

Ways of Perceiving

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Course Title: BA Product Design

Word Count: 1477

HIGH HEEL EVOLUTION

The show will be based on the evolution of high heel footwear and the most iconic heels which have shaped the heels we use today. Shoes have evolved through the centuries. As the world has grown and changed throughout different eras, footwear also has. Technology has advanced resulting in us no longer using straw and animal's skin as protection on feet but instead using shoes as statements in this world. Cultures along with art and the way people choose to express themselves have a major influence on fashion and footwear. The product people put on their feet seems to now represent people's class, their wealth and more than what originally meets the eye. The exhibition will touch upon designers who fully understand this and have changed opinions and movements with their iconic shoes. 'Shoes are a source of first impressions' (O. Gillath, 2012) et al. highlights the fact that people are perceived different ways due to their shoes.

High heels are claimed to originate in the 15th century in Persia and firstly designed and worn by men. As the soldiers needed to secure their feet in stirrups they wore a slight heel. This migrated to Europe and men began to wear them to appear taller and attractive. Queen Elizabeth 1st then wore the heeled shoe as stated 'she wanted to appear manlier' (BBC Radio, 2019). Women eventually follow the trend adding their own feminine touch to the seemingly 'manly' shoes. In today's society high heels are seen as a very womanly shoe and not typically worn by men at all. Women have taken this icon and changed the opinions behind them over time. This is a great achievement as women typically have always been treated differently and often unfairly in comparison to men and a move such as this is very rarely done.

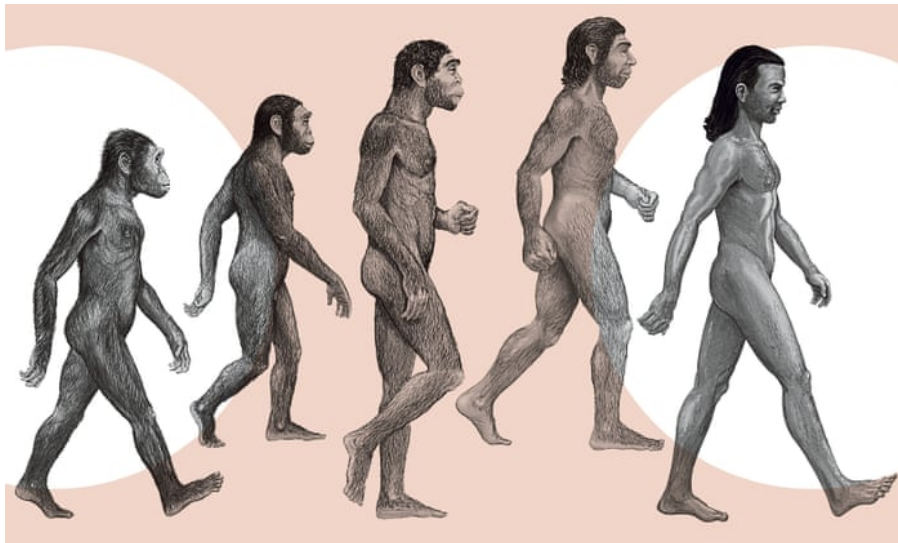


Figure 1
(The Guardian, 2018)

In almost every monkey to human evolution image, each stage is in the male gender. This is continued throughout many life situations which is why as part of my exhibition, I desire the same evolution concept characters but in the female gender wearing the stages of each iconic shoes also in chronological order. I believe the representation of the characters being female will question the audience's minds more than why these characters are modelling these unique shoes which highlights feminism in today's society.

