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FASHION

photo by Diana Petriashvili

AND

GENDER

EDITOR'S NOTE

We argued a lot when selecting the photo for this issue. "Looks too dramatic," one of colleagues said, "but it reflects the reality," the other replied, "the lens managed to reflect it ideally..."

What is the fashion about?

Some people will say, it is newness, elegance, or epatage. Others believe, it is the kind of mimicry, a way of co-existing with people, being like others.

Another opinion is that fashion is a chance of being different and self-asserted.

But for many others fashion is a pure manipulation, and a possibility to make a lot of money making people bring you capital, both monetary and political.

Fashion does not refer to external only; it is also about beliefs and ways of living.

Almaz KALET
Kyrgyzstan

be as all

HAVE TIME TO FOLLOW THE FASHION

between wedding and first baby

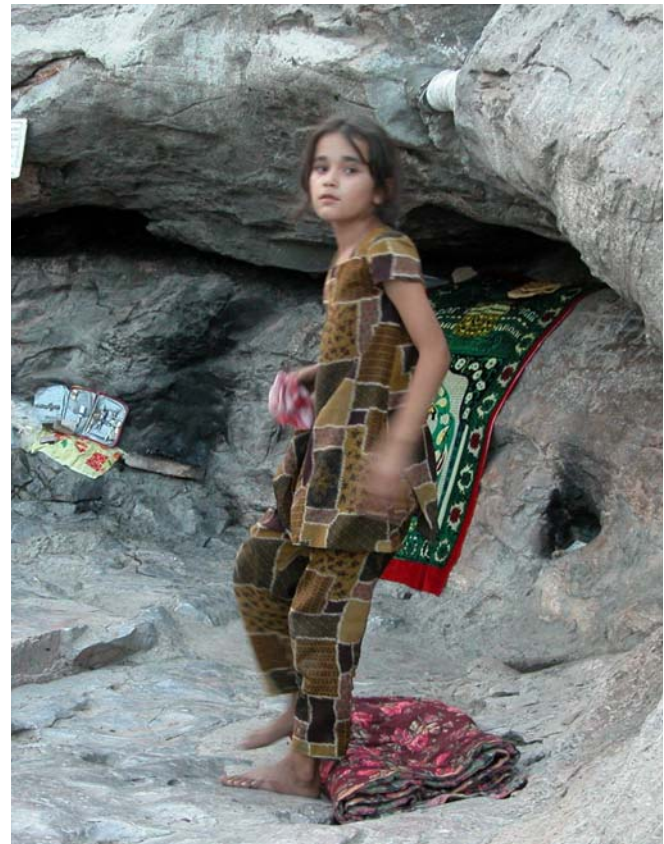
The Osh town is located at the South. Its streets are bright because of colors of clothes we wear. Our clothing reflects social status of men and women so exactly, as nowhere else in the country. One can accurately define any passer-by after looking at what she or he is wearing.

All newly-married traditionally wear bright clothes that are considered 'luxury' at some point. According to the local wedding traditions, a fiance and a young husband should generally wear a classical 'black bottom and white top;' white socks and black shiny shoes are also obligatory. A bride generally wears brighter clothes. For Uzbekistani girls, traditional clothing is a bright satin dress embroidered in gold, and embroidered skull-cap and shoes. Kyrgyz version of this dress is slightly less bright, and includes a kerchief. All young married women should use plenty of make-up, that's the tradition, and you can not violate it. If you do not follow these tendencies, you are likely to have problems with your friends and relatives, as your clothes and the way you dress is some sort of a public marriage certificate.

Several years ago, when soon after the wedding me and my wife visited her parents, their neighbors began to gossip about us, saying that my wife did not look like a married woman



Me and Dilya just before our wedding. National Kyrgyz dresses are back in fashion, and there appear more and more newly married couples wearing national costumes



Local girls wear this type of pants and blouses; after they turn 12, they get used to cover particular parts of their bodies.

photos by Almaz Kalet



The way a woman ties kerchief round her head shows woman's status, religious beliefs and social state

at all. My wife was not dressed in accordance to the above-mentioned standard. She had a regularly-looking skirt on. The parents' reproaches hurt Dilya's feelings. She did have an appropriate wedding dress, but she did not want to look like a Christmas tree in everyday life.

