, perfumes reflected the blending of heterogeneous and conflicting cultural influences and in Renaissance Italy chopines were fundamental to the architecture of female fashion and the expression of familial status through the consequent extravagant display of expensive cloth.

The chopine was eclipsed by the introduction of the heel from the Near East at the end of the 16th century. For a brief moment in Western dress, elevating footwear was embraced by men, but it was only a temporary infatuation. Elevating footwear would remain an exclusive article of feminine dress and, as with the chopine, the history of the high heel would be inextricably connected to the construction of femininity and the gendered economics of fashionable display.

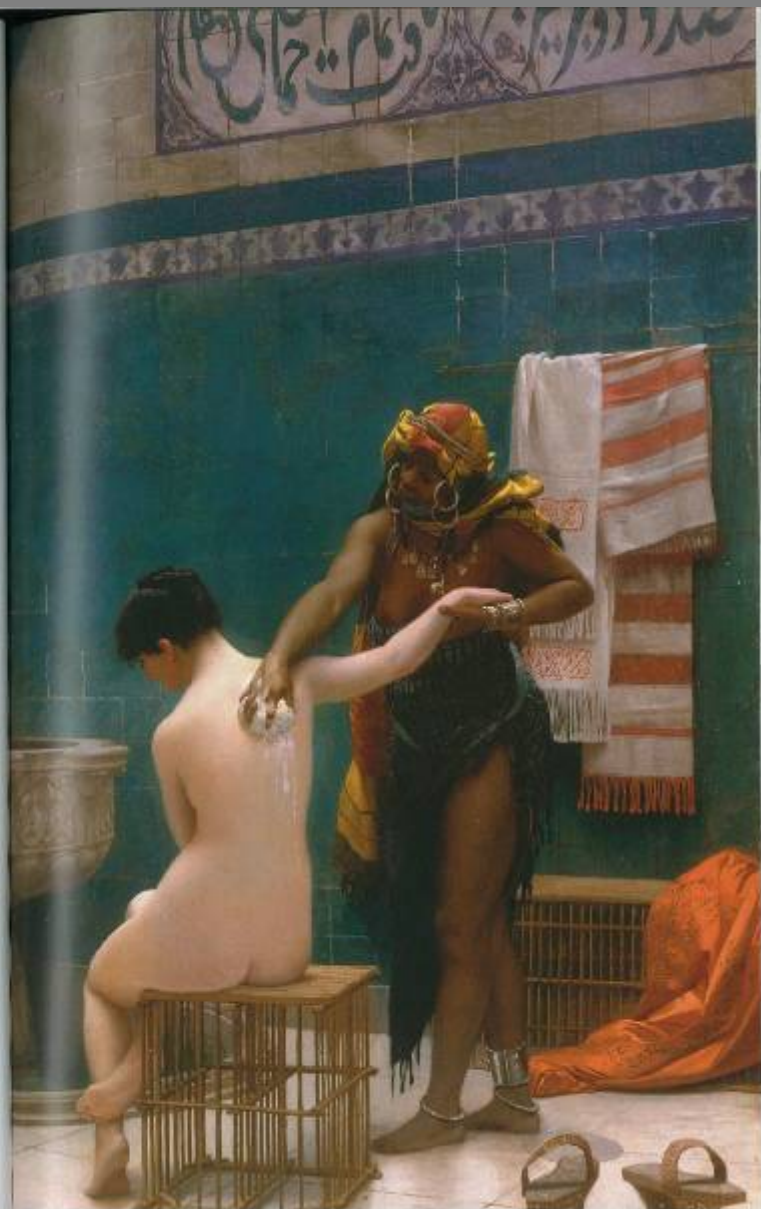
The other form of elevating footwear worn in Moorish Spain and throughout all of the Near East was the *gabayan* or *Atakaab*,⁴¹ a version of the Roman stilted wooden clog or *sculpaeus*. The elaboration of both culture in the Near East in the context of Islamic concerns for cleanliness allowed the *sculpaeus/gabayan* to remain a popular form of footwear. (Fig. 13) In Europe, the *gabayan* would become a symbol of "oriental otherness" because of its relation to Islamic bath culture. This fascination would last for centuries. (Fig. 14) Christian modesty had led to the rejection of bathing culture in principle and in practice by large segments of Christians, causing the stilted *sculpaeus* to fall out of use for centuries in Europe.

