

THE ANNUAL





FROM THE DIRECTOR



2023 marked the first year of Bata Shoe Museum's new three-year Strategic Plan. It was an exceptional year of growth, innovation, and impact that actively demonstrated our commitment to providing meaningful public programming, advancing Indigenous relations, and growing our team. We also celebrated the return of high visitor numbers on par with what we had enjoyed pre-COVID.

Two exhibitions were launched in 2023, *In Bloom: Flowers and Footwear* and *Dressed to Impress: Footwear and Consumerism in the 1980s*. Each was uniquely reflective of our mission to illuminate history and culture through

shoes. Audiences, near and far were delighted by the stories, insights, and programs presented in conjunction with them. Many of these programs were created in collaboration with other purpose-driven local and national community groups.

The Museum also continued to work towards building long-term and reciprocal relationships with Indigenous communities through the development of Repatriation Guidelines, positive engagement with repatriation requests, and inviting Indigenous curators to contribute their knowledge to the *In Bloom* exhibition. The Museum also continued to advance

footwear research through publishing and international partnerships.

Central to all of this success are the people who support, respond, challenge, and inspire us to think and engage critically and compassionately with our community. Thank you for continuing to be part of our journey!

Elizabeth Semmelhack
Director & Senior Curator

2023 EXHIBITIONS

IN BLOOM: FLOWERS AND FOOTWEAR

April 2023 - October 2024

Representations of flowers and floral motifs have been incorporated into textiles and footwear designs for centuries. *In Bloom: Flowers and Footwear* explores the inspiration that nature has provided as a source of meaning and material for shoemaking across the ages.

View Sizzle video



OBSESSED: HOW SHOES BECAME OBJECTS OF DESIRE

October 2022 - April 2024

Exploring the story of how society became obsessed with shoes, this exhibition features highly coveted shoes from the permanent collection. Learn about how industrialization drove consumption to effectively transform footwear designers into celebrities and shoes into high value collectibles.

DRESSED TO IMPRESS: FOOTWEAR AND CONSUMERISM IN THE 1980S

November 2023 – October 2024

The 1980s is a decade known for its bold fashions: bright colors, sharp silhouettes, cone heels, and high-status sneakers. *Dressed to Impress* explores how and why fashion and footwear were promoted as a way to flaunt a successful career, social status, and an enviable lifestyle.

[View Sizzle video](#)



THE GREAT DIVIDE: FOOTWEAR IN THE AGE OF ENLIGHTENMENT

August 2020 – March 2023

Featuring extraordinary 18th century artifacts from the permanent collection, *The Great Divide* explores several timely issues from gender and race to imperialism and colonization. The themes highlight complex stories about privilege, oppression, danger, desire, revolution and resistance that are as relevant today as they were 300 years ago.



FUTURE NOW: VIRTUAL SNEAKERS TO CUTTING EDGE KICKS

May 2022 – October 2023

Future Now considers how cutting-edge technologies, unexpected materials, and new ideas are transforming footwear today through a showcase of digitally designed and 3D printed shoes, sneakers made from mushroom leather and reclaimed ocean plastics, as well as footwear created for the metaverse.



ALL ABOUT SHOES: FOOTWEAR THROUGH THE AGES

Permanent

All About Shoes takes visitors on a global voyage through 4,500 years of footwear, focusing on the importance of shoes to our lives, identities, and imaginations. With only three percent of the collection typically on view at any given time, *Behind the Scenes: A Glimpse into Artifact Storage* gives visitors a peek into the museum's three storage vaults by offering a rotation of artifacts from the permanent collection.



AT A GLANCE



19,348

Free Sunday Attendees



253

Tour Groups



6

Exhibitions



17,5M

Digital Impressions



220,169

Unique Website Visitors



76,505

Visitors



100+

Volunteers



114

Earned Media



120

New Acquisitions



3,885

Students Visited



336,242

Social Media Community



23

Public Programs



THE COLLECTION



In 2023, the Museum acquired over 120 new artifacts through donations and purchases to enhance the permanent collection which now reaches nearly 15,000 shoes and shoe-related artifacts. The Museum is grateful to all its donors, whose generosity enables us to enrich our collection and the visitor experience.

HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE:

- Converse Weapon, 1986
- Patrick Cox for John Galliano, 1985–87
- Yohji Yamamoto, 1980–89
- Dapper Dan x Puma, 2022
- Jacquemus, 2017
- Eaton's pump, 1930s



EDUCATION

For most of 2023, the Museum operated without a formal Education or Programming team. Investments were made into building new strategies and capacities for the department. Despite this hurdle, Museum staff and volunteers rallied together to produce a successful year of learning and discovery, linking the collection to Curriculum-focused tours and workshops. Throughout the year, 3,885 students from schools, day camps, and daycares visited the Museum to experience a variety of customizable tours and hands-on activities. By the end of the year, we welcomed a new Head of Education and Public Programming and Education Assistant, in addition to several part-time Education Guides, to realize our goals for expansion and enhanced



offerings including four new Curriculum-based programs: Footwear in Our Community, Shoes Around the World, Be a Shoe Designer, and Footwear and the Environment. The Museum continues to prioritize learning and education and continues to explore new ways of working collaboratively with schools, teachers, and educational groups to bring knowledge and experience to the community.

Our *Step into Nature* March programming and exhibitions were well attended with 1,822 children and family visitors. A unique alternative to a registered day camp, our flexible programming allowed families to customize their schedule and experience, taking part in a dynamic series of activities, crafts, listening, learning, and dance sessions throughout each day.

BSM PROGRAMMING

Throughout 2023, the Museum continued to host public programming in conjunction with our two banner exhibition themes: florals and 1980s culture, as well as provide diverse, purpose-driven learning opportunities for adults of all ages. We hosted our last three virtual Salon Series events, an initiative that began during the pandemic as a way to engage audiences safely from home. In February, we welcomed costume designer Ellen Mirojnick to speak about her career journey and creative process. In March, Kimberly M. Jenkins, founder of The Fashion and Race Database,



spoke about the impact of our clothes and how we express ourselves through the lenses of politics, race, psychology and anthropology. Finally, in May, we closed the Series with a fascinating discussion with Avalon Fotheringham, Curator of Indian Textiles at the V&A Museum in London, UK.

The Museum was activated all year round with unique opportunities to connect, discover and grow. We continued to host our popular Uplifted: Art of Crochet workshop with Legin Knits, hosted workshops about Sock Mending, Moccasin Making,



Felt Slipper Making, and a Terrarium Making Workshop. We also hosted a Totally 80s Vinyl Record Paint Night and Totally 80s Trivia Night in tandem to the launch of our fall exhibition.

In August, we collaborated with grassroots, community-based initiative **Full Court 21 Canada** to co-host a free panel discussion called Ladies First: Celebrating Women of Colour in Sneaker Culture and Basketball to address the changes, challenges, and triumphs within these disciplines. The panel included Katherine Allen, Toronto Raptors as Manager, Social Impact, Nadine Brown,

former Marketing Director, Foot Locker Canada, Savanna Hamilton, Sportsnet reporter, and 14 year old top Canadian point guard Dinara Horsford, moderated by Marsha-Gaye Knight, Partnership Marketing Manager with CBC Sports and Olympics.

In October, we partnered with **The Music Gallery** to co-host Shoe Horn as part of their annual X Avant XVIII Festival. Curated by Joe Strutt, local musical artists performed experimental acoustic sets throughout the Museum culminating in an end of night concert like no other. Artists included: Tegan Dietsch, Lina Allemano, Why Be Normal, Tom Richards, Annie Elgie.

Also in October, the Museum teamed up with the **HOT DOCS Podcast Festival** for a dynamic, panel discussion including host Avery Trufelman from the fashion podcast Articles of Interest, named one of the 10 best podcasts of the year by *The New Yorker* and *The New York Times*, designer and activist Aurora James, founder of the award-winning shoe label, Brother Vellies and the Fifteen Percent Pledge, as well as Bata Shoe Museum's Director and Senior Curator, Elizabeth Semmelhack. Together, the three brilliant fashion minds brought life to the history and innovations which shape the contemporary design practices of footwear.

