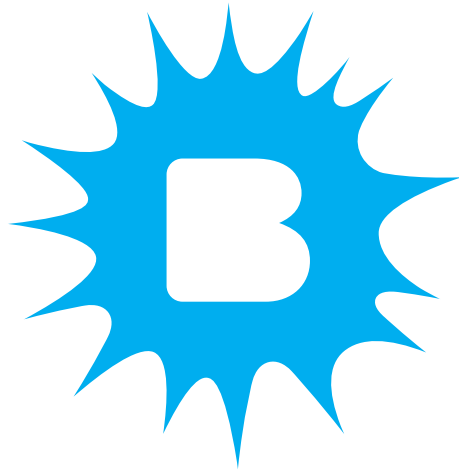


# Press Release



April 2015

## **Brooklyn Museum to Present Exhibition Exploring Sneaker Culture on View July 10–October 4, 2015**

From their modest origins in the mid-nineteenth century to high-end sneakers created in the past decade by designers such as Christian Louboutin and Prada, sneakers have become a global obsession. *The Rise of Sneaker Culture* is the first exhibition to explore the complex social history and cultural significance of the footwear now worn by billions of people throughout the world. The exhibition, which includes approximately 150 pairs of sneakers, debuts at the Brooklyn Museum on July 10 where it will be on view through October 4, 2015, before traveling to three other museums.

Originating at the Bata Shoe Museum in Toronto, the touring exhibition is organized by the American Federation of Arts (AFA) and the Bata Shoe Museum and explores the evolution of the sneaker from its beginnings to its current role as status symbol and urban icon. Included are works from collections such as the Bata Shoe Museum, Kosow Sneaker Museum, and Northampton Museums and Art Gallery; the archives of manufacturers such as Adidas, Converse, Nike, Puma, and Reebok; as well as private collectors such as hip-hop legend Darryl “DMC” McDaniels, sneaker guru Bobbito Garcia, and Dee Wells of *Obsessive Sneaker Disorder*. Also included are film footage, photographic images, and design drawings that contextualize the sneakers and explore the social history, technical innovation, fashion trends, and celebrity endorsements that have shaped sneaker culture over the past two centuries.



**Nike. Air Jordan 1, 1985. Nike Archives.  
(Photo: Ron Wood. Courtesy of American  
Federation of Arts/Bata Shoe Museum)**

Organized into five sections, *The Rise of Sneaker Culture* includes an 1860s spiked running shoe, a pair of 1936 track shoes, the original Air Force 1 and early Adidas Superstars; contemporary sneaker collaborations with artists such as Damien Hirst, Jeremy Scott, Jeff Staple, and Kanye West; as well as sneakers and related prototype drawings spanning the career of Nike sneaker design legend Tinker Hatfield. In addition, the exhibition features Air Jordans I–XX3, highlighting the pivotal role that the coveted series of sneakers has played in the rise of contemporary sneaker culture.

The development of rubber-soled footwear from the 1830s to the 1920s is chronicled in the section **“Rubber Revolution,”** which explores how the new vulcanization process was applied to the manufacture of comfortable and practical athletic footwear. During the same period, an increasingly industrialized society allowed people more

## **Brooklyn Museum**

200 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn, NY 11238-6052  
T (718) 638-5000 F (718) 501-6134  
[www.brooklynmuseum.org](http://www.brooklynmuseum.org)

leisure time, leading to the rise in popularity of sports and physical culture. Included in this section are one of the oldest existing running shoes, created by Thomas Dutton and Thorowgood in the 1860s; an original 1917 Converse All Star/Non Skid sneaker; and a 1920s Keds rubber-soled, canvas top shoe, a version of which is still in production.

Spanning the 1920s to the early 1970s, **“The Body Politic: Sneakers, Statehood, and Sporting,”** examines the development of specialized sport shoes and explores the democratization of the sneaker in relation to nationalism and the evolution of consumer culture. Sneakers were increasingly worn by a wide range of socioeconomic and age groups, and as early as the 1920s celebrities like basketball player Chuck Taylor and tennis player Jack Purcell began promoting brands. Included in this section are the Dominion Rubber Company Fleet Foot, a high-heeled women’s athletic shoe from ca. 1925; the Converse Gripper, made from the late 1940s through the early 1950s; and an Adidas Allround, one of the first leather high-tops, from 1960.