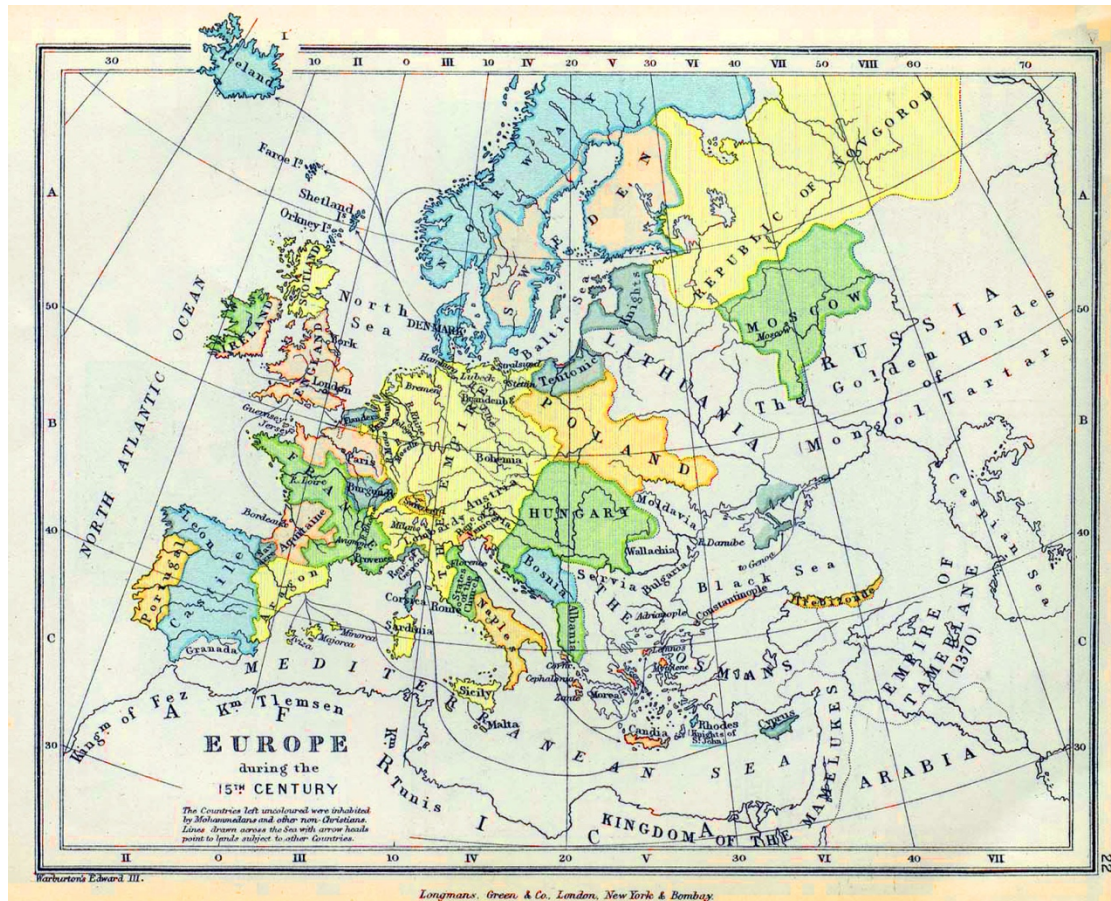


Figure 2
(Colbeck, 1905)

I'd want the exhibition to metaphorically take place across a 15th century map of Europe as shown above. This would demonstrate how the heel was adopted and travelled all across the continent in the century it was admired. The map also shows how Europe was seen and perceived in that century and reminds the audience how much people how far the heeled shoe has evolved since it was first created and what people perceived the map to look like in those times. As the audience views the last and most iconic modern shoe walk across the map on a full human women model, the dated map will remind the audience of how long the heel has been around for.

Many humans struggle to walk in high heels, especially some that will be exhibited, which will only mean monkeys and the early stages of the evolved monkey will struggle more. This is actually a preference rather than disadvantage as I do not want the walk from the models to be the straight and perfectly postured walk we see today in catwalks but instead imperfect and how the mammals would supposedly walk from A to B across the map of Europe in their evolved state and time. I want this in my exhibition as it suggests to the fact not everything has to be or used to be fixed perfect as people often feel the pressure it has to be in today's age.

The numerous different states in time from the 15th century map, 15th century to 21st century heeled shoes and mammals from 5-8 millions of years ago will hopefully confuse the audience the right amount that they question and think about the different time frames and how everything in these time frames have played such a big role in today's age but tie in together in a way people haven't thought about or seen such time frames mixed.



