



Sergio Rossi

Sergio Rossi today conjures up an image of classic elegance in women's heels, and more specifically, sky-high heels, whether on shoes, boots or sandals. The marque is famous for its innovative models, its materials, and its exuberant decoration. Take, for example, the women's Spring-Summer 2010 collection: booties in which wildly meandering curves are juxtaposed to create the overall profile, in brilliantly orchestrated colours; or the spectacular over-the-knee fishnet boot with sequins. Without doubt, one of the brand's most evident features is its ability to transform even the boldest shapes into fine balance and tautly-honed lines, so that the energy of the design is funnelled into an overall image of refined classicism. Each piece is hallmarked by a powerful concept that is brilliantly resolved into an icon of the Sergio Rossi look: pure allure.

Other distinctive features of the Sergio Rossi look are the superb materials and craftsmanship. Comments on the web by customers all share the appreciation for the comfort of these heels, even the loftier version with apparently minimal ankle straps. They are light, and the half-sizes enables everyone to find the ideal fit.

All these brand features originate in the history of the House. Sergio Rossi inherited the tools and the trade of the shoemaking trade from his father, in San Mauro Pascoli, Romagna (near Bologna). But Sergio took what was basically a crafts concern to something more ambitious. He went to Milan to study and train in the early 1950s – he was just twenty – and developed his feel for shape. This long apprenticeship began to pay off a decade later, when the fashion scene in Italy began to change in the early 1960s. That was the time in which modern design was taking off, with the advent of prêt-à-porter and the “fashion look” as so brilliantly expressed in hit films such as *La Dolce Vita*. It was at that time that Sergio met a man who would later play an important part in the Sergio Rossi story: Gianni Versace.

Meanwhile, in 1966 Rossi began selling his shoes to shops in Bologna. During the winter he made sandals that would later be sold for use on the Rimini beaches the next summer. One of his designs achieved

remarkable success, a model named Opanca, in which the sole blended imperceptibly into the uppers, enclosing the foot in comfort and style. This feature became an important part of the brand image.

In the 1970s, Gianni Versace asked Rossi to work with him in the preparation of collections for the catwalk. Sergio Rossi rapidly became a firm favourite with top clothes labels, and this in part reflects a characteristic that he shared with all the finest designers: the ability to design using volumes rather than line. The massive visibility that Rossi obtained at the Milan fashion shows projected the brand into the upper spheres of fashion and enabled the first brand boutiques to be opened. The first was inaugurated in Ancona, and this was followed by stores in Turin, Florence, Rome, Brussels, New York, Los Angeles, and London. Between 1980 and 1999, an average of two boutiques opened every year. This rapid development was fuelled by cooperation with leading fashion houses, such as Dolce & Gabbana, for whom Sergio Rossi made shoes for collections from 1989 to 1999.

Collections from the 1980s include Le Tinì by Sergio Rossi, Miss Rossi, and a bags line. But it was the 1990s that saw the brand reach the full measure of its potential. Advertising campaigns were pivotal in this regard, with vertiginous bare legs reminiscent of Helmut Newton's imagery, and the classic stilettos the only element of style. The stiletto became an element of power, with those crucial three inches giving women a new status of dominance and decision. The success of Sergio Rossi led to interest from the largest players in the fashion field, and on 20 November 1999, Domenico De Sole and Tom Ford bought the brand which thus became part of the Gucci Group. This led to yet more boutiques around the world.

Francesco Russo became Creative Designer at Sergio Rossi from October 2008. He supervises all collections, which now comprise men's and women's footwear, bags and accessories. He arrived from the Yves Saint Laurent design team, where he had worked on the development of the YSL shoes collection. One of the deliciously Sergio Rossi features of the spring-summer 2010 collection is the violet soles on the men's suede shoes, and, as for the women's shoes and bags... well, it's all here in the photos.

The marque has come a long way from that crafts workshop in Mauro Pascoli. But even today, craftsmanship is an essential ingredient in brand image. Hand-crafting – 120 operations on each pair of shoes – is accompanied by state-of-the-art technology and manufacturing equipment. To make sure that, whatever the product, you'll be riding high, in comfort, and style.

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