

Pride of Portugal

Fashion designer Miguel Vieira is a household name in Portugal and his creations are sold internationally. His success comes from discipline and hard work, and his designs are both elegant and sophisticated.

I am probably a romantic type but I do not conform to the image of the romantic designer who dreamily whiles away his time in the workshop waiting to be hit by a stroke of genius to then frantically get on with it," says Portuguese fashion designer, Miguel Vieira. "Design is discipline and hard work more than anything else. What helps me are my good planning skills. I am strict with myself but also with my 12 members of staff who co-design with me. You have to have rules that everyone abides by."

In September, Mr Vieira launched his spring-summer 2012 collection of footwear for men and women at Düsseldorf-based shoe fair GDS. Although this was the designer's first foray into the German market, his footwear and fashion collections have featured on international catwalks including Paris, London, Milan, Madrid, Istanbul, New York and Tokyo. Speaking of his decision to exhibit at the German event, Mr Vieira says: "We are launching our shoe line here first which is why we deliberately opted to feature at GDS; I have wanted to exhibit here for a long time. We primarily wish to target high-fashion stores – boutiques whose ranges suit our high-quality collections so we can also build a good reputation in this market."

Mr Vieira began designing fashion for women in 1988, launching his first collection under his own name. A men's collection quickly followed, solidifying the designer's signature style of minimalism with clear lines and a prominent use of black and white. After a few years of concentrating on apparel, Mr Vieira realised he wanted to create entire fashion concepts – not just clothing. "This is when things started to grow," he says. "The first line in fashion was joined by jeanswear and a sports collection, then sunglasses, even furniture and so on. Today, I work with 12 teamsters on 15 licenses that are now distributed to 100 sales outlets in Portugal and over 300 points of sale worldwide."

Miguel Vieira showcased his spring-summer 2012 shoe collection at the GDS fair in Germany.

CREDIT: GDS/CONSTANCE TILLMANN





Miguel Vieira has showcased his designs internationally on catwalks in Paris, London, New York and Tokyo.

CREDIT: MIGUEL VIEIRA



Stepping away from his preferred black and white colour schemes, Mr Vieira injected some colour into his new collection to add "summers weightlessness". CREDIT: GDS/CONSTANCE TILLMANN

In 1994 Mr Vieira launched his first shoe collections – first for men, then for women. Each footwear collection is inspired by a fashion theme, which also feeds into other aspects of the brand. "For each new season there is a fashion theme such as the Lisbon-Capri theme for spring-summer 2012," says Mr Vieira. "My team and I travel frequently and then we discuss all the ideas at a meeting and 'digest' our impressions. At this point everything is dovetailed in terms of design – be it for apparel or for shoes. Very rarely do items emerge independently."

The attraction of footwear for Mr Vieira is in their many components and materials – and in particular, leather. "I like leather, its touch and the variety the material offers," he says. "For this collection I have used various materials in one shoe, sometimes up to six types of leather. For instance, with one pair of ankle boots I have combined light blue patent leather with coarse canvas. It is precisely the contrast between these rich and very plain materials that typifies this collection, making it so irresistible."

Although the Miguel Vieira trademark look is black and white, the spring-summer 2012 footwear collection features many pastel shades and colourful details. Mr Vieira says of this colourful new collection that, although 'black and white' is a recurring theme, colours

"stand for summery weightlessness". He says:

"Although I love to work with black and white, colour is important in our collections so as to ensure product variety as this allows us to offer our customers a larger selection of shoes. The finish of the shoes is also interesting. We look at every little detail, even when designing the soles that are produced in one piece. And featured inside the shoes is a hologram with the logo."

Part of the appeal of Miguel Vieira's footwear, fashion and accessories is its Portuguese origins – and this is just one of the reasons why it is corporate policy for the company to produce exclusively in Portugal. "This allows us to stay in direct touch with the manufacturing sites," says Mr Vieira. "I visit all the companies that cooperate with us at least once a month. I am very disciplined and see myself not only as a designer but also a businessman. Everything must be taken into consideration."

Mr Vieira says he is inspired by travel to "fashionable beach destinations and cities like Milan, Paris, New York and London," although films are also a great source of inspiration for the designer – and may explain why his footwear is so decadent. "I like glamorous 50s movies and stars such as Humphrey Bogart, Cathérine Deneuve, Marilyn Monroe, Paul Newman, Elizabeth Taylor, Ingrid Bergman and Marlon Brando." 🌐