

marginalia by Hitler and Neville Chamberlain) and a complete set of plans for D-Day (as well as a map with original notations on landings and units), to explosives disguised as lumps of coal, German enigma machines, a French sewing kit used to relay messages for the Resistance, and the bronze bust of Hitler that General George S. Patton used as a doorstop.

Another half-million items are in storage, including the latest acquisition, the most complete known mobile auxiliary surgical hospital—a 50-foot canvas tent, two operating tables, anesthesia equipment, thousands of instruments. “What’s amazing about it is the atmosphere it creates,” says Carter. “People entered that tent hanging on to life. And because of the innovation of the MASH, which was new to World War II, many people who would

Samples of Hitler’s art supplies and watercolor works. Rendell says, “He rarely painted people.”



have died were saved and went home.” That mobile hospital will likely be set up in the museum’s pending reincarnation as a two-story, 62,000-square-foot structure (six times its current size) slated to be built and fully open to the public within three years.

KENNETH W. RENDELL, who built his career as a dealer in historic documents, began the collection at age 16. Born in 1943, the Somerville native was unusually sensitive to shifting cultural perceptions of the

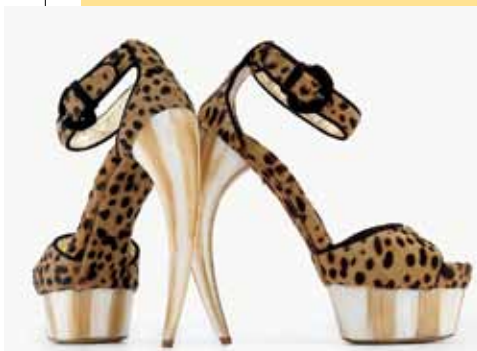
war. “In the 1940s I remember neighbors and friends of my parents coming back, mostly medics from the Pacific, and talking about the horrors,” he says, “but by the 1950s everyone was talking about the glories of war; no one could afford to remember the horrors because they were too devastating. I was struck by this and concerned, even though I was just a kid.” His goal in amassing the ephemera, then and now, is to “save the reality of the war, which reflects the very personal and complex causes and consequences, which were horrible—for everyone.”

CURIOSITIES: Not Made for Walkin’

Less a fête for the feet than a feast for the eyes, much of the haute couture footwear on display in *Killer Heels: The Art of the High-Heeled Shoe* at the Currier Museum is “barely wearable,” admits curator Samantha Cataldo. “Any woman who has put her foot in a non-sensible shoe knows they are not comfortable.” Instead, the 150 shoes range from eighteenth-century European embroidered precursors of the “pump” to Dutch designer Iris van Herpen’s mounds of tangled black strands, which resemble

the roots in a mangrove swamp, and were produced by a 3-D printer. All are presented as design objects akin to titled sculpture, and as “layered cultural symbols in narratives of attraction, transformation,

At left: “Unicorn Tayss,” Walter Steiger, spring 2013; Casuccio e Scalera per Loris Azzaro, 1974-79 (below); and gingham platform shoes, Vivienne Westwood, 1993



empowerment, and play,” per exhibit notes from the original show organized by Lisa Small at the Brooklyn Museum last year.

Take Walter Steiger’s fetishistic “Unicorn Tayss.” Leopard-print vamps and ankle straps top six-inch curved stiletto heels, à la golden horns. Rem D. Koolhaas’s “Eamz” capture the industrial chic of mid-century designers Charles and Ray Eames: fire-engine red flats that appear hoisted by a metallic lever at the heel. Nicholas Kirkwood’s suede “Pumps,” encrusted with Swarovski crystals in a floral pattern, lack any utility.

Some 50 examples on display are historic, such as satin-weave-embroidered silk Manchu-era platforms, Chinese shoes for bound feet, and traditional wooden Japanese *geta* from the 1800s. They point to the Eastern origins of high heels. (Shoes have always walked the line “between form and function,” Cataldo says.) Stilted bath sandals in the Ottoman Empire kept feet dry, and heeled equestrian Persian footwear kept riders firmly in stirrups, but both soon evolved as fashion styles that represented physical status, beauty, and even worldly power.

Fast-forward to the twentieth century and Roger Vivier and Salvatore Ferragamo, the designers most often credited with “inventing” the stiletto heel. To create the blade they adapted extruded steel, Cataldo explains, a material also on the rise in transforming the world of architecture and the urban built landscape, largely in the form of skyscrapers. “That shoe was really when the high heel became a sex symbol,” she adds. Wearing them “changes our whole posture...pushing certain parts of the body out and other parts in.” However glamorous “killer heels” can be, they do have a polarizing effect. “For some people, putting heels on makes them feel taller and more confident and offers a sense of authority,” Cataldo notes. “For others, they symbolize objectification and constricting standards of beauty. Sometimes, too, people just find them erotic.”

Currier Museum of Art
Manchester, New Hampshire
www.currier.org
February 6-May 15

—N.P.B.