However, standards change with the birth of the first baby. There are special sectors at Osh cloth market. These sectors sell clothes for women, who are younger than 40. The dresses sold there are still bright, but not as splendid as those designed for newly married young women. The time between the wedding and the first baby is the period when a girl is free to select clothes and experiment with dresses. Her relatives indulge her to wear what she likes, considering it as a preparation to adult life.

Every time when buying clothes at Osh market (the only place where clothes is actually sold, by the way), you come across plenty of stereotypes. If I choose something for my daughter, which is not pink in color, the salespersons seem to be astonished. They believe I deprive my child of something very important and integral! Dilya had to pierce our daughter's years, when she was only one, so that she'd look like a girl - she was frequently mixed up with a boy, because we do not dress her in bright pink girl-ish clothes.

When I try to find clothes for myself, vendors look at me just as if I would be a very strange person. Especially, if I want to buy a t-shirt or jeans. Come on, I am not even 40 yet!

Women have analogous problems: you won't be able to buy anything nice, if your dress size is bigger than 48... My wife gets really upset each time she visits the market, because all the clothes she likes is too tight for her, while the dresses of her size, are so ugly that no one can like it.

I bet, some of you might smile: "What a big deal! You must have not other problems in Osh." Of course we do have a lot of problems. But none of them will get solved, if a person feels uncomfortable in the cloth he wears.



Parents shave their daughters' heads several times during childhood: it is believed that it makes hair being thicker. They also paint their eyebrows with kohl to make them be black.

photos by Almaz Kalet

Polina MILORADOVICH
 Georgia
fashion magazine

NEWS OF THE SEASON



photo by Diana Petriashvili

POLITICS IN FASHION

Unfortunately, politics keeps being in fashion for at least 20 years in Georgia. Political scandals, disclosures and protest actions remain being very popular. Elections represent some sort of season exacerbation of this fashion. Not long before the most recent elections that took place here, one of children's theatres decided to keep up to date and made children vote for fairy president, while the runners were: Carlson, Pinocchio, Santa and others. These presidential candidates fought with each other, pinching and heating each other, and kept promising tons of candies to their electorate. The kids received bulletins and had to vote during the intermission... This nonsense is exactly the tribute to the fashion.

SEX IN FASHION

If you are not a sex fiend thinking about sex 24 hours a day, you are a loser. If you fail to think about it 24 hours 7 days a week, you should start taking pills right away. A toothpaste, shaving cream, coffee and chocolate - all these products exist to support one's libido. At least this is hat advertisement, popular TV shows, videos and glossy magazines tell us... It turned out to become sympathetic to newly formed societies of staunch supporters of vir-

ginity - they protest the current state of affairs. They say: naturally, a person does not need that much sex. Sometimes a human being does not need sex at all. All what they show to us, is an aggressive lie aimed at manipulating us.

But these societies appeared in the countries with developed democracy. I am afraid, it will take some time for these ideas to reach the heads of our girls looking like prostitutes, and boys looking like ruffians and souteneurs...

SCUFFLE IN FASHION

Ruffians and souteneurs. They listen to gangster rap, a very popular music. Whatever it is, it is full of prostitute-souteneur 'style.' It is the ideology of this music. According to it, all women are 'bitches' and 'whores' and all men can kill each other just for sport... These conclusions come up after watching any of videos widely presented at music charts, after playing a popular computer game, or watching a movie. Virtual personages affect real people, young people and teenagers mostly, infects them with this ideology, and there seems to be no solutions.

Fashion is not about style tendencies, lace, ruche, or high hills...

