

HAND – MADE TRAINERS!!?

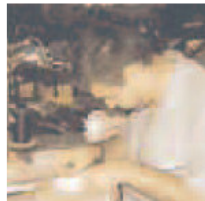
When we look at a pair of trainers we see a modern object, with a fine finishing that seems to have been produced in an automated line of production, especially when we think of the large amounts of trainers manufactured globally. However, a lot of human work is actually necessary in the making of trainers. The general look of a pair of trainers is designed with the help of a computer. The designer chooses the necessary pieces to give the desired look and these exact pieces are then cut. It can be done in two ways:

- With *stamps* : A *steel mould* (stamp) is created for each part of the trainer that gives and somebody cuts the material according to the mould. Several stamps are put on a large piece of fabric, and their weight pushes heavily on the cloth until it is cut. Six or seven layers of cloth are put on top of each other, so that many copies of the same stamp are cut at the same time. Leather has to be cut in layers because it can have knots, lines, etc. Each piece of leather has to be looked at carefully and stamps should be placed at the places where all the irregularities are. That's why working with leather is more expensive than working with synthetic materials.
- With a machine: all designs are saved in a computer. The computer assesses how to place the designs on the leather piece so that the material is best used and then laser rays mark the places where it should be cut. A laser ray can cut twenty layers at the same time. The same technique can be also used on synthetic material but it is not very common.



The *enfranchisement* is then done: all pieces that were previously cut are sewed using the traditional sewing machine. Some pieces that are identical in all trainers, such as the brand name, and put on the back of the shoe, are cut automatically at this stage. Once all pieces are shown together, someone trims all edges with the scissors to ensure a smooth finish, paints any visible edges and also places the metal rings where show laces will be placed later. These cut and sewn pieces of leather constitute a *shoe body* that will later become a pair of trainers.

The assembling process starts all pieces are put on and around a mould (the mould is in the shape of a foot), and a sole is put on the bottom of the mould. This is then put in a heavy machine which presses all pieces together and glues them to each other. One person has to manually remove the pieces from the machine one by one.



The body of the shoe as well as the sole, bought by a local sole merchant, are glued together in another machine. One person is again responsible for taking each pair of trainer out of the machine. There is another way of gluing the shoe body and sole, called *direct injection*:

The sole is put on a mould and the body of the shoe is then added in such a way that the edges are put directly into the sole. This is a more mechanical way that is rarely used. Other elements might be then added to the trainers, such as rubber strips over the toe.