

SCENE

TULSA WORLD **D1** Sunday | June 22, 2008 | tulsaworld.com

It's gotta be the shoes

an article [By JASON ASHLEY WRIGHT World Scene Writer](#) in tulsaworld.com



6/22/2008

Last Modified: 6/22/2008 3:40 AM

For some women, 500 pair in a closet — OK, a pair of closets — is nothing

Tamra Sheehan, by her own admission, is an addict.

"Without a doubt I am," she said. And don't bother tattling to her husband.

"He supports my habit," said Sheehan, who converted her basement into a showcase for her fix — shoes. Lots and lots of pretty ones in a variety of styles and colors.

"This is probably embarrassing to say," she said, laughing, before taking mental inventory of how many she had. "Let's see I would probably say about 100 pairs," ranging in labels from Nine West to Chanel. It's such an awe-inspiring collection that her friends, after watching Sarah Jessica Parker's shoe-obsessed character in the current "Sex and the City" movie, told her, "Girl, Carrie has nothing on you."

Yet hers aren't the most we found among other women around town who claim to share the same addiction to footwear.

"I don't think I'm a shoe addict as much as Well, I probably am," said Susan Ruley, correcting herself in mid-sentence. Why, just the day before, she found some cheetah-print Yellow Box flip-flops — and bought them, of course.

Her inventory: About 50 pairs, she said. But she gives shoes away, like to her daughter-in-law, who wears the same shoe size. "You just can't keep everything."

The relationship many women have with shoes starts developing at a young age, "shortly after

we begin to walk," said Jennifer Combs, co-owner of J. Cole shoe boutique at King's Landing, 9930 Riverside Parkway.

"As soon as we want to feel grown-up," Combs said, "we will put on a pair of our mother's shoes, most likely high heels, and have the instant feeling of what it means to be a female." And then they grow up and, it seems, shop. Some even form their own support groups — or whole societies, one to which Sheehan belongs. She's a charter member of Shuzsociety, "a group of sole sisters from Texas, Oklahoma and Kansas," as well as other locales, according to the group's Web site.

"Shoes create an indescribable bond between women," said Cindy Marshall, a friend of Sheehan's, who also co-founded Shuzsociety in 2007. It consists of an online magazine, shoe-shopping hub and social network for shoe lovers, with offices in Tulsa, Dallas, Las Vegas and New York.

"There's an instant connection between strangers when the conversation begins with, 'I love your shoes,' " Marshall said.

Shoes first, ask questions later

Camaraderie aside, shoes also make a statement for a woman, said NeMar Noulles, a local chef and caterer, who "used to be a shoe buyer in a past life." Her collection, which she keeps in boxes sorted by color in her dressing room, consists of between 400 and 500 pairs.

"A pair of pants is a pair of pants," she said. "But a shoe can define you. If you have on a really great, sexy shoe, it can make you feel so incredible. You can even have on a \$10 skirt, but if you have on a hot pair of shoes, everything looks good."

She and Sheehan both usually buy shoes and worry about their outfit afterward. For them, shoes are the focal point of their look.

The day we spoke, Gloria Kelley's focal point was a pair of black Franco Sarto sandals.

"I have a shoe fetish," she said. "If you saw my closet, you'd understand."

Not just one closet but four, with shoe boxes stacked three deep in each. So how many pairs is that? "Probably 600," said Kelley, who's been known to visit J. Cole and buy 10 or 12 pairs at a time.

Her collection isn't all new, though. One pair from the '50s belonged to her late mother. Another, a pair of lime green wedges from the '70s, are Kelley's. And, yes, she still wears them.

Kelley's favorites, however, include a pair of Donald J Pliners — "Champagne pony with chocolate brown dots on them, look just like an Appaloosa." A pair of "killer" Angeleigh Anastasio shoes are close to the heart of Noulles, who likes "something a little different."

"I don't like to look down and see my shoes on other people's feet, except for flip-flops," said Noulles, who's bought five or six suede flip-flops at one time from Target. "You can't go out and shop and not look at shoes anywhere you go, even Target."

Whatever the price, shoes are pieces of art, Marshall, Noulles and Sheehan each said, all separately from each other. And considering how much some shoes cost, from upper-three-digit to four-digit designer price tags, "art" isn't that far-fetched of a description.

"It's an investment," Noulles said. "When you buy high-quality clothing and take care of it, you have it forever. And if it's not just really faddy stuff, it always comes back." Plus, she admits, "it's all about making your leg look good."