Ilaha ADILKYZY
Azerbaijan

tried it myself



photo by Diana Petriashvili

I met him at my colleague's wedding. I was wearing an evening dress with a decollete. He seemed to like my clothing. Soon we began dating and several months after it he asked me, if I would become his wife.

I had to meet his family, but I felt that he did not want us to meet. Finally, he said that his family, and his mom especially, will not accept me as their daughter-in-law. The only reason is that I work, I frequently go to business trips, I wear short skirts, and pants...

But I did not plan to change my life style! He said he loved me and wanted to marry me regardless of anything. I also loved him and also wanted to create a family, thus, we got married. We had a beautiful wedding with my relatives, our common friends and even his brother participating in the ceremony. His parents never reacted to this event. But I still was happy, I felt that I am together with my prince, and that the life was a beautiful fairy-tale. However, I could see sadness in his eyes.

Six months passed after the wedding, but his parents had never called him. His brother was already engaged, and his wedding was approaching. My husband was invited there, without me. It was known that their future daughter-in-law wears hijab, just like his mother. He had to congratulate his brother, and so he left. I stayed at home and felt terrible, just as if I would be an illegal wife, an offcast and unhappy.

Soon I had to go for a business trip, and I left. When I came back, a neighbor told me that my mother-in-law came to visit our house. My first feeling was joy: I thought that was the first step aimed at improving our relations. But far from that. My husband changed a lot, he is now very different towards me. And I feel our marriage will not last for long...

Vafa SALEH
Azerbaijan
shocking life

WHO IS SINNER INDEED?

A couple of months ago, I read a book - 'Burned Alive' by Souad. It is a shocking story of a woman who has to live in today's world in accordance to the laws of past millenniums. The book tells about women's exploitation in their families and societies, and about the fact that for some cultures woman is only a thing. After reading it, I thought it was just another Western propaganda, aimed at opposing Islam. Islam had never propagandized violence against women, my thought was.

I kept thinking over this issue, when my organization launched a new project I was involved in. I had to conduct seminars for women living in villages to educate them about their rights and to develop women's leadership. Unveiling problems of women living in these regions was another purpose of the project.

I was shocked about what I had to come across. Just not so long ago, I did not want to believe in women's rights violation in Palestine. But I saw almost the same kinds of violation in the regions of my own country! I'd say, in none of these regions women are independent and able to make decisions - even the simplest ones. Illiteracy is terrible, and it tends to grow dramatically each year. Another big problems are early marriages, violence, forced marriage, abortions... In Jalilabad district, many women cover their faces, and wear hijab. Here a woman can not wear what she wants.

In another district I met a girl, who was terribly bitten-up by her brother. The reason was her decision to remove unnecessary hair from her eyebrows. Girls do not have a right to touch their eyebrows before the wedding. And the girl's only fault was the wish to look better.

I was shocked with what I saw and what I heard there. I went to medrece teacher and Islam researcher Vafa Alieva to ask my questions about what Islams lets women do in the field of personal care and beauty. Vafa-khanum said:

"The reality is that each time men do not like something, they use religious views as a cover. It is easy: if you don't like something, you can simply say it's a sin, and label a woman as a sinner. In reality, the Prophet said that a woman should always be taking care of herself. But you always need to have the sense of proportion."



Jalilabad: women are involved in backbreaking work with their faces covered

photo by Vafa Saleh

APROPOS: SENSE OF PROPORTION

Great Britain's Azerbaijani women:

**"WHO IS THE MOST BEAUTIFUL?"
IS THE MOST IMPORTANT QUESTION**

efforts are worth something useful

Women's Azerbaijani society Sara Khatun, working in Great Britain since last year, launched its first project: the beauty contest among Azerbaijani women living in Great Britain. All women aged between 16 -28 are eligible to participate. To participate, candidates should fill in an application and to pass an interview with the organizers. Each participant will receive Azerbaijani national dress, she is assumed to wear at the contest besides all others. The contest is scheduled for March 8.

