



Tuesday 28 March 2023

**Lecturer – Mary Alexander
Shoes in Art or Shoes as Art**

'My shoes are not fashion. They are gestures: objects that happen to be fashion'. Manolo Blahnik. 'A shoe without sex appeal is as barren as a tree without leaves'. Rita de Acosta Lydig, Patron of Yantorny. A seemingly frivolous subject, but one which is layered in symbolism, fantasy, desire and status.

We will look at representations of the historic shoe in art of various periods, and also the late nineteenth/twentieth century developments which led towards the shoe as an art form and the enhanced status of the designer working for an international celebrity clientele. Whether it be the extreme elongated points of medieval poulaines, denoting an impracticality which was of no concern to its wealthy male wearers (in fact setting them apart from the mundane worker), or the towering chopines seen in Carpaccio's courtesans, or red heels as symbol of aristocratic status, or Sex in the City character, Carrie Bradshaw, whose pair of Manolos become a mugger's object of desire - we will

explore the powerful symbolism of footwear, and enjoy the sheer beauty of these creations as seen through paintings, portraiture, film and fine examples of footwear in worldwide historic collections. The changing styles, shapes, and materials of male and female shoes and footwear will be examined in their social, cultural and sartorial context.



Mary Alexander



18th Century Man's Court Shoe with Red Heel



1920's Yantourny for Nancy Lancaster



1927 Pluchino Heel



1928 Perugia Turban Shoe for J Baker