



Salvatore Ferragamo

Salvatore Ferragamo, born near Naples in Italy in 1898, started as a shoe-maker. He joined his brothers in California at the age of 16 to make shoes by hand for the American Film Company.

This led to private requests to make shoes for actors and actresses.

In the 1920s he designed Roman sandals with laces which tied around the ankles. Then he moved to Hollywood and worked for the film studios of Warner Bros., Universal and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, before coming back to Italy in 1927 where he set up a work-shop in Florence. He created the first large-scale production of hand-made shoes and people came from all over the world to buy his shoes.

He claimed that he had created the wedge heel, platform soles and metal support in high heels. He experimented with new materials during the World War, when there was shortage of leather. He used cork, cellophane, raffia, and manila hemp, but he also made shoes from lace, needle-work, raw silk, taffeta, and nylon.

In 1947 he invented the 'invisible shoe': it was made with uppers of clear nylon and a black suede heel.

He was responsible for many innovations that still inspire contemporary styles. By 1957 he had created more than 20,000 styles and registered 350 patents.

(Adapted from *The Dictionary of Fashion and Fashion Design*)



ACTIVITIES

1 Answer the following questions.

- 1 Where and when was Salvatore Ferragamo born?
- 2 How did he start?
- 3 What did he do at the age of 16?
- 4 What was one of his first successes in the 1920s?
- 5 When did he come back to Italy?
- 6 What did he claimed he had created?
- 7 What types of materials did he use?
- 8 What is the 'invisible shoe'?