

FASHION NEWS

Marion Ayonote On Launching Her Footwear And Accessory Brand, Her Dream Collaboration And More



Marion Ayonote's shoes and accessories are not for shrinking violets. Courageous, colorful and singular in design, Ayonote creates one-of-a-kind luxury pieces for original women.

A Cordwainers alumna, the designer launched her eponymous brand in 2000 and is renown for her bold, bright, and vertiginous high heels. All of Ayonote's pieces are handcrafted in England and Italy, and the brand boasts an international presence with a loyal customer base spanning from the U.S. to Russia.

Ayonote's designs have been featured in publications like Vanity Fair, Harper's Bazaar Singapore and Nylon Magazine. The designer's celebrity clientele include industry titans like Gabrielle Union, Kelly Clarkson, Whitney Port and Tyra Banks, among others.

Ayonote's pieces stand the test of time and trends and are testament to her unique aesthetic and approach to design. Read on for our full interview with Ayonote in which she discusses overcoming hurdles in her career, her dream collaboration and more.



(Photo : Courtesy of Marion Ayonote)
The Conqueror Boot in purple.

Fashion Times: When was the first moment you knew you wanted to design footwear? Could you briefly describe the event or experience?

Marion Ayonote: "I toyed with the idea in the '90s but was still a student. It was on New Year's Eve, possibly 1995.

My friends and I agreed to meet at a party and for some reason I changed my mind at the last minute and opted for a quiet evening instead. My friend Beky Graham-Douglas asked what I hoped for in the New Year -- what we hoped to achieve etc. And I just went for it, I kind of prophesied my brand into existence. That's really it! She looked at me; I asked, 'Are you OK? Do I sound crazy?' She went 'NO! Sounds fantastic, go for it and don't look back.'

So I took a year out, researched the industry and met with some successful designers who were kind enough to share their experiences. Jimmy Choo was very supportive and generous with his time. I would ring him up and he would ask me to come-round and show him what I had done. He advised me to attend Cordwainers. He was a real inspiration."

FT: You launched your brand back in 2000. What was one of the most challenging events or obstacles you had to overcome in order to get your label off the ground?

MA: "Initially, I wasn't sure about funding and didn't have a business plan. Thankfully The Prince's Youth Business Trust helped a great deal with training and advice, so I asked my mentor to help with my business plan (as in to do the plan herself). She was baffled and broke the news gently, 'Marion you will have to do your business plan yourself.'

I did it and couldn't believe when I was told by the panel that I had done a great job. I needed a lot more than they offered, so I turned to my mother and she helped fund my first collection. I had a really good start as I received a lot of support, however, I wasn't ready for the challenges ahead. There were a few challenges [with] sourcing, delivery, cancellations, choosing the right shows, the right agent, etc."

FT: You recently launched a new line. Can you tell us a little bit about it and the inspiration?

MA: "Actually [it's] an extension of our Conqueror Classics. "**Shoes from Venus, Shoes from Mars**" is a capsule collection I launched during Premiere Classe, Paris Fashion Week.

I wanted something topical for FW16. It's about society, our similarities and individual preferences -- different yet the same. My work is loosely based on fantasy, so I created something playful yet sophisticated. I wanted to take things a little bit further for FW16. It just felt like the right time to wear statement shoes. I was surprised at the reaction we received. It's amazing to see how positively people react to color."

FT: Who is the woman you design for?

MA: "I design shoes for the Virtuous Woman."

FT: What feeds your creativity? Any rituals, habits, daily routines?

MA: "I don't have a routine as such, although I listen to contemporary worship daily -- when I wake up, on my way to work and whilst working. I find it soothing."

FT: If you could collaborate with one artist or designer, who would they be and why?

MA: "There is more than one: Domenico Dolce and Stefano Gabbana. I find Dolce & Gabbana aesthetically pleasing."

FT: What's next for the brand? Any new partnerships, collaborations or launches on the horizon?

MA: "It's evolving and expanding. Without giving much away, new opportunities for growth and expansion into new markets."

FT: As a designer, what is the legacy you wish to leave behind?

MA: "While showing in New York I had a lovely lady come up to me saying she found love wearing my shoes; the guy walked up to her because he thought her shoes were beautiful. I was absolutely delighted. If I can play a small part in making people happy -- putting smiles on faces, creating excitement -- then I think that would be alright."

Click over to Marion Ayonote's [website](#) for more on the designer and to shop her unique heels and accessories.

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