

THE REMIX

Survival of the Hippest

Around the world, members of our species are celebrating the 200th birthday of Charles Darwin. Because November is also the 150th anniversary of Darwin's controversial book "The Origin of Species," the festivities will be quite frolicsome. Have fun, but please, when attending the many lectures, exhibits, symposia and other lofty events in evolution's honor, choose carefully which of this spring's insane shoes you wear, because one look at your feet and every hot geek knows which branch or twig of Darwinism you favor. LYNN PHILLIPS

YOUR SHOE?



Louboutin's sandal flats

YOUR BRANCH Darwin's original theory of natural selection

WHICH MEANS Nature edits out the least fit.

With runway models collapsing like unstrung marionettes, you hypothesize that the woman who risks her neck on stilts, even if she survives to bear young, is more likely to topple over onto her papoose, tragically squashing her genetic line. To you, "survival of the fittest" means: Wear flats.

YOUR SHOE?



Dior's fertility fetish heels

YOUR BRANCH Darwin's theory revised to include sexual selection

WHICH MEANS Looking good can trump staying alive.

Showy peacocks attract more predators, but they outbreed drabber rivals just because peahens adore flashy tails. You figure the deity this six-inch heel depicts will advertise your fertility and fool alpha males into thinking that your spawn will be super-tall (statistically more likely to head companies).

YOUR SHOE?



McQueen's sports wrap

YOUR BRANCH Modified sexual selection based on physical fitness

WHICH MEANS That which doesn't kill you shows that you're healthy.

It turns out that big peacock tails signal healthier immune systems, so peahens choosing them get healthier chicks. "This discombobulating shoe," you cry, "highlights my superior sense of balance — a biological marker of youth, and hence of more viable eggs."

YOUR SHOE?



Galliano's fantasia

YOUR BRANCH Transhumanism

WHICH MEANS Nature is yesterday. We humans can evolve at will.

You are seeking a futuristic mate, convinced that the granddaughters of fertility worshipers will be stuck in their birthing huts while your children's children, genetically modified to stand seven feet tall and with G.P.S. nanochips in their brains, colonize space on fuel-cell-powered wings.

YOUR SHOE?



Ferré's plastic platforms

YOUR BRANCH Eldredge and Gould's theory of punctuated equilibrium

WHICH MEANS New species arise after an eco-crisis and evolve in isolation.

In your scenario, when global warming floods Manhattan, fashionistas are cut off from civilization. Most die of foot rot, but those who can walk above the muck survive. Eons later, when your tribe rejoins others, mutated genes leave it unable to mate with wingtip wearers.

YOUR SHOE?



YSL's latticed bootie

YOUR BRANCH Gould's theory of contingency

WHICH MEANS Evolution is a crap shoot.

The fossil record shows that our species owes as much to the bad luck of others as to any adaptive changes. By encasing your dogs in a wire-frame model, your boot says, "I'm doing it ironically, because my high-heeled sisters and I agree that the achy, bunion-prone human foot cannot possibly be a product of intelligent design."