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Bottega Mancini - Handmade Shoes

Rome - Their *bottega*, tucked in a side alley off of Via Coronari near Piazza Navona, is as unpretentious as it gets. A counter, a workbench and stool, an electric shoe-polisher, and a few shelves. Yet the dead give-away is an entire wall covered with lasts (right), the wooden shapes around which hand-made shoes are stitched and created.

Danilo and his wife Letizia Mancini are young, but make no mistake as to their abilities in carrying on what is probably one of the crafts for which Italy is most well known. He's been at it 20 years, and says that he still has fun with each pair, each one a new challenge, each one a new satisfaction.

"*Ecco, vuoi vedere un opera d'arte?*", he asks me as a gentleman enters his *bottega*. ("Do you want to see a work of art?") The client had arrived to pick up his new pair of shoes (3rd photo), and was already trying them on.

"*Perfetto!*" the gentleman exclaims, "*E queste le puoi buttare*", as he hands over the shoes he walked in with, which I notice are a mass-produced pair by a very expensive and well known Italian fashion house. ("Perfect, and you can throw these out.")



Always fancied a pair of handmade Italian leather shoes? Swing by next time you're in the area and have your feet measured. Once the lasts are made for your feet, Danilo can make pair after hand-made pair for you. (He keeps all his clients' lasts and files, so his clients can simply call in and have another pair made!) Apologies to the ladies however . . . Danilo only makes men's shoes.

*Danilo Mancini. Vicolo della Volpe, 14.
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--contributed by [GB](#) (see bio), owner of [Welcome Home](#), quality expatriate housing in Rome since 1984.



Quelle:

<http://www.italiannotebook.com/Notes/mancinishoes.html>

Abruf: 7. Januar 2008