



## SomethingAbout DIEGO VANASSIBARA

Shoe designer

Shoe designer Diego Vanassibara's label is still deeply rooted in the countryside of southern Brazil where he grew up. His SS16 collection was inspired by the art and customs of the Brazilian natives, while his installation *The Crying Forest*, sponsored by the British Fashion Council's NEWGEN MEN initiative, raised awareness about the deforestation of the Amazon rainforest. In 2013, Vanassibara was officially commended by the industry, winning the Footwear Friends Designer Award.

After graduating from the London College of Fashion's Cordwainers course,

Vanassibara launched his eponymous shoe brand in 2013. From his previous experience selling footwear, he grew to understand the retail industry and saw a place in the market for handcrafted shoes.

"On average, our shoes pass through 270 processes," discloses Vanassibara. "They are cut with surgical precision." Recognising Tuscany as the most capable manufacturer for his handcrafted shoes, the designer places much importance on provenance: "It is in the hand of the artisan and the local traditions of crafting leather, especially with the denser skins used in men's shoes."

One thing that makes Diego Vanassibara shoes so unique are the wooden details found throughout his collections, all carved by hand to match the curvature of the shoe lasts. The careful consideration that goes into the construction of his designs points to the past: prior to moving into footwear, he studied architecture in Brazil. "I needed to balance the engineering and structural sides of architecture with the creative and fast world of fashion," says Vanassibara. "Shoes seemed to be where those two fields meet. In fashion, is there anything more engineered than shoes?"

### SomethingAboutCARVING...

"For the wooden details, we use New Guinea rosewood and mahogany, and both come from sustainable plantations. The carving is done by specialist artisans on the island of Java. They follow a traditional technique that is passed down from generation to generation, which transcends more than 500 years."

### SomethingAboutLACQUERING...

"The mahogany is treated with a water-based stain used in high-end furniture. Then the surface of the pieces are coated with a special polyester lacquer created for outdoor use. It is water, weather and scratch-resistant. The lacquering process, done entirely by hand, is incredibly time-consuming; the lacquer is sprayed layer upon layer and left to dry, then the surface is sanded with super-fine sandpaper and lacquered again. The process is repeated until a solid high gloss is obtained, and then it's buffered for a piano-like finish. The lacquer work is done in London by an atelier run by an artisan who worked for Rolls Royce for over 20 years, creating their glossy dashboards."

### SomethingAboutSOLES...

"One of the most important things in a shoe is the lining. Our shoes are fully lined in calfskin, and that makes a major difference in terms of comfort. Then there are other aspects like toe spring [the distance between the bottom of the tip of the shoe and the ground]. A good toe spring can make you walk much better and help with your posture. We have engineered most of our soles to achieve the perfect toe-spring balance."

STORY BY JANINE LEAH BARTELS

Portrait: SOPHIE AERTS

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Perforated leather shoes by  
DIEGO VANASSIBARA