

An Argument For Elevation

In which a confirmed stiletto-lover flatly refuses to change her ways



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CONTROL CENTRE

ABANDON MY HIGH heels? Not now, not ever. Tout the comfort of flats all you'd like, but I refuse to relinquish the power, stature, and self-assurance my spikes afford me as a concession to "practicality." Who has ever aspired to be practical?

Over the last decade or so, I've amassed a small arsenal of towering shoes, their heels starting at 4 inches high. Each morning, I delight in surveying my cache and selecting my daily armor. No, I do not wear heels to attract the male gaze—anyone who's seen my wardrobe of black tulle cocoons and conceptual, three-armed dresses can attest to that. Rather, my heels provide a mental and physical boost that makes me feel invincible.

I'm not alone in my adoration of elevated footwear. "I feel rather dowdy and frumpy in invisible flats," said Linda Fargo, Bergdorf Goodman's SVP of Fashion Office and Store Presentation. "Heels, even an inch, 'lift' me up." Dianne LaPointe Rudow, the director of the Zweig Family Center for Living Donation

at Mount Sinai, wears them at least four days a week. "I'm short, so I like to be able to see eye to eye with my colleagues. And just because I'm in a position of power doesn't mean I have to compromise—women can be smart, successful, and feminine."

Many have suggested that men invented heels to sexualize women and hold us back. That's not strictly true, as heels' origins as 10th-century equestrian wear prove. And while yes, heels are associated with erotic femininity (and so what?), Nancy Pelosi was no man's object when she wore four-inch blue suede stilettos last February to deliver a commanding, eight-hour, filibuster-style speech in defense of DACA.

"I love high heels because they give you confidence—they give you an attitude, a way of walking, standing, and even sitting. You feel tougher and sexier," said Carine Roitfeld, editor in chief of CR Fashion Book. Ms. Fargo agreed: "Clothing and shoes are more than just a surface expression. We internalize what we're wearing and see ourselves differently, but to each her own. I'm more of the ilk of effort. Effortless, easy style? I can't relate." Indeed. Why be effortless when you could be fabulous?

—Katharine K. Zarrella