

The designer



PEDRO GARCÍA
Pedro García

7

“It is a huge advantage to have the factory downstairs and to access it directly,” says Pedro García, as he opens his studio door to let in the din of the factory floor below. Steam hisses, hammers bang and sewing machines whirr. This proximity enables García’s team to fit shoes in-house instead of having to wait for prototypes to come back from external manufacturers. “It changes the way you design. I still need to project my vision with precision but the rhythm is different.”

García and his wife, Dale Dubovich, met at New York’s Fashion Institute of Technology. Today they lead a design team at the shoe business that has been in García’s family for three generations in the town of Elda, near Alicante. From their atelier-cum-laboratory, they have been exploring the possibilities and limitations of the materials they use. Caramel-hued Tuscan leather inspires a two-piece gladiator

sandal, in which buckles are forgone for a streamlined Velcro closure at the ankle, while the forefoot is secured with a single toe-ring strap. A clever update reinterprets 1970s clogs, replacing the traditional wooden platform with lightweight wedges covered in suede.

Shoemakers and technicians here use a part-mechanised system that allows them to work by hand or with a machine depending on the demands of a given design. And when the expertise inside the building isn’t enough, García doesn’t have to go far: the company is based in the heart of Spain’s shoe-making industry so there is a wealth of talent nearby that it has relied on for almost 100 years.

Some items in particular require the highest level of skill. “Sandals must be assembled entirely by hand,” says García, as he watches an artisan place buttery, pebble-grain leather straps on a shoe last with

The look



Espadrilles by Pedro García, jacket and trousers by Giuliva Heritage, earrings and ring by Tasaki, clutch by Totême

confident yet delicate movements. “If the material is exceptional, it’s unnecessary to add excessive finishes or tamper with it in any way.”

When it comes to the company’s designs, the focus is as much on elegance as it is on ease of wear. A pair of jute slides feature criss-crossed uppers in frayed, lemon-yellow satin, bringing a relaxed warmth to what is traditionally an evening-wear fabric. Form meeting function is something that’s particularly important to Mila García, the company’s CEO and Pedro’s older sister, as she trained as a dancer before joining the business. Given that she happens to have a perfectly sample-sized foot, she has tried on all of the brand’s prototypes.

Mila’s daughter Zahara Gallardo, who is the company’s marketing and communications director, drives home this point when she starts describing an apple-green mule in chrome-free leather from

the latest collection. “It has a ‘running’ heel,” she says of the sturdy model. It is deceptively slender but incredibly solid: it feels like a chunky heel underfoot but has a more elegant profile and lighter weight. “The secret is that we pair an anatomical insole with a heel. It’s an easy concept but not many people do it. You just have to try them on to feel it.” We slip them on and can’t help but agree.

Pedro and Mila’s father wrote a family biography before he died centring on the company’s story, from his father hand-making shoes to his children giving the brand a global sensibility. “To have lasted three generations in the world of footwear, we must have done something right,” he wrote. With a fourth generation hot on the heels of their parents, that legacy may well extend for many more years. — FME pedrogarcia.com

PHOTOGRAPHER: Ben Roberts