

KNOCKOFF

THE LOOK FOR LESS BY LEANNE DELAP
LOVE KNOT NECKLACE

This love knot necklace was paired with metallic separates on Max Mara's spring/summer 2010 runway. GIUSEPPE CACACE/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

I'm in a superstitious state this spring. Things are going awfully well and that is when all sane folk start to worry. When I get like this, I turn to totemic pieces of jewellery to keep the good juju inside and the bad juju far away from me and mine.

Summer is jewellery season: While pearls go well with winter's snow, rosy cheeks and pallor, there is a lot more skin crying out for less formal ornamentation when the mercury rises and the clothes come off. That said, I've never been a big believer in piling on masses of junky jewellery: Oh, honey, you think low-rent Christmas tree is a good look?

Jewellery is personal, talismanic. I have a big silver ring, an organic blob really, by brilliant Toronto jewellery artist Alexandra Schleicher, that I would never leave the house without. I have a stack of mix-and-match leather bracelets with tear-drop stones by another fav Toronto designer, Jane Apor, for my left wrist and a stack of \$5 silver bangles from H&M for my right. (Special doesn't necessarily mean expensive; by the end of the season,

each bangle will have cost me 0.000001 cent per daily use! And these were a gift from my best friend, so they are indeed priceless.)

As for necklaces, I love this simple Max Mara chain love knot at left. I aspire to everything in that store and everything the label stands for – classy, grown-up, Italian, top-quality. Its signature camel coat will some day be mine, if I ever stop raiding the change jar.

The chain, a long, fused lariat, is elegant and will look great on lightly (fake) tanned cleavage. It is the kind of simple signature piece that, if you wear it every day, will imbue you with the superpowers of your choice.

And best of all, my pennies are still on hold for the coat: I found a pretty smashing knockoff at Banana Republic (www.bananarepublic.com) for just \$62. Buy now and start prorating a summer of good luck on your chest.



We found our equally glitzy knockoff for \$62 at Banana Republic (www.bananarepublic.com). DEBORAH BAIC/THE GLOBE AND MAIL

FASHION

The consummate sole man

John Fluevog's fans have ranged from Julie Christie to Jack White. Now, a B.C. exhibition explores the shoemaker's storied career

BY MARSHA LEDERMAN VANCOUVER

It's not just a rationalization for an over-the-top purchase: Shoes can be art. They can also reflect history, telling the story of a civilization or, in the case of a new exhibition at the Museum of Vancouver, of the city that grew up alongside a footwear phenomenon.

Fox, Fluevog & Friends: The Story Behind the Shoes chronicles the birth and growth of the footwear known by aficionados simply as Fluevogs. There are old photographs, handwritten letters, sketches and, of course, shoes – more than 150 of them, from towering platform clogs and Victorian-style lace-up boots to pointy Floofies and silver sandals perched atop a giant X to mark the new millennium.

The shoes are so out there that it's hard to imagine they were the result of anything but a life-long dream to make footwear history. But that's hardly, as the exhibition reveals, the case.

"I've never been a shoe person, really," John Fluevog, 62, said during a preview at the museum last week. "I just happen to be in the shoe business."

It's a funny statement coming from the man whose name is now synonymous with funky footwear. (Fluevog, incidentally, wasn't his name originally; it was Nielson. His grandfather changed it to Fluevog after the Norwe-

gian village from which the family came.)

Pulling up to the museum in his vintage white Aston Martin in a pair of two-tone brown leather 1611 1st Avenues (named for the address of his first Seattle store and available for sale this fall), Fluevog looks every bit the fashion icon. But it was actually his original partner, Peter Fox, who took the first step toward shoe superstardom about 40 years ago.

In the 1960s, Fox was working at Sheppard's, a downtown Vancouver shoe store catering to businessmen, when he was sent on a buying trip to Europe. The fashion-forward London he encountered inspired a new outlook: Fox went on an envelope-pushing buying spree, overspending on footwear that wasn't exactly suited to the average Vancouver businessman.

Shortly after that trip, Fox decided to open his own store and took a young protégé – Fluevog, then 21 – with him.

Fox & Fluevog Boots and Shoes opened in the Gastown neighbourhood in 1970, modelled loosely on the library in the 1938 film *Pygmalion*. It featured floor-to-ceiling bookshelves stacked with old books the guys had bought by the pound around town.

Initially, they sold men's shoes only. But within a few months, they were selling women's shoes, too.

Now 77, Fox began design-

ing footwear unlike anything



These sky-high clogs were designed and made by Ken Rice, who entered into a partnership with John Fluevog in the 1970s. The shoes are featured in *Fox, Fluevog and Friends*, on now at the Museum of Vancouver. REBECCA BLISSETT

being sold in Vancouver at that time. He was strongly influenced by historical art: stained glass, the King Tut exhibition at New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art, 18th- and 19th-century paintings.

The shoes became very big with the hippie crowd. At \$75 for a pair of clogs, they weren't cheap, but that didn't seem to matter. "We were sell-

ing loads of them," Fluevog says.

The clogs were the specialty of shoemaker Ken Rice, whose collaboration with Fox and Fluevog began with some bartering: Rice made belts and bags at a Christian commu-

nity – often with biblical phrases engraved on them – and he traded those for Fox & Fluevog's. "When it came to

the point where almost everybody in the commune had a couple pairs of shoes, we wanted to get paid some other way," says Rice, who ultimately joined the payroll.

The store's cachet was boosted by some high-profile customers: Julie Christie, Faye Dunaway, Warren Beatty and Robert Altman all shopped there in the early seventies.

And the celebrity worship continues: Jack White is a fan and so is Iggy Pop. According to the company, Marilyn Manson also once dropped by looking for freebies (which were not forthcoming).

Both Rice and Fox ultimately left the fold – amicably – to pursue their own shoe endeavours, leaving Fluevog to run the business on his own.

But it wasn't until the mid-1980s that Fluevog began designing shoes himself.

His first pair was inspired by a customer who came into the store wearing cowboy boots that were probably too big for her and turned up at the toe. The result: Fluevog's first pair of pilgrims, which featured a giant buckle and super-pointy upturned toe.

Since then, there have been shoes inspired by nurses, rock stars and beat poets.

In the process, Fluevog has become known not just for his edgy designs, but for his whimsical dedications – often engraved on intricately crafted soles – paying homage to a beloved radio station or newspaper or including an inspirational message.

"Shoes are your soul," he says in a deliberate double entendre. "They're what you're standing on between you and the earth, they're your foundation of who you are. They tell a lot about you as a person."

» *Fox, Fluevog & Friends* is at the Museum of Vancouver (www.museumofvancouver.ca) until Sept. 26.