

## Come Into the Closet

### let the spring cleaning begin

by allison wilkermuth

**T**he humble master bedroom closet has come into its own.

Once the never-to-be-seen repository for clothes, sentimental objects and any manner of skeletons, the closet has become one of the most glamorous rooms in the house, and one that, if designed properly and maintained well, can draw as many oohs and aahs as a designer kitchen. Even in today's economy, a well-thought-out closet can reap benefits right away as well as in years to come.

The master closet's definitely not humble anymore. Ranging anywhere in size from 48 to 1,500 square feet, and costing anywhere from \$4,000 to \$40,000, the custom-designed closet is a thing of beauty.

It is also a thing of value. Even in a slowed housing market, a beautifully organized custom closet can help sell a house.

"Organization and upkeep of a home ultimately brings value," said designer Ellen Baron-Goldstein, of Baron-Goldstein Designs in Roslyn. "Every home I do entails some sort of custom closet. People definitely want to maximize their space and have everything as visual as possible."

Real estate expert Shawn Elliott agreed on the value of closets. In new construction, "it helps tremendously when the builder or developer finishes the closets," said Elliott, president of Shawn Elliott Luxury Homes & Estates. "If the developer spends \$5,000 to \$10,000 to outfit the master and the children's rooms, it helps sell the house tremendously." And on resale, a home with built-in closets will sell better than one without, Elliott said.

Elliott, who has sold all types of homes, from those with small walk-in closets to one \$14 million home with a 1,500-square-foot closet, said a great closet is still relevant in today's market, "more so than ever. Closets have become additional rooms."

Designers who have done their fair share of closets have included all sorts of amenities in them, from refrigerators and wine caves to flat panel televisions to adjacent pet closets. While some people prefer closets with a singular function – a space just for handbags or shoes, for instance – most hope a well-organized closet will bring order to their lives by providing a space



A closet designed by Melanie Charlton Fawcett includes painted maple and brass center islands with new slabs on each corner and a beautiful Italian silk wall-to-wall carpet.



Above: A painted maple finish on the cabinetry, light carpeting and clear-fronted shoe shelves keep this custom closet designed by Melanie Charlton Fascitelli light and airy.

Left: Painted maple with decorative wallpaper and celine fabric upholstery on drawer fronts, along with a custom, blown glass chandelier, lend elegance to a closet designed by Fascitelli.

## THE MOST DESIRABLE FEATURES OF A CUSTOM CLOSET INCLUDE:

- ✓ Plenty of space for shoes (ideally, slanted shelves for women's shoes and flat, deep shelves for men's)
- ✓ Multiple-height hanging areas for shirts and blouses, pants, suits and both short and long dresses
- ✓ Drawers of various depths and sizes, some of them lined for jewelry and some that lock
- ✓ Shelves for sweaters, t-shirts, gym clothes and other foldable items
- ✓ Additional shelving for handbags and shoes that are not in constant use
- ✓ A flat surface (typically a center island) with a charging station for pdas and other personal electronics
- ✓ Mirrors

Then there are the 'wow' features. Closet amenities include things like lavender and cedar-lined drawers, laundry and dry-cleaning bins, steamers, custom ladders, belt drawers, shoe-shine areas and retractable rods in the seams of the cabinetry.

Kolson, a decorative hardware and bath fittings store in Great Neck, offers dozens of beautiful drawer pulls for any type of cabinetry finish, such as mahogany and cherry. It also carries the Gem Safe, a jewelry safe for the home whose standard features include an electronic push-button lock, exotic hardwood jewelry interior, velvet lined drawers, five active and passive relocking devices and a choice of four levels of security.

Seating in a closet is always nice – a bench, chair or built-in for relaxing, putting on shoes or storing extra blankets. And the experts agree that good lighting is critical. Incandescent light provides a warm glow, a skylight provides natural light, and a chandelier lends a touch of elegance. A good lighting plan will take all of these options into consideration.

Before you layout your dream closet, however, the most important thing to consider is your lifestyle.

Before Baron-Goldstein starts any closet project, she asks the homeowner how she wants it to function – will it be a simple storage space, a dressing area, or a place for relaxation? She also asks people how many and what kind of shoes they have (lots of heels? running shoes? boots?), how many handbags they have and how they prefer to store them, how they fold their clothes and how they put away their jewelry.



The Gem Safe, a line of home safes carried by Kolson in Great Neck, is an attractive, luxurious and secure way to protect your jewelry. The safe offers biometric locks (it uses a fingerprint recognition system), or can be integrated into your home security system. It comes predrilled with bolt holes so it can easily mount to the floor. Gem Safes range in price from \$3,000 to \$16,000.