The Catholic Reconquest of Spain was completed in 1492 and the effort to create a decidedly Catholic Spain, in part through Christianizing cross, provides additional evidence of the widespread use of platform footwear during Moorish rule.⁴² The establishment of a purely Catholic Spanish identity through measures such as dress proved difficult because of Spain's complex and heterogeneous history. As Christian Spaniards struggled to create a



Figure 13 The use of stilted platform footwear is a symbol of cleanliness in the Near East. Though Roman clogs had stilted wooden heels, the use of decorative carved and carved lacquered wooden heels led to the *gabayan*. The *gabayan* is a symbol of "oriental otherness" because of its relation to Islamic bath culture. This fascination would last for centuries. (Fig. 14) Christian modesty had led to the rejection of bathing culture in principle and in practice by large segments of Christians, causing the stilted *sculpaeus* to fall out of use for centuries in Europe.

Figure 14 The *gabayan* (stilted wooden shoes) were the symbol of Moorish culture. The *gabayan* was a symbol of the stilted platform footwear of the Near East, which by the 12th century had been adopted by the Christians. The *gabayan* is a symbol of "oriental otherness" because of its relation to Islamic bath culture. This fascination would last for centuries. (Fig. 14) Christian modesty had led to the rejection of bathing culture in principle and in practice by large segments of Christians, causing the stilted *sculpaeus* to fall out of use for centuries in Europe.



Those who lauded chopines saw them as a means of enhancing female dignity by causing women to walk at a slow, considered pace.¹⁶ One writer, however, obliquely stated that, although chopines had been invented to keep women at home, women had overcome this impediment by instructing their chopine makers to use cork, rather than heavy wood, when making chopines.¹⁷

Ideas about clothing certainly circulated around Europe and information about foreign styles and availability of clothing was disseminated in myriad ways. Castelflora's correspondence is indicative of interest in foreign dress. Another Florentine, Lorenzo Strozzi, wrote home about a pair of golden chopines he had seen in Valencia in 1450 and regretted that he couldn't buy them because they were too expensive.¹⁸ Clothes were frequently elements of diplomatic gift exchange. The transfer of women by marriage among the rulers of cities and states was another important means by which foreign customs and dress were disseminated between courts and countries.

(Fig. 21) When Catherine of Aragon, the youngest daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella I, arrived in England in 1501 as the bride of Prince Arthur, her "strange" appearance (in contrast to the courtiers of Hispania)¹⁹ did not escape notice. Fifty years later, Lady Jane Grey was described by the Genoese gentleman Sir Baptista Spinola as mounted on high chopines to enhance her small stature at her coronation.²⁰ The famous Eleanor de Toledo was married to Cosimo de Medici in an effort to cement Spanish and Florentine relations and the records of her wardrobe, as well as correspondence in the Medici archives, include numerous mentions of chopines, although it is unclear whether or not they were of Spanish or Italian design. By the 16th century, Spain was at the height of its imperial power, ruling much of Europe from Italy to the Netherlands, and riches poured into its coffers from its New World colonies. Throughout history, fashion has incorporated elements of dress from dominant cultures, regardless of whether those relations are friendly or hostile, but was the Spanish fashion for chopines throughout Europe an example of this? (Fig. 22)



Figure 21 Italian Florentine chopines were designed to cause women to walk slowly and deliberately to impress onlookers. This can be seen in the pair of chopines. The low heel does, in fact, of Spanish design, offered another opportunity to display expensive fabrics. Spanish, 1580-1620, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, Cross Britain, TA 3864-1313.