Figure 5
(The Guardian, 2012)

These are claimed to be the first design of the heeled shoe. It secured Persians foot into the saddle when they stood up to shoot with bows and arrows in the 15th century. As they travelled to Europe, we desired the powerful look the soldiers had and men recreated them and wore them for aesthetic reasons only. These will be the first heels to walk down my exhibition on the chimpanzee and beginning of transition from monkey to human. As these are the first design of the heel, they are also the smallest and will theoretically be the easiest to walk in, allowing the monkey to walk almost as it would with one of each limb. It reminds us that men and women still sadly change appearances constantly as the men did in Europe at the time.



Figure 3 (Louboutin, 2020)



Figure 4 (The Guardian, 2012)

It is said that King Louis XIV first invented the red sole and heels (Marsh, 2020). The colour was seen to represent superiority as he only allowed a circle of his nobles to wear the shoe statement. French designer, Christian Louboutin, is widely known in the 20th and 21st century for his iconic signature of a shiny and red lacquered sole to his shoes. The red soles to his shoes are trademarked to Louboutin meaning when people see the sole they immediately associate it with the brand and the characteristics behind it. The designer's shoes are deemed to be high class due to the high

expense which is what people automatically associate the wearer of these shoes also with. Furthermore, red shoe soles would need to be kept clean and maintained unlike usual black soles which paints more of a description upon the wearer. The imagery behind the sole and colour is imbedded in our minds as an image of wealth and power as King Louis XIV desired centuries ago which is why it deserves to walk down my exhibition.



Figure 6
(Georgievska, 2017)

During the 16th century, ‘chopines’ were created and worn by upper-class women in Europe. They were platforms made from wood and were again only worn by nobles or people of high class. The higher the chopines, the more material was required in the dress and reflected wealth and status along with the height it gave the women. The shoes also meant it protected the women’s clothes from dust or touching the ground. The upper part of the shoe was often made with silk or velvet to infiltrate the high-status message. The wearer of these style shoes would require the assistance of a partner often either a maid or husband which again implements the high status as only the rich could afford maids to assist them in walking. This is in the perfect place in order of the evolution mammals as the model would be off of all four limbs and walking on two but with terrible posture which would exaggerate how difficult these shoes would have been to stand or move whilst wearing and stress the lengths women went to in order to show off their wealth and class.

Italian dancing master and composer of music in the age, Fabrizio Carosa, wrote ‘if women practiced enough how to wear the shoes, they could move with grace and beauty and even dance in them’. I want this quote clearly spoken with a male voice on repeat as the mammal attempts to walk or scramble across the map of Europe. This will remind the audience not to abide by and always listen to the opinions of men which we most often do in today’s society and have done for centuries as expressed.



Figure 8 (Whitelocks, 2011)



Figure 9 (BeautyRiot, 2012)

Figure 8 is a pair of red soled Louboutin designed shoe. They appear to be a ballerina pump style shoe held up with a 90-degree heel. These would likely be worn by a skilled and trained dancer and hopefully the models wearing these in the exhibition will allow the audience to appreciate the skill and art within dancers and the pain within their feet and body they maintain to put on a show. Similar to how many in the world go to extreme or small lengths of pain to show off to others.

Figure 9 is a pair of Alexander McQueen's famous heels. He is known for changing fashion movements and having a very modern style. The shoes look so powerful and admirable but yet so uncomfortable and heavy to walk in which is the modern view of what women and men have seen in high heels over the centuries and still do. This will hopefully leave the audience with the question why we go to such measures for appearance and if it's even worth it.

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Figure 1

The Guardian, 2018. *Women Evolution Image*. (image)
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Figure 2

Colbeck, C., 1905. *15Th Century Map Of Europe*. (image)
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Figure 3

Christian Louboutin., 2020. *So Kate*. christianlouboutin. (image)
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Figure 4

The Guardian, 2012. *Exhibition Boot, Circa*. (image).
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Figure 5

Marsh, A., 2020. *Persian Heeled Shoe*. (image)
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Figure 6

Georgievska, M., 2017. *Chopine Shoes*. (image)
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Figure 7

Whitelocks, S., 2011. *Louboutins Ballerina Heels*. (image)

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Figure 8

BeautyRiot, 2012. *Alexander Mcqueen Heels*. (image)

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