
DATING THE SHOES



The joy of collecting and learning

Collecting is a pleasure not because you come to possess more and more articles of whatever you collect, but because you tend to acquire more and more knowledge on the subject of your collection.

The hobby of collecting is generally described as consisting of seeking, locating, acquiring, organising, cataloguing, displaying, storing and maintaining

Recently - introduced French footwear

Paris - A view of the "1939 Folly" shoes, which were recently introduced by Pinet for spring wear. The heel forms one block with sole of more-than-average thickness. They are of varied color combinations.

ACME, March 3, 1939

whatever objects are of interest to the collector. None of these stages is intriguing enough without the cognition of the object, which the collector is trying to gather and the rule is that the knowledge of the item comes long before the collector gets hold of the object of his quest.

Collecting shoes, however, suggests the topic so wide-ranging and diverse in origin and design, that in many cases it is nearly impossible to know the item before it adds up to your collection.

This is when you start asking the questions: who designed it? Who manufactured it? When and where was it made? As it often happens collector's library or archives might give you many answers. You may want to browse your books and try to find an exact model, especially if you know the designer's name or consult the company historical catalogues if you happen to have the name and lucky to have the printed catalogues.

Defining the exact date of the shoes is always a tricky business, even if you know the time range of a certain style the given pair most credibly belongs to - there is always a chance that some designer or producer came up with this style long before it became acceptable as mainstream fashion, or on the contrary, was still manufacturing the shoes after they were out of vogue.

It is a real collectors luck when you happen to come across the printed or photographic documents featuring the shoes from your collection.

Gold Sandals



There is a pair of gold leather sandals in my collection, which the seller advertised as possibly 1920s as they resembled the shoes made by Salvatore Ferragamo for Hollywood movies and incidentally came from a Beverly Hills estate sale. I was sceptical about the dating as the wedge was more likely from late 30s than 20s, but assuming they might have been designed for movies, I have initially placed them in the 20s category.



Ferragamo shoes, 1935-1936, 1940

Salvatore Ferragamo. The art of the shoes. Staffing Ricci, 1988, Kodansha Publishers, Japan

Later a more knowledgeable, and sharing the same passion for footwear history friend of mine from the UK, Melanie Nute has sent me a picture of a pair of shoes very similar to my gold sandals with nearly identical design and gold embossing on the straps, suggesting they might be from the 1940s. As you can see from the label, they were specially made for the famous Bata company.



François Pinet Shoes

Sometime later I received a letter with a picture of Pinet shoes from Lesley Crosthwaite, UK, enquiring about the possible date and origin of the pair. She found some information about Francois Pinet on Shoe Icons site and was wondering if I would be interested in acquiring the pair for the museum.

I was more than eager to get these shoes for my collection as they had exactly the same wedge construction as my golden sandals. It was even more exciting because they presented another design puzzle: the construction of the wedge was evidently from the late 1930s, but the upper was made of lamé, which is a type of brocaded fabric woven with thin ribbons of metallic yarns, usually gold or silver, indicative if earlier years.



François Pinet shoes

Front lacing shoes with festooned edge wedges, with lamé upper and gold kid appliqué.

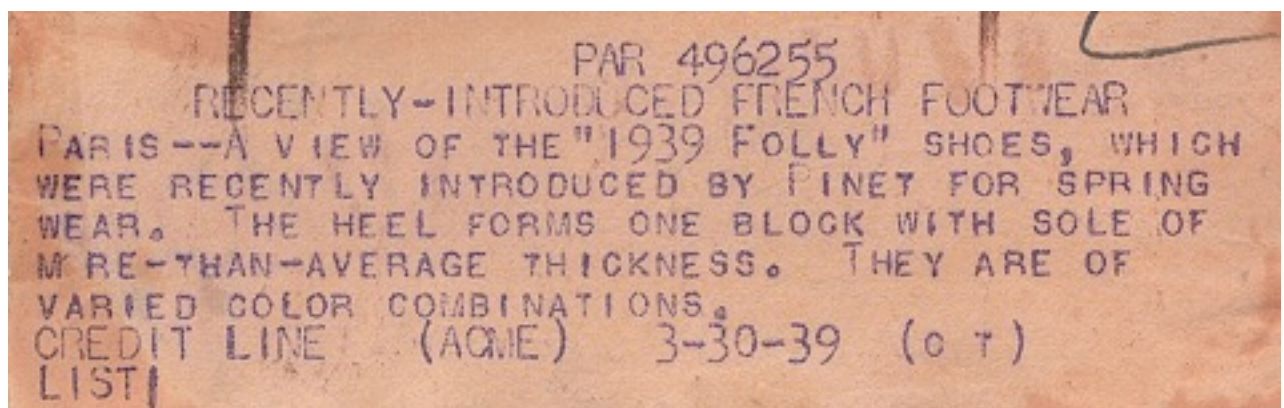
1939, France

Most English dictionaries date the origin of this word in relation to fabric from 1920s, Merriam-Webster mentions its first use in 1922.

Whatever the linguistic intricacies, I can count quite a few examples of shoes using lamé for upper from early 1900s, acknowledging that many shoes in our collection with this fabric originated in the 1920s.

1939 Folly

This is when documents can be of great value. A couple of weeks ago I was lucky to win a press photograph on eBay from a wonderful collection offered by a top-rated seller **vintageimagephotos**. This picture features the very pair of François Pinet shoes and is dated March 30, 1939.



Coming back to collecting. I have always called my collection a shoe museum, not a museum of shoes. The difference may sound inconspicuous, but in practice it means that I collect not only shoe, but everything around shoes. Every shoe-related item, especially documents, like adverts, catalogues, books, postcards, stamps, photos might become an additional and sometimes decisive source of light in the often not so easy matter of dating shoes.