

Growing up in a shoe factory, taking in the smells and touch of a leather production facility, Gherardo Felloni, 38, has already spent a lifetime living and working with shoes and accessories. He brings this vast and unique experience to the Parisian luxury accessories brand Roger Vivier as the new Creative Director, effective March 2018.

“I was practically born in a shoe factory. My uncle and father owned a prominent factory in the province of Arezzo in Tuscany since 1958. As a child, I played there, cutting leather and combining the colors of the skins. A shoe factory still feels like home to me,” says Felloni, who was actually born in the nearby town of Montevarchi in 1980.

Originally planning to be an architect, his father encouraged him to apply his drawings of the natural world to shoes. He joined as an intern, where he started designing shoes, and “I never stopped,” according to Felloni. “Twenty years later, I see the coincidence in a link between architecture and shoe design. Each involves a structure that must be able to hold you.” His education and training at the factory gave him access to witness the production of not only the brands his family owned but those which were household luxury names such as Hermes, Gucci, and Prada. In fact, his father and uncle launched Prada shoes with Patrizio Bertelli in the early 1980s, eventually joining Prada S.p.A. to build the group’s footwear division. “As a child, I grew up having the opportunity to see, touch, and understand everything about the shoes – the last, heel, leathers, and different colors – inheriting this technical knowledge has given me a strong advantage.”

His education continued with his first job after working at his family’s factory, working for Helmut Lang. Owned by Prada then, Helmut Lang taught him another point of view for designing shoes in addition to luxury and fashion: how to make conceptual accessory designs.

He would go on to design shoes for Fendi and Miu Miu next. He then relocated to Paris 10 years ago to take a position with Dior, where he was responsible for women’s RTW and couture shoes during both the John Galliano and Raf Simons tenures. He came to Roger Vivier after returning to Miu Miu in 2014 as design director of footwear, leather goods, and jewellery.

“Roger Vivier has always been a source of reference in my work. He was the master of shoes. It’s an honor to work here.”

Felloni’s love affair with design and the arts continues in his after-hours life outside of the studio and contributes to his inspiration. Interior design, collecting antique jewellery, and singing opera as a tenor are among his top passions outside of designing accessories. He also loves to travel to places such as the US, China, and his home country, Italy, which remains a great source of inspiration owing to its rich culture of fine arts.

