

A barrier between body and earth, shoes were first made of grass, leaves, or animal skins. They had a rag-like appearance and were wrapped around the feet. This is evidenced only by cave drawings, since the material has long since rotted away.

Over time, due to the wearing of shoes and their protective coverings, feet had to adjust to a different load than they were used to while walking barefoot. As the big toe had to withstand more tension, the other toes became smaller. This resulted in a change of bones' development, and with it, the form of the shoe itself.

In colder regions, the whole foot was covered with fur—the origin of the moccasin—while in hot regions, sandals made of raffia, papyrus, and leather were worn with a triangular strap construction between the big toe and the second—the prototype of the flip-flop. And while the profession of shoemaker arose at the end of the Predynastic Period in Egypt, c. 6000 BCE, with the rising fashion of the sandal, owning shoes still wasn't standard. Shoemakers' sandals were expensive, and only worn on special occasions. The sandal-owner would be accompanied by a servant who carried the shoes to their destination, where they would be put on the owner's feet.

Over the course of time, the protective function of the shoe was complemented by the expression of one's rank. Around 2000 BCE, tapered poulaines originated in Syria and Canaan, ultimately leading to the popularity of pointed toes in the 14<sup>th</sup> century in France and England. Eventually, the toe of the shoe lengthened so much that it took on the shape of a stork's beak, indicating one's economic position—the longer the toe, the better one's social standing. For some, the tip of such footwear became so long that it was even bent upwards in a half-moon shape, or fixed to the calf to enable walking. In order to protect the poulaine's fine leather, eventually some started to use under shoes—pattens—which were made of a high wooden sole. To reduce their weight, all superfluous material was cut out, resulting in two stilts under each patten. In the European Middle Ages—where roads and pavement were minimal, and the heel was not in fashion yet—wooden stilts served not only to protect the actual shoes, but also to heighten oneself, both out of the street and away from common folk.

With the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century the chopine appeared in Spain, fulfilling a similar function of the European Middle Age shoe, heightening the appearance of the person wearing them. In contrast to pattens, chopines were not used as under shoes—they consisted of one piece with a platform sole mostly made of cork. Chopines gained such popularity that cork stocks were almost depleted in the middle of the century. Even though the shoe itself was not visible—since they were worn under dresses—this footwear was covered with fine leather, jewel-embroidered velvet, and brocades. Chopines also made their way to France, England, and Italy. Especially popular in Venice, the sole could be as high as 50 cm. Since movement at such heights was almost impossible, the wearers of the highest, most impractical shoes had to be guided, sometimes by two assistants.

Footwear continued to be uncomfortable into the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The distinction between left and right shoe was dismissed in favor of a symmetrical beauty ideal. Shoes had to be painstakingly broken-in until they were more functionally wearable, and those who could afford to do so handed this task to someone else. In 1796, attention was drawn to defects of the foot structure and accompanied back problems caused by this style, and 60 years later the aspiring American shoe fabrics and war ministries supported a reform in which a distinction between the left and right shoe returned—in part because it allowed soldiers to march faster and farther.

With the beginning of Industrialization, shoes started to be produced in factories and, in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, they finally became available as a mass product in Europe, at which point a lack of footwear once again became associated with poor etiquette and poverty. But with the rise of hippie, and environmentalist movements in the 1960s, going barefoot gained popularity among certain groups and became a symbol of anti-consumerism.

This issue can be read barefoot, in high heels, or anything in between. Dedicated to being *high* with all its connected meanings—physically, mentally, or socially—this issue looks at the states of up and down, high and low, and how they relate to each other and yet constantly contradict.