The section **“Sports Stars and Status Sneakers: Fashioning Fitness in the Twentieth Century”** focuses on the 1970s and 1980s, when many high-end sneakers moved beyond basic athletic use to become emblems of conspicuous consumption. This section explores the growth of fitness culture in relation to the “Me Generation” and how the sneaker evolved into a fashion item as prized on the street as in the gym, closing with the two most pivotal events in contemporary sneaker culture: the 1985 launch of the Air Jordan franchise and Run-DMC signing on with Adidas after the 1986 release of “My Adidas.” Included are specialized signature sneakers like Reebok Freestyles released in 1981 for aerobic exercise; the extremely rare Bata x Wilson x John Wooden (1977); and the Puma Suede, which was later endorsed by Knicks legend Walt “Clyde” Frazier.

The section **“ ‘Fresh Out the Box’: Sneaker Culture and Shifting Masculinities”** focuses on the synergies between hip-hop, basketball, and sneakers from the 1980s to today, when sneakers were transformed into treasured personal possessions, collectible items, and touchpoints for a mass audience. Boldly reintroducing color and pattern into men’s dress, fashionable sneakers became central to the idea of contemporary urban masculinity as markers of status and taste. Designer sneakers recently produced by Lanvin, Hussein Chalayan, Jimmy Choo, and Yohji Yamamoto raised the sneaker to high fashion. Included in this section are examples of rare cult classics such as Louis Vuitton x Kanye West Don (2009), Nike Stewie Griffin LeBron VI (2009), Nike Dunk Supremes (2003), Adidas x Jeremy Scott Totems (2013), and Nike Pigeons (2005).

The exhibition concludes with **“Design and Innovation,”** which includes a selection of Tinker Hatfield designs and shoes, among them the Nike Air Trainer 1, the first cross-trainer, and the iconic Air Jordan III and XI, as well as Eric Avar’s Nike Foamposite, Paul Litchfield’s Reebok Pump, and GE x Android Homme’s Missions moon boots. Also included in the section are excerpts from the documentary *Just for Kicks*, covering sneaker culture from the 1970s to 2004.

*The Rise of Sneaker Culture* is organized by the American Federation of Arts and the Bata Shoe Museum. The exhibition was curated by Elizabeth Semmelhack, Senior Curator at the Bata Shoe Museum. The Brooklyn presentation has been coordinated by Lisa Small, Curator of Exhibitions at the Brooklyn Museum.

Following Brooklyn, the exhibition will be presented at the Toledo Museum of Art from December 3, 2015, to February 28, 2016; a venue to be announced soon; and the Speed Art Museum from September 9 to November 27, 2016.

The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue published by the AFA in partnership with the Bata Shoe Museum and Rizzoli. Included are an introduction by Bobbito Garcia, an essay by Elizabeth Semmelhack, Senior Curator of the Bata Shoe Museum, an essay on conserving your sneakers by Ada Hopkins, Conservator of the Bata Shoe Museum, and interviews between Dee Wells and Nike designers Tinker Hatfield and Eric Avar, as well as a variety of contributions by sneaker experts including seminal figures such as Cey Adams, James Bond, Darryl "DMC" McDaniels, Marc Eckō, D'Wayne Edwards, Walt "Clyde" Frazier, Adam "Ad Rock" Horowitz, Christian Louboutin, Hiroki Nakamura, Tom Sachs, Jeremy Scott, and Stan Smith, among others.

#sneakerculture

#### **Media Contacts:**

Emily Liebowitz, Public Information Associate, (718) 501-6354, [emily.liebowitz@brooklynmuseum.org](mailto:emily.liebowitz@brooklynmuseum.org)  
Fatima Kafele, Media Relations Manager, (718) 501-6331, [fatima.kafele@brooklynmuseum.org](mailto:fatima.kafele@brooklynmuseum.org)

#### **GENERAL INFORMATION**

##### **Admission:**

Contribution \$16; students with valid I.D. and seniors \$10. Ages 19 and under FREE. Group tours or visits must be arranged in advance by calling extension 234.

##### **Directions:**

Subway: Seventh Avenue express (2 or 3) to Eastern Parkway/Brooklyn Museum stop; Lexington Avenue express (4 or 5) to Nevins Street, cross platform and transfer to the 2 or 3. Bus: B41, B69, B48. On-site parking available.

##### **Museum Hours:**

Wednesday and Friday, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Thursday 11 a.m. to 10 p.m.; Saturday and Sunday, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.; first Saturday of each month (except September), 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. Closed Monday, Tuesday, Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day.