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Dream job: Melanie Fascitelli

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You could say that Melanie Fascitelli's work is "hanging" with celebrities.

As New York's top closet consultant, it's her job to arrange the hangers, drawers, tie racks and everything else (read: lots of shoes) of the rich and famous.

But that's only the half of it. The 35-year-old's firm, Clos-ette, is a design consultancy that works with well-heeled clients and their architects at the blueprint stage to create multiple-room closet and dressing spaces bigger than most city one-bedrooms.

She's designed dressing areas for Eva Longoria and Julianna Margulies that feel more like SoHo boutiques than walk-in closets, and a "golf room" for Michael Jordan's linkswear.

Other touches have included compact hair salons, sinks, mini-bars, spa areas, and even tiny safe rooms for expensive jewelry. One closet, for a Pennsylvania software millionaire, even had an elevator.

As a star within her own very specific field, Fascitelli fetches up to \$5,000 for a consultation that includes site measurements and an inventory of closet items.

Living with her husband and son on the Upper East Side, the driven and to-the-point Fascitelli took a break from juggling jobs in New York, Miami and Dallas, to give @work a peek inside the closet door.

Have you always been obsessed with having an organized closet?

I was always into it. Growing up in Palm Beach, Fla., I was crazy about my closet. My parents built homes for my family, and I was in charge of filling out everyone's closet.

What did you do for work when you first got to NYC?

I was an intern, working for Mike Judge at MTV the summer after high school, before I went to NYU. I'm a very organized person. So I kept track of all of his voice-overs. I organized his schedule.

It's probably safe to assume there was no "closet organizer" major at NYU.

No, I triple-majored in creative writing, journalism and media ecology. But beginning my junior year, I also worked full-time for Paul Wilmot, a major p.r. guy. After graduation, I went to a start-up magazine called Channel as associate editor. Then I was content editor of luxuryfinder.com for three years. Then I went to Style.com as senior fashion producer.

When did you get interested in designing spaces?

I went to Anne Klein as VP of marketing and communication. I got hooked on layout and design while we were building two boutiques, one on Broadway and one up on Madison. I loved it, working with the architecture and design teams, learning how the stores are set up, all the visual merchandizing tricks.

I found Anne Klein too corporate, so I went freelance and my big break was working with designer Ana Abdul on her boutique in NoLIta. I redesigned the store space, and when she bought a loft in TriBeCa, she had me interior design that, too. It was her workroom, living areas, but also her closet, for sure.

What led to the launch of Clos-ette?

That's a funny story. Ana liked my work, so she told people she knew at Vogue about it. In 2002, I'm eating lunch at Blue Ribbon, and I get a call from Vogue. They want to profile my "company." Meanwhile, I didn't even have a company. I said, I've got to call you back. So, I doodled on the napkin the name Clos-ette and the logo. Then I had, like, two months to come up with a company and a Web site before the September issue came out.

Who was your first celebrity client?

Liv Tyler, a total New Yorker. She had lots of clothes to organize and tons of accessories, bags, cosmetics.

Is part of your job simply telling people they've got to throw away some clothes?

We always start with an edit, which requires an inventory — a record of what they have and what they'll be acquiring for the new space. Typically it's a massive edit, especially with celebrities, because they get so much free stuff.

What's an example of a design decision you'd make depending on someone's wardrobe?

Well, let's say someone's got a thing for large handbags, 32-centimeter Birkins. They're massive and they want them in display cases. Other women may have a huge collection of clutches, which are perfect for in-line door trays where you can pull them out and see them.

How do potential customers find you?

Probably 75 percent of my referrals come from architects. It's a room they don't want to worry about, but it's the first room clients are angry about if it's not right because every time they get dressed, it's aggravating.

What's the most grandiose celeb closet you've done?

We did a closet for Eva Longoria in San Antonio, when she was still with [Spurs star] Tony Parker. She wanted everything on display — gowns, handbags, jewelry. It was two separate spaces, three really. One had a little sink, ottomans for a little dressing room. It was at least 2,000 square feet.

Is space always a challenge in New York City?

Often. Think of the super-rich hedge-fund people. They can have 1,200 to 1,500 feet of closet space. And the funny thing about New York is that guys can be just as bad as women with shoes. I'll commonly do two closets, one for shoes and one for clothes.

What's the biggest challenge in your job?

When I design a his-and-hers closet, it's always a debate over space. Either that or the man doesn't want to be involved. And then typically the woman goes way off into left field, and I have to deal with reality of what the husband wants to spend. I'm often forced to play mediator.

Any advice for aspiring closet designers?

I get hundreds of resumes every month from girls who want to be closet organizers. There is something called the National Association of Professional Organizers, and that's a great resource for people looking to get into that line of career.

Can you isolate why you're good at this job?

I have the eye of an editor and the hand of an architect.

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