According to the Sara Khatun Society, its goals are to unite Azerbaijani women of Great Britain and to "spread the information on Azerbaijani women's achievements of different historic epochs." There were no comments posted on the link between the historic achievements and beauty contest.

(C@ucAsia comment on information published by Echo national newspaper, Jan 15, 2008)

Marina MAKSIMOVA
Estonia

photo by Diana Petriashvili

style and life

THREE GRACES: Sasha, Katya, Margarita

All-sufficient women living in harmony with themselves and their surrounding are always interesting and attractive. These women's style in dressing depends not only on their personal taste, but also on the specifics of their career and work they do. I picked out three women among those I know. Each of them is a special personality, who managed to build her life so that it corresponds to her values and beliefs. These women are of the most 'progressive' archetypes: entrepreneur, free-lance computer designer and creative intelligentsia representative. All of them are successful and economically independent.

I asked each of them two simple questions:

How important fashion is for your life?

What kind of clothes you prefer to feel yourself feminine?

Alexandra, 42

A business lady. Divorced, has an adult son. She generally wears business suits. Her hair is short; she wears glasses.

"Fashion is not any important for me. My wardrobe has functional purposes only - I need to take care of my business and social status, that's all. I have never felt happy or pleased doing shopping. Selecting clothes to buy is a very boring thing to do for me. That's why I employeed a person to do it for me as soon as I had a chance. We cooperate for

many years already, this woman has a great taste, and she knows well how I need to look. I like business style, preferring business suits with pants, I don't think my legs are good enough for wearing skirts. When on vacations, I wear sports clothes.

I don't have any particular clothes I would feel feminine wearing it. I think, you feel that you ar a woman only when there is a loving man by your side. I don't have that man by my side right now. And I don't think he will soon appear on scene."



Katherina, 34

Free-lance computer designer, working from home. Married, has two children. She wears jeans, sports shoes and a light jacket. There is no make-up on her face, and she wears a simple hairstyle. She considers herself as a feminist.

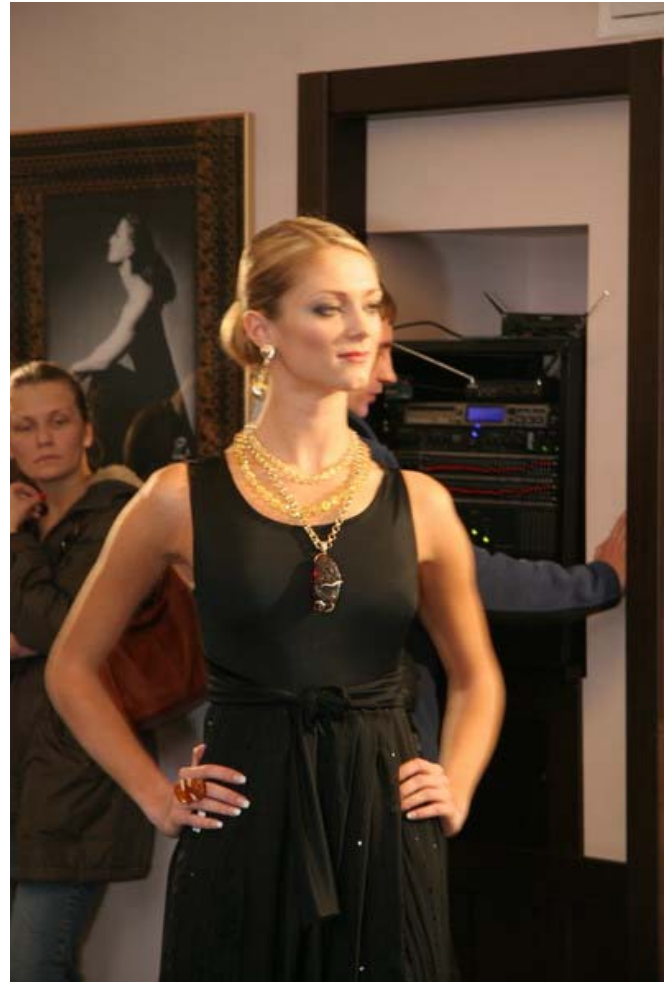
"I was sick with fashion back in childhood. My mom is good at sewing, she was making clothes for me when I was little. I was dressed like a doll, had plenty of pretty dresses. I had to go through a family scandal to make my parents buy first pair of jeans for me. The world of fashion is hard for me to understand, it is sometimes even scary for me, because it grades a human's personality and deprives women of self-esteem. I feel sorry for all those Barbie dolls walking at podiums. I think, these girls consider themselves as an article of trade. However, each of us should live our own lives. If they like false nails, bikini zone epilation - it is their personal choice. I dress in such way that I feel comfortable. I hate spending money for clothes. I'd rather buy something for my computer, for my work. We don't have free money. Both me and my husband work, but we have two children and two credits. But we finally bought an apartment! It is the most important for us right now. My female identity does not depend on clothes."