Figure 22 In 1599, the Spanish Infanta Isabella Clara Eugenia and Albert VI, Archduke of Austria and became the ruler of the Spanish Netherlands. As a marriage is an example of the exchange of royal power throughout Europe which contributed to the transfer of knowledge about dress from one nation to another. In this painting, the Infanta Isabella, a Spanish princess, wears her traditional dress, the placement of her hand on the breast of her courtier, Magdalena, indicates that she is to walk and therefore wear the low-heeled chopines. The crown held by Magdalena is most likely Spain's crown of redness. Spanish, 16th century, Infanta Clara Eugenia and Alphonse Archduke of Austria by studio of Alonso Sánchez Coello, 1582, Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain.





lowerly dress. If (Fig. 27) when worn by the wealthy, stilted shoes suggest the realm of internal wealth and high status and worldly sophistication (Fig. 28).

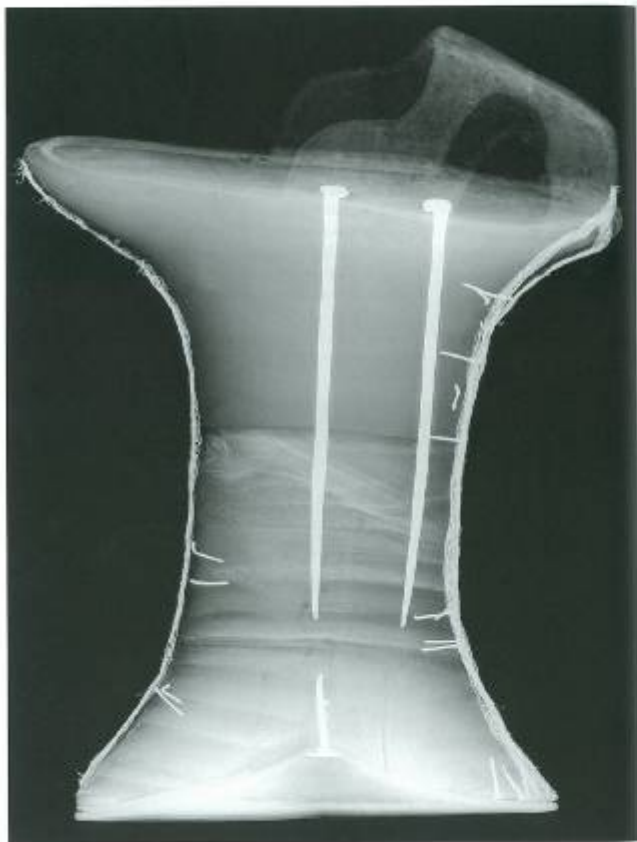
The fashion for stilted shoes was at its peak at the same time as that of the *pointe*, a form of footwear that featured an exaggeratedly elongated toe. The *pointe*, like the stilted shoe, was a fashion clearly inspired by "oriental" motifs²⁶ as indicated by its name which meant "Polish." Straddling the border as between Europe and the "Orient," Poland, along with other Eastern European countries such as Hungary, was frequently linked to the Near East and many aspects of Polish apparel were often conflated with "oriental" dress.²⁷

The fashion for dramatically pointed-toed footwear also harmonized with the prevailing aesthetic for attenuation in Gothic architecture. The footwear worn by the fashionable elite echoed the arches of Gothic buildings providing visual proof of the synergy²⁸ between dress and architecture. By the early 18th century, however, the taste for Gothic architecture and fashion was abandoned and both the stilted shoe and the *pointe* ceased to be expressions of status. Only the poor and the ecclesiastical continued to wear the stilted shoe; the *pointe* was completely abandoned.

Figure 28 A detail of Erasmus's painting (ca. 1530). An Italian noble is seated under a loggia. In the foreground, a woman is kneeling with the infant Jesus on her lap. The woman is wearing a blue dress and a white headscarf. The man is wearing a red robe and a black hat. The scene is set in a courtyard with a stone archway and a building in the background.

