Nike Air YEEZY 1





THE STORY:

The Nike Air Yeezy 1, launched in 2009, was the first official sneaker design collaboration between Kanye West and Nike. This model marked a significant shift in sneaker design and culture, as it was one of the first collaborations of Nike with a non-athlete at this level. Paving the way for further collaborations between brands and artists in the fashion and sneaker industries.

The impact of the Air Yeezy 1 remains significant in the sneaker world, both in terms of design and how artists can collaborate with major sportswear brands.

The development of the Air Yeezy 1 began several years before its launch, with Kanye working closely with the Nike team to create a product that reflected his artistic vision.

This release was not only notable for its design and limited production but also because it was the very first Yeezy sneaker ever.

The Air Yeezy 1 debuted at the 2008 Grammy Awards, where Kanye wore a pair as a tribute to his late mother, Donda. The sneakers were officially released in three colors: Blink, Zen Grey and Net Tan, in the spring of 2009, immediately becoming a cultural icon due to their limited availability and the unique design that incorporated elements from Nike's extensive archive.

In April 2021, the Nike Air Yeezy 1 prototypes, notably worn by Kanye West during his performance at the 2008 Grammy Awards, were sold through a Sotheby's auction for a staggering $1.8 million. This sale not only shattered previous records for sneaker auctions but also marked the first time a pair of sneakers surpassed the $1 million threshold in such a sale.

The significance of this event cannot be understated as it reflects the immense cultural and financial value attached to items associated with major public figures in the entertainment industry, particularly those as influential as Kanye West. The auction highlighted how sneakers have transcended their utilitarian origins to become bona fide pieces of collectible art.

The Yeezy 1 prototypes were part of a strategic collaboration between Kanye West and Nike, creating a product that fused fashion with high-performance sportswear. Their sale at such a high price speaks volumes about Kanye's legacy as one of the most influential clothing and sneaker designers of our time. It also underscores the stature of the Yeezy franchise, which has grown into an industry titan under Kanye's creative direction.

The buyer, RARES, a sneaker investment marketplace, acquired these iconic sneakers, indicating the growing trend of treating sneakers as investment assets, similar to art, wine and watches. This sale was not just a transaction but also a significant event in the collectibles market, setting benchmarks for future sales and valuations of high-profile sneakers.

Nike Air YEEZY 2





THE STORY:

The Nike Air Yeezy 2, released in 2012, is the second edition in the notable collaboration between Kanye West and Nike. Following the impactful debut of the Air Yeezy in 2009, the Air Yeezy 2 was eagerly anticipated and brought with it significant design enhancements that were more tailored to Kanye West's vision and preferences.

The Air Yeezy 2's design eliminated unnecessary padding from the upper to create a slimmer silhouette that enhanced mobility and provided a better fit specifically for West's foot. This model also featured a hand-skived anaconda textured panel, a molded forefoot strap, and elements inspired by ancient civilizations, such as hieroglyphics on the loop strap and a leather lace toggle carrying the Roman numeral "II"

Nike released the Air Yeezy 2 in two initial colorways: Platinum and Black/Pink on June 9, 2012. Despite its $245 retail price, pre-order bids on eBay skyrocketed as high as $90,000 due to the intense hype and limited availability. The sneakers' allure was further magnified by the subsequent release of the "Red October" colorway in 2014, which continued to build on the model's legendary status



The release of the Nike Air Yeezy 2 "Red October" is one of the most iconic moments in sneaker culture, primarily because of its unexpected launch and the frenzy it created. The "Red October" colorway, characterized by its striking all-red design, was highly anticipated throughout 2013 due to various teasers and Kanye West's public appearances wearing them.

However, the actual release was shrouded in mystery and uncertainty, especially after Kanye West announced his departure from Nike in November 2013 to partner with Adidas. This left many wondering if the "Red October" would ever be released. The suspense built until February 9, 2014, when Nike abruptly released the sneakers online without any prior announcement. The release was done through a simple tweet from Nike's official Twitter account, which provided a direct link to purchase the sneakers.

The sneakers sold out within minutes, causing Nike's website to crash due to the high traffic and leaving many fans and sneakerheads empty-handed. This method of release added to the legend of the "Red October," marking it as one of the most dramatic and coveted sneaker drops in history. The limited nature of the release, coupled with the design's association with Kanye West's creative peak at Nike, has kept the "Red October" at legendary status within the sneaker community.

This unexpected drop not only highlighted Nike's innovative approach to sneaker releases but also set a precedent for future surprise drops in the industry.