

FETISH FOOTWEAR EROTICA FOR THE FOOT

True shoe fetishism might appear very strange to most people, but changes in our sexual attitudes over the last thirty years have pushed 'fetish' footwear into the mainstream. Fetish chic is now available on the high street. You do not have to subscribe to fetishist behaviour in order to wear fetish fashion à la Vivienne Westwood, Jean- Paul Gaultier or Christian Louboutin.

The idea that shoes play a part in the erotic imagination first emerged during the eighteenth century with the novel *Le Pied de Fanchette* by French writer Restif de la Bretonne (1769). The story's narrator steals the shoes of his employer's wife and gets very excited about their little pink tongues, green heels and rosettes over the toes.

Shoe fetishisms can take many forms. Perhaps it is the look of the shoe that excites, its size or the way it feels. Maybe it triggers a memory or some sexual fantasy. Although people with large shoe collections tend to be women, it is quite often men who develop fetishist attitudes towards shoes.

Fetish footwear is in the eye of the beholder. Colour and texture play an important role, with black being very popular, closely rivalled by red. There are the typical fetish styles – high spiked heels, the wet look, PVC, a patent finish, tight laces straps and buckles. And the ubiquitous high-heeled shoe often becomes an object of devotion. The heel hinders the wearer's movements, suggesting a form of bondage that some people find erotic. The use of straps, padlocks, studs and spikes to adorn fetish footwear suggests submission. Fashion historian Anne Hollander believes this presents the foot 'as a beautiful slave' to be used by the slave master. Quite often the simplest and most unassuming shoes provide the strongest emotional reactions.

'Fetishism – a condition in which the handling of an inanimate object or part of the body other than the sexual organs is a source of sexual satisfaction'

Collins Concise English Dictionary



ABOVE: Caption copy to come.



LEFT: A women's single, black, patent leather, ankle-strap shoe. A nude female figure wearing court shoes and long gloves is attached to the vamp throat, forming a T-bar. This shoe was commissioned by the Crafts Council for the Shoe Show: British Shoes Since 1790, held in 1978. It has since been adapted by the Argentinian designer Rodolfo Azaro.