

## Middle America

Dita Von Teese once said that her favorite shoes weren't for walking – literally – they were made to be crawled in. If you listen closely, all over the homes of certain childhoods in middle American, you can hear the plastic on the couch crinkle. I've never understood what's meant by "the good" china; I put the gilt-rimmed plates in the microwave to see them spark. My grandmother's Spode is down to four plates only, and when my mother visits she tells me to pack it away, for safe keeping, for later.

The clear wrap still ringing her buff-colored lamp shades a sign of inattention, but visiting for the weekend I unwind it in the dark, & discard. Last week, I dusted off my one pair of heels to wear to a fundraiser and told everyone – not wanting them to mistake me for the kind of woman who wears heels regularly.

Scholars disagree as to whether it was ever possible to move elegantly in chopines, those platformed noblewoman's shoes. Two servants were needed to affix them to the feet; two others to assist with walking; but maybe with practice one could dance. Often jeweled or embroidered to match a gown that hung down well over their tops, obscuring the extra work anyway. Shakespeare quipped about "altitude"; Venetian sumptuary laws regulated their height. If I'm going to crawl, my bare feet

will make sparks, not the microwave or any hand-me-down goods. Whatever's unwound in the dark won't be couch-crinkle quiet.

-- C. Kubasta