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Wednesday, May 18, 2005

## Living/FYI XML

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### Cherries enjoy a fashionable jubilee

JACKIE WHITE

Life has definitely been a bowl of, well, you know what for fashion devotees.

It started last fall when Louis Vuitton introduced Takashi Murakami's cherry-print handbag on the spring runway. Since his two previous styles have been status hits for the luxury house, it was easy to predict the success of the simple cherry pattern.

While the affluent shoppers are willing to spend thousands for the authentic bags, the copies and facsimiles have multiplied many times over. You've only to check out the street vendors in New York City.

*New York Times* photographer Bill Cunningham recently featured 19 people-in-the-street photos of knock-offs and originals as more testimony that the bag is on a wildly successful ride.

And a scan of the Internet depicts the bag to be an industry unto itself. The Hollywood favorite sportswear company Juicy Couture has a cherry-print roll bag available at Nordstrom for \$165. Last week eBay had offerings ranging from bids of a few dollars to one at \$525. A line called Mary Frances Accessories offers versions for \$146 and \$64 at department stores.

Many, like the original, have leather trim. Juicy's version has red straps with a bow. Some are in the traditional Vuitton pattern and graced with one cherry cluster. Others have cherry blossoms.



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## Opinion

The print itself has also shown up in children's wear, designer dresses and bikinis. Tablecloths and curtains next?

### Riding high

So you're ready to shut out the lights and head upstairs to bed. Just hop aboard your elevator and take a ride. It's the latest status feature for homes, the *Wall Street Journal* reports.

Sure you could have put in a pool or invested in a redesigned bathroom with a television built into the mirror. Maybe you considered a theater room.

But your friends are bound to be impressed and the ride is a gift to your knees or your aging pet's joints. The *WSJ* says baby boomers in part are driving the trend. And it's a way for older people to stay in their homes longer.

At the same time, some people simply view it as a symbol of luxury like a Mercedes in the garage. And they think it brings value to the home.

What's more, technology has made the cost of the pneumatic lift more reasonable. They run about \$20,000 to \$28,000. Otis elevator told the *WSJ* that residential sales have increased 12 percent to 15 percent a year in the last three years.

Let's hope they aren't inclined to malfunction between floors when you're on your way to work.

### Cues from shoes

We love them. We hate them. And we're always trying to find the most beautiful, most comfortable, sexiest and most utilitarian shoes. We know they ultimately shape the impression we make on the world.

Therefore what our choices say about us is an interesting area to explore. So it's no surprise to see a little book that not only interprets the meaning of our favorite shoes but also offers advice about how best to express our inner personalities and find soul mates. It's *The Perfect Fit: What Your Shoes Say About You* (Chronicle Books, \$12.95) by Meghan Cleary, a New York writer with a penchant for cool footwear.

Are you fond of bare feet? You are free and easy and "add a breath of fresh air to any room," she says. If ballet flats are your love, you were brought up with strong middle-class values and "iron out disagreements among friends." The classic high-heel pump means you're a multitasker likely reading the financial page, scanning text messages, making notes and drinking coffee simultaneously. And as for the flip-flop, you're probably on island time, taking a slower "more meditative approach" to life.

OK. We know such musings are a stretch. But in these times, aren't we always trying to find the meaning of life? And most important, we need a giggle.

### To you, Michael Jordan

Whether it's a Starbucks latte, a faux designer bag, a Lexus or Chiefs' tickets, it falls into the category of luxury for consumers. And the sense of luxury is what everyone wants to buy and sell these days.

Luxury gives you the quiet satisfaction of having the best and/or seeing the object as a reflection

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## YOUR PETS

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of yourself, says Kenneth Hirst, a product and retail interior designer. In recent years the selling of a so-called luxury has been made faster and easier by the culture's obsession with celebrities from movies, television and sports.

The marketers use personalities to entice consumers. For instance, buyers of Jennifer Lopez fragrance "Still" or Celene Dion's "Celene" perfume can have an emotional reward from having the relationship with that person even if it's only through a fragrance. The same goes for the jeans and T-shirts Jessica Simpson wears. The consumer aspires to the luxurious lifestyles of the star, Hirst tells "Visibility," a marketing newsletter.

In the past, he adds, it took decades to build good will for a high-quality brand. Now it can be done overnight.

You can be sure that such endorsement favorites as Yao Ming and Tiger Woods hope the trend continues.

## Wall power

Some men just find comfort in striped and foulard ties. They give them confidence and courage. Now they can reap the benefits at work on casual days or at home watching basketball.

*The New York Times* says Brooks Brothers has introduced a wallpaper collection in the same patterns as traditional store ties. An executive team chose the designs from Brooks' archives. They sell for \$29.99 to \$46.99 a roll. For information, call (800) 332-3384 and request the Gramercy division of F. Schumacher.

## Teen power

The teen who had to have the jeans with grommets or ruffled blouse last year won't go near them now. What's the deal?

He or she is just part of a trend that affects almost everyone under the age of 18.

Marshal Cohen, fashion trend analyst with NPD, a market research firm, describes the teen market as a "revolving door" with trends going out as fast as they come in. According to a report in the newsletter "WGSN," Cohen was part of a recent New York seminar, "Those Transient Teens: Deconstructing the Teen Consumer."

Teens are strongly influenced by media, he says, spending more than six hours a day with television and online. But at least a fourth of the time is spent multitasking.

More than other generations, they share with parents everything from music and movies to clothing (mother-daughter joint ward

robes). And they are drawn to brands that reinvent themselves and stay relevant. But most of all, they want brands that are real. They see "right through marketing fluff," Cohen said.

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## FASHION CALENDAR

- **SPRING TRUNK SHOW:** May 10-13, *Asiatica*, 4824 Rainbow, Westwood (913-831-0831)
- **TRUNK SHOW:** *Ralph Lauren*. Informal modeling 11 a.m.-3 p.m. May 12-13, *Halls Plaza*,