

Jump, Man: Air Jordan 1 Prototypes Kick Off Heritage's Inaugural Sneaker Auction in December

Event filled with world's rarest sneakers features three pairs of 'Friends and Family' Louis Vuitton x Nike Air Force 1s, Kobe Bryant's Air Force 1 Bespoke Lakers Homes and 'the greatest sneaker that never was'

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DALLAS, Texas (Nov. 18, 2022) — As *The New York Times* noted in its farewell to Peter Moore, who died in April at 78, the man "helped revolutionize sneaker culture in the mid-1980s with his design of the remarkably popular Nike Air Jordan." His career spanned far more than that slam-dunk moment in 1985 when sneaker culture trampled through Middle America; as Adidas' president, Moore remade its three-stripe trademark into its now-ubiquitous logo meant to resemble a mountain. But as Nike's Howard White said this year, Moore's "legacy will forever be connected to Jordan Brand and the sneaker culture he helped to create."

As such, Heritage Auctions proudly presents the perfect centerpiece for [its inaugural Sneakers Signature® Auction: a pair of unworn 1985 Air Jordan 1 Chicago Prototypes accompanied by a letter written and signed by Moore](#). Both were part of

last year's "Sneakers Unboxed: Studio to Street" exhibition held at London's Design Museum, and are offered together in [this event now open for bidding that culminates with a live auction on Dec. 13](#).

"Heritage offered sneakers in Sports and Urban Art auctions, among others, long before anyone else believed them to be the celebrated, high-end artwork they've become," says Arman Salemi, consignment director of Heritage's Sneakers Division. "But this inaugural event is a true coming-out for us: It traces the history of modern sneaker culture with the most exclusive and elusive offerings brought into a single auction. And to do this right, we had to start with Peter Moore's creation."

There are nearly 100 pairs of sneakers in this kick-off event at Heritage, including [a pair of never-worn Air Jordan 1 Chicagos from 1985 still bearing the tag with the iconic photo of Jordan as "Jumpman,"](#) which Moore turned into the sneakers' logo. Here, too, is [one of only 23 pairs of the Air Jordan Retro High Breds](#) made in 2017 and gifted to friends and family.

All told some 80 pairs of sneakers in this event bear the swoosh, among them three highly coveted "Friends & Family" Louis Vuitton x Nike Air Force 1 Lows, a reinvention of the late Virgil Abloh during his tenure as Louis Vuitton's artistic director of menswear. The shoes — Abloh's "grandest sneakers," as *Complex* called them — were inspired by the cover of Rob Base and DJ E-Z Rock's once-ubiquitous *It Takes Two*, where Rock sports Air Force 1s with Louis Vuitton monograms on the swooshes.

"The cover embodied the hip-hop community's early practice of hacking together high

fashion and sportswear, sidelining diverging brands with equal reverence," Louis Vuitton said about the sneakers' debut in June 2021. "A cultural symbol in its own right, today the Nike Air Force 1 serves as an *objet d'art* emblematic of self-generated subcultural provenance."

They were also kick-ass kicks, a rainbow lineup of decorated kicks available in various colorways dispensed only to bold-faced A-listers on "The List." This auction features three: [orange](#), [blue](#) and [purple](#). They may well be the most coveted sneakers of all time — wrapped like a present, presented like art. As Abloh notes on the "Virgil Was Here" card that came with each pair, this is "the most authentic high-end sneaker ever made ... transcending fashion into an art object through craftsmanship."

Which brings us back to Moore's prototype Air Jordans, the Alpha and Omega of sneaker culture.

Moore outlines the shoe's genesis in his letter — from pitch to product, from concept to execution. He writes about sketching the Air Jordan winged logo on a United Airlines napkin after seeing a flight attendant pin captain's wings on a 9-year-old boy. He explained how Jordan wanted his namesake sneakers "to be closer to the floor than most," how they chose a better grade of leather to survive NBA tussles, how they arrived at the red-and-white-and-black color scheme (the Chicago Bulls' colors, natch).

"One of my ideas with MJ was to break some rules, do things different," Moore writes in the missive accompanying this remarkable pair of sneakers.

"Interesting when I first showed MJ the drawings ... he was appalled. He said he could not wear red, black and white shoes or anything colored that way. I said they are your team's colors."



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What Moore began, Abloh perfected; they took the sneaker off the floor and placed it on the shelf as something to be admired, adored, revered, protected. The basketball shoe, once synonymous with Converse's unassuming cotton canvas Chuck Taylor All-Stars, transcends the game for which it was made: "This generation may value sneakers more than a Matisse," [Abloh once said](#), "because [the Matisse] is not attainable. ... I hold sneakers as art, to hold on to and be close to."

Look no further than this shoe for skateboarders made in 2003: [the Nike SB Dunk Low Paris](#), drawing inspiration and imagery from revered French painter and lithographer Bernard Buffet. [Says Nike](#), the shoe was created "to champion the imprint some of the world's most recognizable cities have had on skate culture," and as such, was intended "to release exclusively at the 'White Dunk: Evolution of an Icon' exhibit in Paris." But "fervorous demand" caused a delay, and "the limited bespoke pairs were circulated through select accounts" in Paris.

There are said to be only 202 pairs in existence, each unique from the others as Nike cut the canvas differently for each pair.

Of these, there is but one pair: [the Nike Air Force 1 MID Kobe Bryant Bespoke Lakers Home](#), a players' exclusive made for Bryant. It was no secret Kobe adored the Air Force 1, which he wore on the court before he signed with the swoosh — including Air Force 1 MIDs in Lakers home and away colorways, which Nike used during the 2002-2003 season to lure him to their dotted line.

Six years later, Nike launched the appointment-only customizable Bespoke program from its 21 Mercer St.



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flagship in New York City. Provenance accompanying this pair reveals Bryant requested the company remake those original 2002 Lakers Player Exclusives with which he'd initially fallen in love: Tags in the shoe and on the underside of the box explicitly state that they were made for Black Mamba.

In an auction filled with historic rarities, one-offs, exclusives and samples, here's a shoe that was [once called "the greatest sneaker that never was"](#): the [Nike SB Dunk Low Freddy Krueger Sample](#). Long story short, 15 years ago Nike planned on a trilogy of Halloween releases, with a Trainer 1 inspired by *Dawn of the Dead* and two Dunks that took their looks from, respectively, *Friday the 13th* and *Nightmare on Elm Street*. The first two were released; the latter was murdered by New Line Cinema, which issued a cease-and-desist letter

claiming the Dunks were a copyright violation.

As Inverse noted, "The claim of copyright infringement came so late that the sneaker had already made its way out to retailers, which were then ordered to return the shoes to Nike so they could be destroyed to avoid litigation. Apparently, not everyone followed orders, because a small number of the Dunks still made their way out to collectors." About 30 pairs, precisely, and this sample that survived the lawyers' massacre.

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