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# Pumps and Circumstance

Katia Jean Paul ruminates on the trends and the elements of style within the culture at large.



**Fancy Footwork**  
 by Katia Jean Paul  
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*Sneakers, slip-on shoes, espadrilles: all manner of flats, now made almost as glamorous as the perennial high heel shoe, are proving a fitting alternative to sport with the luxe garb and classic duds normally reserved for pumps and stilettos.*

I'm a die-hard fan of the high heel shoe. I began sporting high heels long before I started wearing makeup. Over the past few years, I've seldom worn flats, so much so that when I do descend from atop my pumps and stilettos and slip on something closer to the ground, the people that know me best are greatly concerned. They fathom that I must not be well to do something so out of character. That is the extent to which heels have become a part of my sartorial aesthetic.



Sneakerheads, from left to right: street style looks outside the shows in Milan, and a look from the DKNY Spring 2014 fashion show during Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week.

There are many reasons why I—and all the die-hard heel fanatics—favour a high heel shoe: the illusion of height, better posture, an unflinching feeling of sexiness, strength and power are just a few.

But the high heel is a paradox in itself: it can bestow a sense of empowerment just as it can make one feel disempowered. Does it limit your mobility or does it enable you to make strides in the world? Does it give you more confidence or does it take it away? That all depends on your perception of it.

While I have never felt trapped in a pair of high heels, after years of wearing them day in and day out, I now feel a pull towards its antithesis. Perhaps it's the fatigue of having relegated a glamorous shoe to everyday wear, or the desire for light, airy sartorial fare to match the season—and the current, or simply not wanting to ruin any more heels in Montreal's pothole-infested streets. In any case, flats, the latter of which seldom matched the elegance of a pair of heels before now, pack a stylish punch that almost rivals that of the classic high heel shoe. Almost, because nothing quite compares to a high heel. But the flats on offer this season, from sneakers to slip-on shoes, slingbacks, loafers, sandals and espadrilles—complete with luxe prints, rich colours and finishes, and playful embellishments—err more on the side of fab than drab, making them a surprisingly ideal, albeit quirky, match for our fancy ensembles.



Slingback Leather Track Shoe, \$129 at [Zara](#) stores, and online.



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