

BOOTS

The Height of Fashion

Gallery Guide

This exhibition examines how boots emerged as a modern fashion phenomenon and became an essential accessory in every woman's closet. The objects are organized according to three themes: "Sex," "Rebellion," and "Status." Today, a woman's boots can convey a bold statement of sexuality, a challenge to mainstream fashion, or a symbol of wealth and status.

A sexy boot...



This 1994 Christian Louboutin evening boot features a silk satin in bold red—the traditional color of passion—that shouts, "Look at me!" When a woman wears stiletto heels like these, she acquires a distinctive, sexy walk. "Men are like bulls," Louboutin says. "They cannot resist the red sole."

Do you think this boot is sexy? What makes it sexy? Is it the red color involved in this design? Are there other sexy colors? Is it the sparkle of the passementerie? Or the glint of the gold ring around the slimmest part of the stiletto heel? Look at the other boots in this section. What makes them sexy? Is it their shape? The materials – fur, leather, chains?

A rebellious boot...

Independent women have long been inspired by designer Norma Kamali, who opened her boutique, OMO (On My Own) in 1978. Here, she borrows the look of a Converse high-top sneaker, originally worn by male basketball players, and makes it into fashionable footwear for a modern woman. The defiantly informal sneaker style has long been associated with teenage rebellion.



When or how is wearing boots an act of rebellion? Think of your favorite rebel; what type of footwear did she or he wear? What type of boot is best suited to rebellion?

A status boot...

At first glance, these boots by couturier Paul Poiret might appear rather unremarkable. But they were designed nearly 100 years ago, and wouldn't be out of fashion today. When the designer's wife Denise first wore these, they stopped traffic in Paris because their radical simplicity made them dramatically different from other boots of the period. As her husband's muse, Denise wore luxury items Poiret designed before anyone. She wore them with such flair that they became status symbols, highly desired by others.



What makes a boot a status symbol—is it the price tag? The fame of the designer? Who is a muse today, and how do they influence the success of a fashion house?

Glossary:

Couturier: The designer for an establishment engaged in haute couture, or hand-made, highly exclusive fashion.

Muse: A person who is a source of inspiration for artists or designers.

Passementerie: Fancy trimming made of cord.