



Sartorial Spaces

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Photo by Jody Tiongco

Custom designs, luxurious materials and an organized approach combine for closets that impress.

By Connie K. Ho

Clean. Sleek. Organized. These are just some of the words that come to mind when thinking of a closet done well. With Spring just getting underway, take advantage of the season to clear out clutter and create a space that showcases your sumptuous wardrobe and makes assembling an outfit a breeze each

morning.

Orange County organizing expert Amy Goddard says a custom closet can help kick off the path to a more orderly clothing collection. To begin, instead of having items piled on top of each other, designate specific areas to store apparel and accessories like shoes and jewelry: Scarves might be hung up for display while belts are rolled up neatly, for example.

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“For me, the No. 1 thing with any organization is that if you can’t see it and label it, you’re probably going to forget about it and lose it. So I always recommend with any closet organization that the better view that you have, the better,” says Goddard, who is the founder of A/L/G Organizing Strategies, which recently moved from Newport Beach to Costa Mesa. “I’ve even taken doors off my clients’ closets and we’ve organized it so ... that when we walk into their closet, it doesn’t look like a chaotic mess, it looks like an art piece.”

And for those who are just seeking to freshen up an existing closet, a wide selection of racks and containers can be utilized. “We recommend using neutral colored bins and baskets to help organize the space in a variety of materials consisting of fabric, cotton or woven materials to provide warmth to the space,” says Melanie Graham, public relations assistant at The Container Store, which has a location in Costa Mesa.

But, to create a closet that you truly love, starting from scratch may be the way to go, whether remodeling or building a new space to your own specifications.

Building Basics

When constructing a custom closet, a wide variety of materials are available to achieve a look that’s classic, modern or anything in between. With wood tones ranging from darker walnut to lighter birch, selections should be based on personal preference as well as the existing style of the room where the closet will be located. Goddard says cedar is a good choice to protect clothing, as it repels moths, although some people don’t care for the scent.

Sustainable options like recycled and reclaimed wood are also available, as well as melamine and other wood-like products. Closets can be designed with glass or solid doors, soft lighting or any other carefully curated details. With so many choices, having a designer on hand to guide you through the process is key.

California Closets—with a showroom in Corona del Mar—is one company offering custom solutions. The process starts with an in-home design consultation to measure the space and discuss options with the client.

“Our job is to understand what are these clients’ needs and how can we streamline all of their wants to meet their needs,” says Heather Mancini, a local designer with California Closets. “The most important thing is knowing their personality and lifestyle and their habits, routines and, of course, inventory.”

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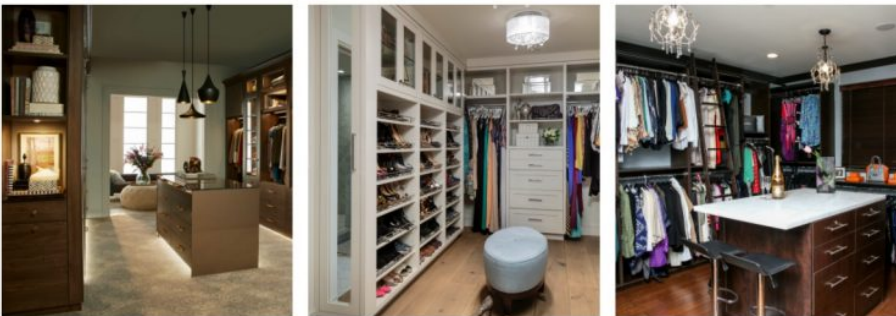
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Next, the designer uses a computer program to create a 3-D virtual model of the proposed closet. If clients want any changes, the plan can be tweaked until it's perfect—down to the finishes, lighting and accessories—before installation.

Seating is also an important factor: Depending on space, this could be in the form of a vanity and chair, a built-in cushioned bench, chaise lounge or cushy armchair. Seating can come in handy when pondering possible outfits and it can also provide a place to perch while a stylist works his or her sartorial magic before a gala or party.

"[The client] ... can sit comfortably while the stylists pull out outfits and might even hang them on an extra clothing bar for them to say 'Yes, I like that' or 'No, I don't like that,'" Goddard says. "Also, for shoes, seating is huge. I can't tell you how many people don't have an area to properly put on their shoes, so that's essential when you're getting dressed."

According to Mancini, lighting is another element that's crucial in a closet, as this kind of space typically does not have windows since sunlight can fade fabric. Overhead lighting may brighten the general area, but more is often needed to fully illuminate garments and make their true colors visible. One option is puck lighting, which highlights and defines an item directly below it while strip lighting may be considered to improve visibility of garments along an entire shelf. Extras like a dimmer switch and remote control may also come in handy.



<http://www.newportbeachmagazine.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/ClosetSpaces.jpg>

Down to the Details

Once construction is completed, Goddard recommends grouping clothing by category. For a male client, she might sort by suits, shirts, ties and belts; for a female client, she'll consider arranging tops by sleeve length and then put dresses together, followed by skirts and pants. The closet could also be organized by color, going from white to black and following the whole color spectrum. The way items are displayed can make all the difference when it comes to getting ready and selecting the day's clothing and accessories.

“If you have a walk-in, you’ll want to see the clothes almost like a retail store—you don’t walk into Chanel or Hermès and see all their bags or shoes covered,” Goddard says. “If you can’t see it, you probably won’t grab that shoe or bag or whatever.”