DIGITAL COMMUNITY



Meta
10.1 MILLION
Impressions



TikTok
6.53 MILLION +
views

WEBSITE



Unique views
449,853



Canadian
67.94%



American
20.15%



International
11.91%

**SOCIAL
COMMUNITY**



TikTok
116,040
followers



Facebook
125,600
followers



X (Twitter)
13,352
followers



Instagram
81,250
followers



YouTube
167,901
views





SPECIAL EVENTS



The Museum continued to welcome Friends and Patrons to our marquee events including the spring and fall exhibition openings and annual Founder's Lecture. For the spring opening of *In Bloom: Flowers and Footwear*, we partnered with the **Toronto Botanical Gardens** to create a flower shoe pin

making station for guests to enjoy as they perused the indoor gardens designed by **Rye Florals**. In the fall, for the lively Halloween night opening of *Dressed to Impress: Footwear and Consumerism in the 1980s*, guests attended in 'truly outrageous' 80s-inspired costume to explore the exhibition, the arcade room, candy station,

and hit the dance floor alongside a series of break, glamrock, and aerobics dance performances by **City Dance Corps** dressed in sponsored **Reebok** gear. For our sold-out annual Founder's Lecture, honouring Sonja Bata's birthday each November, we welcomed **Sarah Andelman**: visionary, culture-maker, and co-founder of

the revolutionary Parisian concept shop, Colette, to speak about leading some of the world's most high fashion brand collaborations.

New this year, the Museum hosted our first Pride Party titled *Click Clack* in partnership with **Pride Toronto**. The event kicked off with the unveiling of our first pair of Drag Queen shoes donated by Canada's Drag Race winner and international icon, **Priyanka**. The evening, hosted by Cityline's Fashion Expert **Daniel Reyes Cocka**, included an avant guard fashion show by **Fashion Art Toronto** and drag performance by **Miss Moço**.

“ It was truly one of the finest events I have had the privilege of attending. Your commitment to fostering inclusivity and diversity is commendable, and we are immensely grateful for the Bata Shoe Museum's partnership as a Major Cultural Partner.

- Derek Kang, Pride Toronto

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ACCESS FOR ALL



To foster opportunities for everyone to experience our exhibitions year-round, the Museum continued with various accessible programs and admission options including **Free Sundays**. Free admission was also shared through the **Toronto Public Library Museum + Arts Pass** which welcomed over 5,466 visitors. In partnership with the Institute for Canadian Citizenship, we provided free access to over 1,534 new Canadians as part of the **Canoo program**. Free admission is always provided to Indigenous visitors and care workers.

