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If the Shoe Fits

Aquazzura's Edgardo Osorio wants every woman to have 'a Cinderella moment'

By Sahar Khan





Clockwise from left: Aquazzura's Starlite Clutch bag; the Hot Rumor Sling 105 pump in sunset; tableware from the Aquazzura Casa collection

When he started Aquazzura, Osorio was just 25 years old, bringing a youthful energy to the field at a time when most master shoe designers were over the age of 50. "I thought it would be nice to have a voice for my generation," says the prodigious designer, who began his career by landing an internship with a Colombian fashion designer at the age of 15. His job back then was to create matching shoes and bags for the designer's clients, and he quickly realized that accessories were his passion. "I became a horse with blinders on," he recalls. He studied accessory design at the London College of Fashion, but before he could finish his degree Salvatore Ferragamo hired him as a consultant. Four years later, Roberto Cavalli appointed him head of footwear; Osorio was just 23.

Today, Osorio has an accessories empire, with boutiques in Europe, the U.S., the Middle East, and Asia, and he's now focused on building a full-fledged lifestyle brand. In 2022, he launched a homewares line, Aquazzura Casa, and he also has plans to debut his first menswear shoe collection.

As the brand grows, Osorio continues to look to women—friends, family, shoppers—for inspiration. He shares an anecdote about a shopping event he hosted in New York where many of the women apologized for wearing flats because they had been running errands. "I thought, *Why are they apologizing?*" he says. "Maybe it's because no one's made a flat that you don't need to apologize for—one that's as fabulous as a heel." That led him to design the Christy, a pointy ballerina flat with leather straps that wrap around the ankle. It became the brand's best-selling shoe of all time.

"Part of my design process is making you try on that shoe and have a Cinderella moment," Osorio says. "I want a woman to be able to dance with me at a party and not be thinking of her feet the entire night."

Edgardo Osorio loves to dance. At parties, hosts know the Colombian-born, Florence-based shoe designer will get everyone grooving. That passion ultimately led to his success in the fashion world, as well. In 2011, when Osorio was the head of footwear at Roberto Cavalli, he attended a dozen weddings. Every time he hit the dance floor, he noticed that the women around him were in pain, and, he remembers, "It was too early on in the night to be complaining about their shoes."

The following year, he founded Aquazzura, a luxury shoe brand based on ergonomic principles. "No one was thinking of doing beautiful but comfortable shoes," says Osorio, who is also the company's creative director. "It wasn't a focus for anyone, so I decided to make it mine." For someone wearing high heels, the weight rests on the ball of the foot, but Osorio teamed up with a technician who had studied foot anatomy for 30 years, and together they found a way to distribute the weight between the sole, arch, and heel. (They then added memory foam for extra comfort.)

Osorio also understood a fundamental truth: "It can be the most comfortable

shoe in the world," he says, "but if it's not beautiful, it stays on the shelf." Aquazzura shoes rarely do. The architecturally designed heels and flats are bejeweled and bow-tied, and they've earned Osorio quite the celebrity fan club. Catherine, Princess of Wales, regularly wears his pumps and stilettos to greet heads of state; Scarlett Johansson has donned the designer's glittery-heeled sandals on the red carpet; and Taylor Swift caused internet searches for Aquazzura to increase 186 percent after she rocked his Atelier Plateau 130 sandals for her 34th birthday celebration this past December.

