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Nike Air Max 97 sneakers glimmer with 55K Swarovski crystals

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Nike and Swarovski teamed for Crystal Fabric Air Max 97 XLs. Image credit: Nike

By STAFF REPORTS

Precision-cut crystal maker Swarovski is expressing its textile innovations through a partnership with athletic wear brand Nike.

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To celebrate the 20th anniversary of Nike's first silver sneaker, inspired by the finish found on mountain bikes, the Air Max 97, the athletic brand sought to find a "material pioneer" to represent the shoe's innovation. Swarovski's Crystal Fabric, developed after more than a decade of research, was selected as the perfect expression of the original Air Max 97's signature shine.

Fused with crystals

Swarovski's Crystal Fabric contains tiny, densely clustered cut and uncut crystals to create a textile that is "gleaming yet gritty." The fabric contains approximately 1.71 million Swarovski crystals per square meter.

"[Our brand] has a proud heritage of innovation and creative collaboration," said Markus Langes-Swarovski, executive board member of Swarovski, in a statement. "We were delighted to partner with Nike to create this unique design.

"The Air Max is a truly iconic 360-degree silhouette that has inspired us to imagine what might happen when speed meets light," he said.



Swarovski's Crystal Fabric was developed over 12 years. Image credit: Nike

The Crystal Fabric is just one of many innovative applications Swarovski has created for jewelry, apparel, home decor, car interiors and timepieces. Nike gravitated toward the Crystal Fabric textile application for its Air Max 97.

Crystal Fabric was applied to each Air Max 97 through a heat fusing process, without any stitching. Each shoe size is made of exact pattern pieces.

As the shoe moves the crystals refract the light to create a shimmering effect. Nike shared that an Air Max 97, women's size 7, has about 55,690 Swarovski crystals within the fabric.

"This was such an exciting project in terms of material innovation," says Marie Crow, Nike material design director for NikeWomen Sportswear, in a statement. "We were looking to explore shine and durability in a new and innovative way, and we loved the juxtaposition of the Crystal Fabric's tough sparkle to reinvent an already iconic shoe."

Nike released a black version of the Swarovski Crystal Fabric Air Max 97 LX in spring and a silver edition for fall. The collaboration is the first time NikeWomen has used Swarovski crystals on a shoe and the first time the brand has fused precious materials onto the Air Max 97.



Nike's Air Max 97 LX shimmer and shine thanks to Swarovski's Crystal Fabric. Image credit: Nike

Priced at about \$400, Nike's silver Air Max 97 LX will be available at select retailers starting Sept. 7.

As the athletic wear boom took off, Nike sought to work with high-profile collaborators from the luxury sector.

In May 2016, for example, Balmain's creative director Olivier Rousteing injected his "golden touch" to athletic wear.

Mr. Rousteing's collaboration with NikeLab included include black and gold track jackets reflecting the designer's military silhouettes and black sneakers with gold accents ([see story](#)).