

FORM & FUNCTION SHOE ART BY CHRIS FRANCIS

CURRICULUM GUIDE

AUG. 13-DEC. 8, 2019





Installation view, *Form and Function: Shoe Art by Chris Francis*.

About the Artist and the Exhibition

SCAD FASH presents *Form & Function: Shoe Art by Chris Francis*, an exhibition of iconic footwear by the Los Angeles-based shoe designer. Francis blurs the line between art and fashion, implementing unconventional techniques and materials. Strong colors, bold shapes and sharp lines are all characteristic of his sculptural, architectural designs.

Francis became a notable figure in the street art community before gravitating to shoe design. Inspired by the teachings of the early 20th-century Bauhaus school of design, he manipulates a wide range of uncommon shoemaking materials such as glass, concrete, metal and plastic. Francis is a consummate craftsman, employing both modern and traditional techniques. He cites the rebellious, DIY spirit of the punk movement as a foundation for his independent design house, where he is committed to small-batch, in-house, handcrafted production. His bespoke shoes have been worn by rock legends including Mick Mars of Mötley Crüe, Steve Jones of the Sex Pistols and Lita Ford of the Runaways.

About SCAD and SCAD FASH

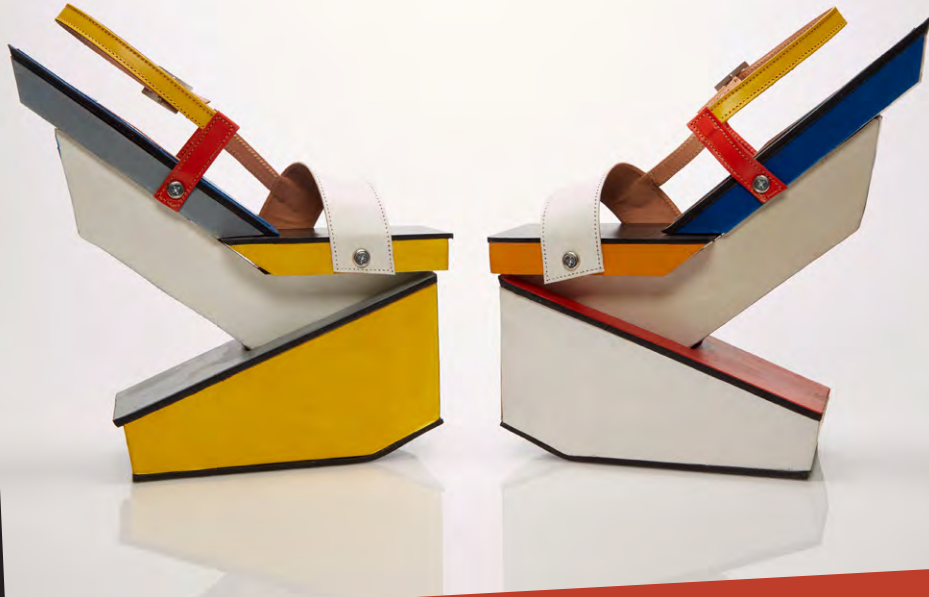
Offering more degree programs and specializations than any other art and design university, SCAD is uniquely qualified to prepare talented students for creative professions. SCAD FASH Museum of Fashion + Film is an integral part of the SCAD educational experience, fortified by the university's strong global presence and worldwide connections to renowned contemporary fashion designers, filmmakers and creative professionals. Situated within SCAD Atlanta, SCAD FASH welcomes visitors of all ages to dynamic exhibitions and captivating films.

Francis is a former art student, graphic designer and carpenter who has tailored his skills to shoemaking. Unable to secure an apprenticeship within the contemporary shoemaking community in Los Angeles, he sought out time-honored, immigrant artisans, acquiring their vintage machines and tools to learn the trade for himself. Francis' work has been shown in a solo exhibition at Craft Contemporary in Los Angeles and in group exhibitions at the Palm Springs Art Museum and Richmond Art Center in California. His designs have been featured in *Vogue*, *Metropolis* magazine and *Ornament* magazine, among others.

Form & Function: Shoe Art by Chris Francis is curated by Rafael Gomes, SCAD director of fashion exhibitions.

SCAD FASH educational materials engage K-12 audiences in activities that enhance understanding of art and design — investigations that reveal relevant personal, historical and cultural connections while promoting cross-disciplinary links necessary for today's innovative careers.

For more information, visit scad.edu and scadfash.org.