Rita, 36

Translator and writer. Married, has a daughter. She is wearing dark dress, highlighting her slim body. Long curly hair and accurate make-up make her look very attractive. She also wears accessories, such as neckerchief, watch, rings.

"I am very interested in fashion since my childhood. I have several good books on fashion history. I like reading good fashion magazines, and always pay attention to well-dressed people. The basics of my wardrobe are clothes of dark or neutral colors. Some of my dresses are quite expensive, but I decided to buy them, because I am frequently invited to theatres, exhibitions, presentations. I don't want to look like a Bohemian. I always feel myself as a woman, regardless of what I put on and how old I am."

When talking to these Graces, I understood that a woman, who has a vivid identity, doesn't have to follow generally accepted fashion. She can consider it and use it, but she never becomes the hostage of the fashion.



...but will never become the fashion's hostage.

photo by Umida Akhmedova

photo by Polina Miloradovich



Asya TSATUROVA
Armenia

**small details
of
big-time politics**

**FASHION
FOR**

**FEMALE
PARLIAMENTARIANS:**

rules changing

A stereotyped image of a female politician is a middle-aged woman wearing a conservative suite and minimum of jewelry. It used to be a strict rule for women engaged in politics not so long ago, but the situation has already changed.

Segolene Royal, who made her femininity be the main point of her pre-elections campaign, is probably the best example of new in the political fashion. "Some five-six years ago, when being a minister, she used to dress as a bourgeois Parisian," French media writes, "now she looks sexier, wears bright colors and high heels. Undoubtedly, she was suggested this style by her image-makers, and she plays the new role generously."

Yulia Timoshenko is another successful example of creating an image; Timoshenko's image of a 'Slavic Beauty' is being actively discussed by the media, judging wither Timoshenko's golden braid is real or fake. Some of medias even

blame Timoshenko in spending too much finances to take care of her braid. Besides her hair style, Ukrainian prime minister wears extravagant clothes and quite expensive jewelry. However, only selected politicians dare to break the dress-code rules. The politicians of lower range use more conservative and elegant style. Specialists suggest that a woman politician should look conservative, natural and balanced. A female politician should not look like she has just came out from a barber's shop, specialists say.

"The classics of political genre are conservative suits made of expensive high-quality fabric," a popular stylist, who did not want to unveil her name, said. "These clothes should not be bright, shiny or chatoyant. No gauzy blouses and deep decollete are allowed. Accessories might include conservative purse and moderated jewelry. It is hard to have an individual image staying in these limitations."

Previously, the etiquette would not let women occupying any important positions to wear trousers and diamonds. Presently, the attitude towards pants has changed, as for diamonds, it's up to women to decide what is a proper situation to have them on.