Figure 29 An oil painting by the French painter Jean-Baptiste Carpeaux (1827-1875). The painting depicts a woman in a green dress and a white headscarf standing in a room. She is holding a small object in her hands. The room is dimly lit, with a window in the background. The woman's dress is long and flowing, with a high collar and long sleeves. The headscarf is white and covers her hair. The overall style is characteristic of the 19th-century French painting.





There were occasional refers to these attacks. (Figs. 52, 53 and 54) The Venetian nun, Arcangela Tarabotti, a champion of women's rights, writes with a charming sense of humour:

We could also say that a woman certainly deserves to be lifted above the earthly triviality just like a miracle of nature, because the man was made of soil and the woman out of one of his ribs. It is thus reasonable that she would wear pannelle that elevate her for the same distance that there is between a man's rib and his foot, because nature and God have created her with such privilege. We should also add that, since the zoccoli are the garment of modesty, then they are a very laudable and modest invention.¹⁷⁷

But it is the 16th century Venetian writer, Moderata Fonte, who articulates the matter with the greatest clarity and insight in her book *The Wirth of Women*. In her text, two women remark on the irrationality of men's efforts to control women in the name of propriety. The character Corinna begins,

... just think of how frequent it is to see women of low estate repudiated by men and coming to grief, in spite of the fact that they dress plainly and, one might say, without any form of adornment. It is far rarer to see gentlewomen suffering the same fate, in spite of all their finery...

Her friend Looma responds,

... what you just said about women dressing up can be said with even more justice about their acquiring an education. For it is obvious that an ignorant person is far more liable to fall into error than someone intelligent and well read, and we see from experience that far more unlettered women slide into vice than educated women who have exercised their minds.¹⁷⁸



Figure 52 This chest from the 16th century work on the following pages depicting the habits and heads of the Venetian women shows a woman in very high white heels stepping into a gondola. She is assisted by two men. Her steady unswerving conception is a heavy scotch in the back of the picture. The scene suggests that such precarious manoeuvres were indeed possible. Venetian, *The Boat Diving at Murano* by Joseph Heintz the Younger, 1670, Museo Correr, Venice, Italy, 12121.

Figure 53 It is as though the women in the habits painting left her shoes for parody, given the similarities between the pair and the chair depicted in the sketch. The condition of this pair suggests that they were well worn in conditions similar to those depicted in the painting. Venetian, 1500-1600, Staatliches Naturhistorisches Museum, Berlin, Germany, 13.34.8.25.

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Figure 54 Venetian, *The Boat Diving at Murano* by Joseph Heintz the Younger, 1670, Museo Correr, Venice, Italy.



Northern Europe

The increased importance of woolen textiles over the course of the 16th century and the shift of economic power away from the Mediterranean are linked to the dramatic expansion of global trade and burgeoning nationalism. For Spain, Portugal, England and France, their New World colonial holdings promised an abundance of natural resources important to the production of textiles and also potential new markets for finished goods such as woolen textiles and footwear. The Spanish discovery of cochineal, a small insect that could be harvested to produce a brilliant red dye, in Central and North America and Portugal's claim to Brazil, so named because of its abundance of brazilwood, a type of tree that likewise produces a bright red dye, are evidence of the centrality of textile production to the enrichment of colonial powers. The Virginia Company of London, founded in 1606, was partially funded by the cordwainers' guild in the hope that the Virginia colony would provide both a new source of leather and a market for ready-made English shoes. In addition, the uncharted New World offered hope for the discovery of a new route to the Far East and its luxury commodities free from Near Eastern interference. The dream of circumventing Ottoman control of access to the Near and Far East also spurred England and Holland to explore new overland routes to Persia, India and China through Russia.

While throughout all of Europe, Near Eastern and Far Eastern goods continued to signify status, exoticism and above all, luxury in England, fabrics imported from places closer to home were viewed as if suspicious to both the domestic wool cloth industry and the thread of Protestantism which had woven itself into the social fabric.¹¹¹ Specifically, textiles imported from the Catholic countries such as Italy, France and Spain, were identified with papist decadence and ostentation. Some English critics went as far as to link southern continental fabrics with lasciviousness, and even venereal disease, as though "dancing the fabrics and fashions from these countries invited the corruption into England."¹¹² It was in this milieu that the chopine lost its footing in Northern European dress.