“
I exist happily in an experimental realm
where I question design and function
in the hopes of finding answers
that come in the shape
of shoes.
”



Above, from top to bottom: **Chris Francis**, *Red Wedge*, painted leather, wood, rubber, metal, 2016; *Bauhaus Staircase*, wood, painted leather, rubber, 2017; *Wagenfeld Concept (Glass Block Shoes)*, glass, acrylic, painted leather, rubber, 2016.

Chris Francis describes his art-making process as a kind of questioning. To call it a “quest” is equally apt. His work is the result of a venturesome attitude — an all-embracing pursuit of inspiration that includes bold choices in materials and a worldwide exploration of architecture, art history, film, graphic arts, industrial design, interior design, landscape design, music, and performance.

His questioning of design and function comes into particular focus in the works at left, representing Francis’ experiments with the visual language of the Constructivist, Bauhaus and De Stijl schools of art. Arising respectively in Russia, the Netherlands and Germany during the years after World War I, these movements are linked by a common interest in bridging the fine arts with utilitarian purposes.

How does Francis’ work both adhere to and challenge the idea of integrating fine arts and functionality? What might be his intention with this seeming contradiction? Support your ideas with evidence from Francis’ work.



“

... Material exploration is vital to successful experimentation and unique outcomes...

”



Audacity of Huge is inspired by Brutalism, a mid-20th century architectural movement characterized by massive, unadorned concrete forms with an imposing, powerful presence. It is paired here with *Punk Years Revisited*, a reminiscence on Francis’ youth, created with authentic details that express punk’s subversive approach to music, graphics and design in general — including an original Sex Pistols button and band fliers that Francis collected from punk venues.

Francis has described how his Brutalism collection arose from a desire to design shoes with no regard for market appeal, an intent that aligns well with punk’s anti-commercial DIY spirit. His ongoing conviction that the use of unconventional materials challenges creativity is a vital part of his iconoclastic, freethinking approach to shoemaking.

Above, top to bottom: Chris Francis, *Audacity of Huge*, wood, concrete, steel, EVA rubber, leather, paint, 2016; *Punk Years Revisited*, leather, found upholstery, broom bristles, original Sex Pistols button, paper pieces from CBGB’s wall, glue photo copy, patch, dirt, leather, wood, metal, 2015.

In the opening quote Francis speaks of an “experimental realm” where he questions and seeks answers, and, in the closing words above, about experimenting within a form in order to expressively portray the moment he inhabits.

Follow Francis’ lead and express yourself by creating a portrait of the moment you inhabit. Determine the form you would like to experiment with, and then go on a quest for inspiring ideas and unconventional materials.

As you work, remember to record your ideas, setbacks, progress and successes. Start now by taking a moment to brainstorm ideas with friends, and then begin composing our first notes and sketches.



Chris Francis, *Star Goddess*, wood, leather, spray-painted leather, rubber, 2018.



Chris Francis, *Icons*, synthetic suede, metallic leather, EVA rubber, PVC, patent leather, vintage thread, 2019.

“

I can express myself with a shoe like no other form I have experimented with; every pair is a portrait of the moment I am in. I can document sound, a feeling, a point in history or a vision for the future ... there are no limitations.

”



Chris Francis, *VKhUTEMAS*, wood, paper and leather, 2015.

NATIONAL CORE ARTS STANDARDS - 9th through 12th grade

Creating 1.2

Anchor: Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.

HSI: Shape an artistic investigation of an aspect of present-day life using a contemporary practice of art or design.

HSII: Choose from a range of materials and methods of traditional and contemporary artistic practices to plan works of art and design.

HSIII: Choose from a range of materials and methods of traditional and contemporary artistic practices, following or breaking established conventions, to plan the making of multiple works of art and design based on a theme, idea or concept.

Responding 8.1

Anchor: Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.

HSI: Interpret an artwork or collection of works, supported by relevant and sufficient evidence found in the work and its various contexts.

HSII: Identify types of contextual information useful in the process of constructing interpretations of an artwork or collection of works.

HSIII: Analyze differing interpretations of an artwork or collection of works in order to select and defend a plausible critical analysis.

COMMON CORE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6-8.1

Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-12.1

Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

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The Savannah College of Art and Design is a private, nonprofit, accredited university, offering more than 100 academic degree programs in more than 40 majors across its locations in Atlanta and Savannah, Georgia; Hong Kong; Lacoste, France; and online via SCAD eLearning.

For more information, visit scad.edu.

Cover image: **Chris Francis**, *Shoe Machine*, painted leather, leather, wood and rubber, 2015.



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