Electorate, and especially female voters, are very attentive to women politicians' images. At one of the meetings, several women candidates came; all except for one were wearing pants. "Trousers is a very comfortable and a very democratic clothes, but I think skirt looks better," one of my respondents said. Others believe that it is important for a politician to have good taste. Professionals state that any person can learn what to wear and how to act in order to look perfect. From the other side, we are lacking image-makers who would work with women politicians. And the lack of women at decision-making positions seems to be a reason behind it.

**APROPOS
RUSSIA: NEW DUMA LADIES**

**NO stereotypes
and complexes!**

According to the results of the recent parliamentary elections, there are 62 women MPs in the Russian parliament. The number grew by 18, compared to the previous parliament. The quality composition of female parliament members is even more interesting: among the female Duma members there are glamorous sportswomen and women of fashion, such as Svetlana Zhurova, Alina Kabaeva, Svetlana Khorkina. These women had several times posed naked for men's magazines, and it is likely that it would take time for their male colleagues to get rid of unnecessary associations and to forget their initial image.

The Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF) turned out to be the most 'male' faction (only four women out of total 57 MPs), the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR) and United Russia have alike proportion, while there is a gender breakthrough in the Fair Russia (11 women out of 38 MPs in total). The majority of Duma ladies wear classical clothes, but there also appear bright colors and low-necked dresses. MP Natalya Karpovich is especially standing out at this background: she uses pink-colored business cards, wears shiny jackets, decollete dresses and curls her blond hair.

(sources: *Moskovskiy Komsomolets* n/p and www.utro.ru)



Tmoshenko's braid is like Castro's beard or Gorbachev's birthmark - you will always recognize and notice it.

However, neither beard, nor birthmark have ever caused so much attention

photo by Vladyslav Musiienko

**APROPOS
UKRAINE: about the braid again**

Journalists believe that the rating of the Orange Princess Yulia Tymoshenko seriously depends on her hairstyle. According to the media, a well-known braid contributes to Tymoshenko's charisma, makes her easy to recognize by the voters, and even brings associations with the Orthodox saint aureole. It is significant that the braid began to grow simultaneously with Tymoshenko's rating.

Alma BEKTURGANOVA-ANDERSEN
Denmark

here

F R E E F R O M H E E L L S

I now really like Dane women's manner to dress,
but initially it even shocked me

It is easy to recognize a person, who has recently come to Denmark from our region: makeup, skirts, high heels... When I was planning to attend the first parents' meeting in my son's new Danish school, my son looked at me skeptically and said: "Are you planning to wear this?" "What's wrong?" I replied, "there are plenty of people here, who wear their national dresses. Maybe this business suit is my national dress."

To be honest, at that parents' meeting I felt like a decorated Christmas tree in the regular forest...

In Denmark, I had to face many confusing situations because of my dressing. Finally, I began wearing comfortable clothes, as Danes do. It is not comfortable to ride a bike, when you wear short skirt and high heels and when it's rainy and windy (it's a common weather for Denmark). Only after I found a new style, I realized that men are those who made up fashion for women. This is how they got a chance to make women dependable and unprotected. A woman-hater only could invent stiletto heels, that makes you feel terribly tired, even after you learn how to wear them. Only a sadist could create and make women use mascara, which complicates you life. Only a person, who wanted to prove to a woman her vainness, created pantyhose that tear once you make a clumsy move and make women to think about it 24 hours a day and entertains them from thinking of something more useful.

The dressing rules only seem to be inoffensive, in reality they are a big problem. A friend of mine working at one of schools in

Kazakhstan, complains that the school administration obliges women to wear dresses. Wearing pants means staying healthy for my friend, who has to spend her working hours in a cold school building. Besides other, she has two children and gets really little money for teaching, and buying new pantyhose everyday is quite painful for her budget. This is a good example on how the issue of dressing turns into the issue of suppression.

It demonstrates not only gender inequality, but social inequality as well. In post-Soviet countries, you can always recognize a person occupying more or less important position - this person is generally wearing expensive clothes, driving a good car and looking perfectly groomed. But in Denmark, it is practically impossible to distinguish a parliament member from the regular people. Here, the majority of MPs take a bike to come to work. Just look at the parliament entrance, and you will see how many bicycles are parked there.