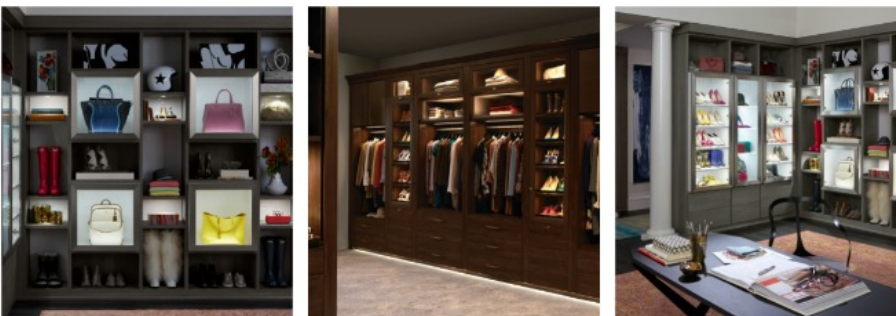
The goal is to help clients feel as if they’re browsing in a boutique rather than rummaging through a closet. High-end details can elevate this experience. For example, leather shelving may be used for storing handbags or fragrances, and garments can be hung on poles wrapped in leather. There are also pull-out rods for storing belts, ties, hats and scarves “to make your inventory usable,” Mancini says. “These accessories are crucial to a space,” she says.

For many, jewelry organization is one of the most difficult aspects of maintaining a well-ordered closet space. The object is to arrange your collection in an accessible way—rather than a jumbled mess—that’s easy to view, allowing items to quickly be paired with ensembles. If working with a custom closet designer, homeowners may want to consider installing an island in the middle of the space with drawers where jewelry can be laid out. Dividers can be placed in drawers to help keep items separated; velvet-lined inserts can protect jewelry pieces as well. Another possibility is to create boards for jewelry displays.

“Some people have earrings and a watch that go together, [so] we’ll put them in collections,” Goddard says. “But, for the necklaces, if they don’t have a built-in storage system with the lined drawers, I have them put them on boards; they almost look like frames ... and they have access to them laid out. Otherwise people will just put them in a jewelry box and they get tangled.”

The Container Store offers shelves, drawers, jewelry trays and dividers in its elfa and TCS Closets collections “to keep everything from chandelier earrings to bangles neat and organized,” Graham says. Or choose the elfa door and wall rack system, a sophisticated update on classic pegboards, to take advantage of vertical space that’s often wasted.

A glass countertop with lighting is another option—to show off favorite pieces and find items without having to open drawers. And, for those who want to safeguard jewelry and accessories, California Closets offers drawer locks or a safe behind hidden doors.



Bringing It All Together

A closet should be tailored to fit your needs. Every detail, from placement of each element to the materials used, should have a reason behind it, whether that's aesthetics or functionality. Business professionals might request to have everything exposed in the closet so that shoes and other items can be quickly grabbed and packed for frequent work trips. Or, a client who isn't home much due to traveling might want their handbags safely stored behind glass doors to protect from dust.

Mancini recalls collaborating on one closet for a fashionista whose lifestyle includes traveling and blogging. The design maximized storage and created easy access to the items she loved. Mancini made sure there was a dedicated spot for every piece, utilizing garment rods and tilted shoe shelves with fences to keep each pair in place, with lighting to emphasize the display.

Mancini also assisted a retiree in downsizing from a home that was too large, creating a custom closet that could showcase a collection of artwork, books and gifts. Height mattered for this particular client, so everything in the closet was carefully measured to accommodate specific clothing sizes, for example.

Once a closet is organized, getting dressed in the morning becomes less of a hassle, which helps set the tone for whatever lies ahead.

"You'll feel confident about every decision you're making as you prepare for the day," Mancini says. "... Your mind will be clear, and you'll have a clearer vision of who you want to be as you're getting ready to conquer your day."



Wardrobe Butler

Gain extra closet space with Garde Robe's singular storage and delivery service.

From too many clothes and not enough space to a limited need for seasonal attire or transportation of garments between multiple homes and travel destinations, these are just some of the challenges faced by fashionistas. Enter Garde Robe, a luxury wardrobe storage and valet service with an

Photo courtesy of Garde Robe app for keeping track of the location of each item. The company has been in business since 2001 and expanded to California nine years later, including service to Orange County.

“Clients love the service for the level of care ... [for their] clothing, ability to access things placed elsewhere or via the Cyber Closet app and the elegance and convenience of the white glove aspect,” says Doug Greenberg, vice president of sales and marketing for Garde Robe.

Known for its bespoke service, the company will send a representative to pick up and deliver the selected clothes, shoes and accessories. Once items arrive at the Garde Robe facility, they go through a detailed inspection and are photographed and cataloged to the minute detail, including color, size and designer. After garments have been photographed, they are dry-cleaned if necessary and wrapped in tissue and placed in breathable garment bags or boxes when appropriate, following the same textile preservation standards used by museums. The items are kept in a climate-controlled, air-purified environment, which is protected against moths.

Different members utilize the service for different needs. Some store items seasonally so that, at certain times of the year, select garments are at home and while others remain in the Garde Robe facility. Others use it for long-term archival storage for high-value gowns and fur coats. Those who have a fashion emergency can count on the company to provide the item at a moment’s notice; Garde Robe offers next-day delivery service.

The company counts actress Gwyneth Paltrow and model Iman among its members, and also has worked with top designers like Carolina Herrera and Oscar de la Renta on storing their archives.

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