

Oriental elements give Vienna-based brand an edge



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It's clear at first glance that there is something special about rosa mosa shoes.

It's the brand of design-team Simone Springer and Yoji Mizobuchi, she from Austria and he from Japan.

They met at the start of the century at a footwear design course at Cordwainers College, now part of the London College of Fashion, and have been together ever since.

They moved first to Salzburg and made bags and shoes entirely by hand. Every piece was unique and sold as a one-off. Three years later they moved to the Austrian capital, where they stepped up production and where they still have their base.

They work with a small-scale footwear manufacturing partner near Vienna—which employs only artisans—making it possible for them to stay faithful to their design principles.

They describe their philosophy in these terms. It is “highly conceptual”, but based on things that already

exist, transferring them into something new. Their designs are contemporary and raw, but still stylish.

They insist on using high-quality traditional materials (naturally dyed bovine leather) or innovative new materials (carpets handwoven in Salzburg, for example) and believe that decorative elements should have a function.

The results of this approach have allowed them to build up a following among high-end footwear retailers and discerning consumers. Their shoes and accessories are on sale in Canada, the US, Germany, Austria, Italy, Switzerland, Belgium, the UK, Israel, Taiwan and Japan.

The designs are “infused with Japanese elements”, Simone Springer has said, which comes as no surprise when you learn that her partner was a student of Buddhist philosophy in Kyoto before choosing footwear design as the best channel for his creative energy.

Just as rosa mosa's spring-summer 2008 collection was arriving on store shelves, *World Footwear* had the chance to ask Yoji Mizobuchi about some of the ideas that have gone into the shoes.

In a shoe such as the Tunga (see this issue's front cover) or the Andrea, what would you point to as Japanese elements, and what as European ideas?

I think if you view it from a European perspective the vamp part of the Andrea (see above) can be seen as part of a Kimono. From a Japanese point of view it is the whole composition that matters, including the proportion and the pattern.

What has been your experience of being a footwear designer in Europe and how did this contrast with your experience in Japan?

I don't have any experience of the shoe industry in Japan and I think it's important to point out that many of my ideas now have been influenced by the culture, tradition and materials of Austria.



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The rosa mosa family. From left to right: Yoji Mizobuchi, Simone Springer and their assistant Miho.

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What would you say were the main differences between the consumer's experience of shopping for shoes in Ginza and shopping for shoes in, say, the Kärntner Straße in Vienna?

I would say, Japanese people do care about fashion from young age, they save money to buy clothes or shoes, anything fashionable. Sometimes, good things are expensive, but they still want to have them.

I think more consumers in Japan have become used to spending their money on fashion items, more than Europeans, I guess. The trends in Japan change so quickly; everyone always wants new things, different things. In Europe, consumers tend to be a little conservative.

Which Japanese or Buddhist influences have you seen in the recent work of Simone Springer?

She is interested in Japanese culture and tradition but it is difficult to say, 'this is from Japan'. Simone and I don't really design from anything directly. However, I think she has found some inspiration in Japanese things.

I have noticed that things that I am completely used to are very fresh for her. But when she has an idea, it is not totally European or totally Japanese.

During your most recent visits to Japan, what big changes have you seen in footwear fashion, whether you liked them or not?

I was last there in April 2007 and I am sure that footwear fashion in Japan has already changed since then. I am not interested in such movement and change. I just feel I want to make timeless shoes. 🍷



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