Another indicator of democratic social formation. Personal transport parking by Danish parliament

photo by Alma-Bekturganova-Andersen

Ruta PELS
Estonia

turns out that

MEN TORTURED THEMSELVES WITH HIGH HEELS until they gave them to women

*I had a chance to realize it
at the museum
of shoes king Tomas Bata
in Toronto*

Museum is the part of BATA shoe empire, which is spread all over the world creating fashion tendencies. The museum displays interesting collection of shoes popular in XVII-XIX centuries. Mostly, this is women's shoes, but there are some elegant high heel men's samples also. I knew that European aristocrats liked to wear silk stockings, lace and shoes with high thick heels; but I would never imagine that Eastern men were also very coquettish and liked to look higher than they were in reality. Persian men's shoes of the XIX century surprised me with its delicacy and inconvenience; it became obvious for me that that type of shoes was designed exactly for showing off in ladies' company.

The exposition of XX century included many different shoes belonging to the world's celebrities: Pablo Picasso, Elvis Presley, Marilyn Monroe, Ella Fitzgerald, Princess Diana. By the way, the Princess of Whales used to wear comfortable shoes only, she



Persian men's shoes looked quite fetching



Moccasins of Canadian Indians' married couple

photos by Ruta Pels

never tortured herself with stiletto heels. Her shoes displayed at the museum exhibition, look so simple and modest, that you realize how expensive they are. I remember reading an article in one of magazines, saying that a special program was created for the Princess to find necessary pair of shoes, one of several thousand.

But most of all I liked the hall with mocassins from all over the world. They all looked alike, equally beautiful and comfortable: shoes of Canadian Indians, Siberians, Mongols, and Africans. The exposition also includes demonstration of a documentary showing the process of creation of this type of shoes - equally comfortable, beautiful and suitable for women, men, young and old.

It's a pity that life in the modern cities does not let us wear them, and that fashion magazines make us walk on stilts.



Boots of married couple in Burkina-Faso



Canadian Indians seemed to know what beauty is for both, women and men

During the same time, European ladies liked to wear these shoes. Different, but nice.



photos by Ruta Pels

Anna KERSTAN
Germany

nevertheless

STILETTO HEEL AS THORN

in one's subconsciousness



photo by Anna Kerstan

Stiletto heel has become the symbol in the argument for women's rights. Makeup and sexy clothes can also be included in this category. Some believe, these are irons and chains imposed to women by slaveholder males. However, the 'slaves' themselves often-times defend these symbols of enslavement. What is the reason?

Recently, I was amazed with a sight I saw when crossing the street. An attractive young woman was cycling like the wind. She was wearing a nice short skirt, elegant fur jacket, red high heel boots; her hair was nicely styled and she was holding an umbrella to protect it. She was moving with the speed of at least 25 kilometers per hour, and it took me some time to get back to reality.

There is something about all those nice dresses and shoes, I thought, otherwise women would never thirst for these irons and chains. The thirst for high heels and heavy makeup lays some-

where in our subconsciousness, and it needs to come out once so often. Carnival is the perfect place to realize the secret thoughts and instincts. You can be an ordinarily dressed human being between New Year parties, but once a year you can satisfy your nostalgia. For a real carnival you will need a special dressing and a special makeup; and no one will spare time or money for crushing everybody with your feathering!

I plan to go to one of parties like that to my friends in Cologne. As my husband hates carnivals, I will have to go there alone, but we went shopping together to find a proper dress for me. There were dresses a'la Marilyn Monroe, and punks' outfit, and equipment for sexy vamp women, and white short nurse dresses. We finally selected the costume of Venus, the goddess of love and beauty. I now wait for the carnival to prove or deny my theory about the stiletto heels in subconsciousness.

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