The chopine had established a presence in English fashion in the 16th century but it never became a defining feature of upper-class women's dress and it always retained its foreign associations. *Pantofles* or *parrottes* were described in the period as being made of cork and as being similar to both Spanish and Italian "shoppes".¹¹³ The warrants of Queen Elizabeth I mention numerous pairs of velvet and leather *parrottes* but unfortunately their heights are not recorded. Extant examples worn by other women, however, suggest that English platforms never attained the exaggerated height of Italian or Spanish examples¹¹⁴ despite Shakespeare's oft-quoted line from *Hamlet*: "By'r lady, your ladyship is nearer to heaven than when I saw you last, by the altitude of a chopine".¹¹⁵ This mention of chopines dates to the last moments in which the chopine was fashionable in England. By the 1680s, a new form of elevation, the heel, would make its debut in Western dress and would be as warmly embraced by men as by women.

Figure 67 This late 17th century Persian miniature depicts a Sultan in a blue and white robe wearing the tips of his heel. Footwear featured in Persian, Persian, painting from the *Large Divan Album* by Koca Sinan Paşa, c. 1690-92. Victoria and Albert Museum, London, Great Britain

Figure 68 This sketch of the chopine worn by Persian men and fashions who visited and adopted covered heel. Chopine was a very popular material for footwear in Persia where it was produced with the domestic use and for export. Thick oval chopine is made using handmade typically dyed green. The rough, polished surface is created by pressing muslin seeds into the wet leather. Most likely, the chopine, typical of Persian design, was not adopted by European dressmakers. Persia, 17th century. *Bahá'í Shikhs Museum*, W6, 16.

The heel was not a European invention nor was it a new form of footwear. Heels had been worn by Near Eastern men for centuries as a form of equestrian footwear, designed to secure the foot in the stirrup while riding.¹¹⁶ (Figs. 57 and 58) Many Europeans were well aware of this aspect of Near Eastern dress before its incorporation into Western fashion. Books on "oriental" dress featuring images of heeled footwear, such as Nicolas de Nicolay's *Navigations et pérégrinations orientales*, which was translated into multiple languages, and Pieter Coecke van Aelst's *Manière et facon des Textes (Customs and Fashion of the Turk)*, were published during the



Exactly how the new fashion for heeled footwear was realized by domestic shoemakers is unclear. What the fashion brought in the 1590s is apparent: that the same shoemakers who had been crafting chamois and flat shoes were now asked to create shoes with heels. Queen Elizabeth I had two royal shoemakers during her reign, Gerritt Johnson and then his son, Peter Johnson.⁶⁷ All orders for footwear went to them and one wonders how the royal shoemaker responded to the order for "one paire of spangie leather shoes with high heels and arched" recorded in the Garter's household accounts in 1592.⁶⁸ Surely as the first European shoemakers struggled to make heeled footwear, they relied on techniques they had used in the manufacture of other types of shoes, each individual shoemaker solving the engineering problems introduced by heels, in his own unique way (Fig. 65).

The relationship between heeled footwear and equestrianism is illustrated in the plethora of portraits of men in riding attire painted in the early 17th century and the survival of many riding boots. (Figs. 65 and 67.) Nonetheless, the practical function of the heel and its original design as an aid to

Figure 65 The construction of the shoe (left), the cork block (center) that the shoemaker used to shape the shoe form, and the finished shoe (right) as they are shown by a 16th century Dutch artist. (The shoe is from the collection of the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, 1600-10.)

Figure 67 The French equestrian Jean-Baptiste de La Haye, comte de Sancerre, in full riding attire, as painted by the 17th century French artist, Louis Le Nôtre. (The painting is from the collection of the Musée de la Ville de Paris, Paris, France, c. 1650.)



