

In a new twist to an old partnership, Brazilian designer Sarah Chofakian has recreated an updated version of an old Repetto shoe, the Tango.

Chagall-inspired shoe collaboration



Sarah Chofakian and Jean-Marc Gaucher with the Brazilian designer's new take on the Repetto Tango.

CREDIT: SARAH CHOFAKIAN

The Sarah Chofakian Tango in chéri red and black distressed goatskin leather. The shoe is based on Repetto's historic Tango line.

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Brazilian footwear designer Sarah Chofakian has launched a new collaboration with French high-end shoe brand Repetto, for which Ms Chofakian has reinterpreted a historic Repetto model called Tango. In an announcement at the launch of the Sarah Chofakian campaign, both brands said they shared a commitment to "handmade, timeless creations and excellent quality".

The Sarah Chofakian Tango shoes will be available in Repetto boutiques across Paris as well as in Printemps Haussmann, Galeries Lafayette and Bon Marché stores in the French capital. In Brazil, they will go on sale in the Repetto boutique in the Cidade Jardim mall in São Paulo, as well as in Sarah Chofakian stores throughout the country.

Ms Chofakian explains that she feels she has had a hand in helping Repetto make an impression on the Brazilian market. Since 2008, she has kept a little space on her own-brand store shelves for a limited number of Repetto shoes. "For five years," she continues, "we had exclusive rights in São Paulo to stock Repetto. This gave me a great chance to see just how customers personally reacted to the famous ballet flats and to build up ties with the brand."

A slow introduction to footwear

To build up a relationship over a number of years is often the best way in business. Repetto's chief executive, Jean-Marc Gaucher, only became involved in the footwear business slowly. He was a sound recordist for a well known television channel, TF1, when he took the opportunity to start distributing footwear from Reebok, then a new brand in France. He introduced Reebok to the French market without giving up his media job and was still involved with TF1 when the athletic footwear company had 27 employees in France. He took up his present position in 1999 (by which time his sound recording days were behind him).

Patience paid off in this instance for Ms Chofakian too because, when Jean-Marc Gaucher, decided 2014 would be a good year to add the name of a Brazilian designer to the short and exclusive list of fashion names he has invited to make shoes for his brand, Sarah Chofakian was quickly in the frame.

Pictures full of magic

Something less expected helped her seal the deal, however. She relates that when she and Jean-Marc Gaucher met for an initial discussion, he was intrigued by her current collection, autumn-winter (in Brazil) 2014. For this, Ms Chofakian took her inspiration from the painter Marc Chagall, who was born in Belarus, but became a French citizen and spent most of his long life there. "Marc Chagall was moved by emotions," the Brazilian shoe designer said upon launching the collection. "He used his art as a channel for expressing the force and intensity of his own story, which included surviving the Bolshevik revolution and the Nazis. He showed that, for people who allow themselves to dream, the imagination is the only limit there is. His pictures are always filled with magic." There are shoes in the collection called Chagall, Bella (the painter's wife's name), Cubism, Modern, Artistic and other names reminiscent of his life and work.

Ms Chofakian says that when she and Jean-Marc Gaucher got talking about this, they discovered they shared a passion for art and "ended up as good friends". From an initial discussion about the possibility of a collaboration between Repetto and a Brazilian designer (perhaps her, perhaps not), she says they were soon discussing the format the partnership should take.

She describes the new Tango as a classic Sarah Chofakian style, produced in the Repetto factory in the small town of Saint-Médard d'Excideuil in the Dordogne, using the same leather as Repetto uses in its ballet flats. She joins a select band: previous contributors to the brand's capsule collections include Issey Miyake, Karl Lagerfeld and Mary Katrantzou. She says she is proud to see her name beside theirs. 🌀