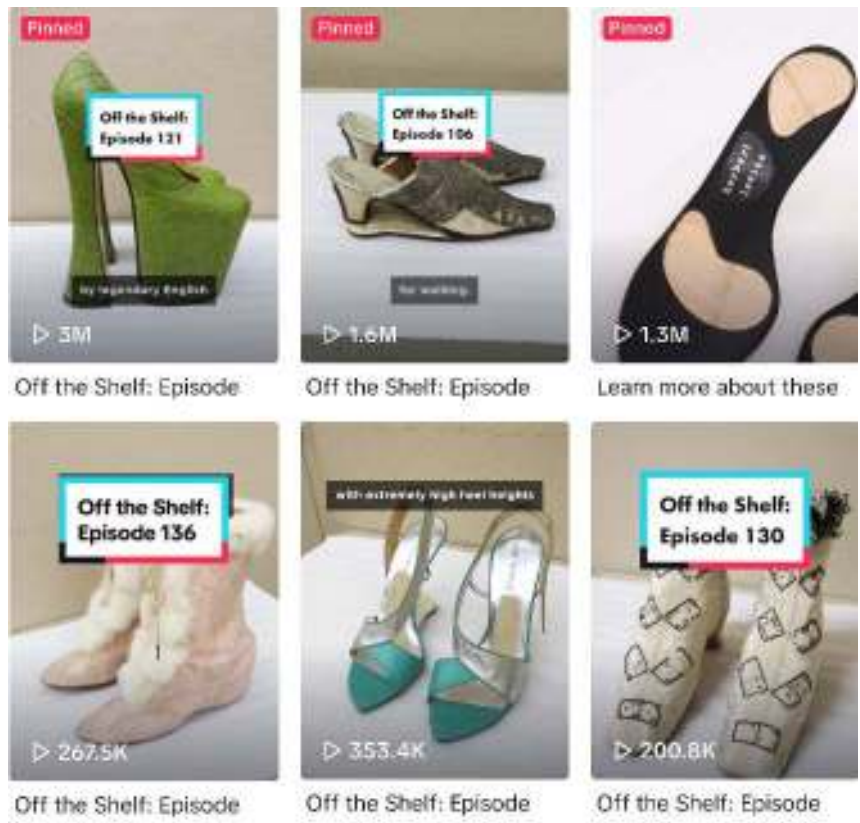


MARKETING & MEDIA

In 2023, the Bata Shoe Museum's marketing approach helped draw in record numbers of visitors, an increase of 30% over the previous year. Robust digital and out of home programs were introduced to include a combination of paid marketing, earned media, influencer collaboration, and media partnerships. Through the delivery of diverse, curated content aimed at a wide spectrum of new and returning audiences, the Museum realized a 12% growth in admissions revenue and a 63% increase in online audiences, most notably TikTok which grew by 30%.

Media channels from around the world continue to profile the Bata Shoe Museum as the foremost authority on the history of shoes. Earned media highlights include: *New York Times*, *CNN*, *National Geographic*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Post*, *Forbes*, *The Guardian*, *CBC*, *FASHION*, *blogTO*, *NOW*, *CP24*, and *Curiosity*.

View Sizzle video





SHARING KNOWLEDGE



One of the three Strategic Objectives of the Bata Shoe Museum is to build and strengthen staff by advancing and sharing knowledge, supporting professional development, and encouraging community building within the museums, tourism, and academic community around the world. This year:

- Elizabeth Semmelhack presented *Shoe Obsessed: Power, Identity, and the Manufacturing of Desire* as the Ruth Ketterer annual lecturer at the Center for Design and Material Culture, University of Wisconsin. She also presented *Collab: Sneakers x Culture* for the annual Luncheon by Design at the Denver Art Museum and spoke about Bata Shoe Museum Collection at Dress and Drinks, Costume Society of America.
- Suzanne Petersen presented *Re-imagining the Sector: Galleries in a Post-Pandemic World* at the Ontario Galleries
- Adrienne Naval spoke at TikTok *Culture Starts* panel about her work on the platform
- Nishi Bassi presented *Interpretive and Curatorial Planning: Balancing Audience, Content, and Method* for the University of Toronto, Faculty of Information in addition to speaking as part of the Costume Society UK, Fashioning A Decade virtual conference
- Sarah Power attended the COMPLEXCon Sneaker Conference and festival in Long Beach, California

OUR SUPPORTERS

The Bata Shoe Museum gratefully acknowledges the generosity of our esteemed supporters, funders, and donors whose annual contributions enable us to provide meaningful and impactful experiences for diverse communities both in person and online.



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boom 97.3 **designlines**

ROLLOUT SAINT-GEORGE

TORONTO STAR **THE KIT**



FULL TIME STAFF

Director & Senior Curator	Elizabeth Semmelhack
Deputy Director of Administration	Amy Prilika
Curator & Manager of Exhibitions	Nishi Bassi
Collections Manager & Registrar	Suzanne Petersen
Conservator	Laura Cunningham
Head of Education (until Feb. 2023)	Yvette Brown
Head of Education (as of Nov. 2023)	Qwyn C. MacLachlan
Education Assistant (until Mar. 2023)	Angie Ma
Education Assistant (as of Sept. 2023)	Shan Fernando
Head of Communications (as of Jan. 2023)	Sarah Power
Marketing & Social Media Manager	Adrienne Naval
Website & Graphics Designer	Gus Aguirre
Head of Facility and Visitor Services (until Nov. 2023)	Christopher Mitanidis
Head of Facility and Visitor Services (as of Sept. 2023)	Aruna Ajit
Manager of Visitor & Venue Services (as of Nov. 2023)	Jordan-na Belle-Isle
Development Manager	Anne Cobban
Office Administrator	Anupsingh Verma
Auditor	Ernst & Young

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