

Coming Out Of The Closet

It's now a room of its own.

By Susan Kehoe, Ph.D.



Room closet in cashmere finish with linen backer and vertical ribbon lights in display cabinet.

A rose may still be a rose, but designer Shirley Maddalena suggests a closet is no longer a closet. “Closets are an extension of our house; they’re not just a repository for clothes.”

The data agree. Many people are converting or building on an entire room to house their clothes. These “closet rooms” are finished in wood or laminate to resemble furniture and include upholstered-top benches, marble dresser islands and maybe a chandelier for atmosphere.

According to Houzz.com, closet envy causes many to gaze at the luxuries so readily available for that once-tucked-away room. Houzz recently released its “15 most popular closet luxuries,” and the dresser island is the most popular item with 136,000 saves

in the Online Ideabooks.

Of course, a closet island can only fit in a closet room because it needs 3 to 4 feet of space on all sides for a walkway and drawer openings — so, bigger closets are certainly on the wish list.

Jennifer Taylor says, “Today’s closets

have cabinets for every item and accessory. A good example is the men’s closet where they request space dedicated to watch collections, pullout accessory drawers for sunglasses, and glass door cabinets to easily find or display shirts, hats and other items.”

A single picture of a men’s closet

on Houzz was saved 67,000 times. It’s finished in dark wood with a shoe shelf running the entire length and slatted benches on which to try them on.

Glass cabinet doors and shelves are showing up in all kinds of closets lending a display case look. Some have *Continued on page 138*



Far left: Minimalist men's closet in gray from the streamlined Virtuoso line. Left: Men's closet in dark finish with dresser and textured backing, angled shoe racks, tilt-out hamper and translucent glass upper cabinets in a floor-to-ceiling suite design with LED lighting inset on shelves and puck lighting throughout the upper perimeter.

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Above: Single wall closet becomes part of this contemporary, minimalist room.

Right: Men's and women's closet in sienna-colored wood with black leather insets on the armoire, drawers and some shelves. Built-in jewelry drawer angled shoe and boot racks and custom shelves with LED inset light strips.



LED lights on each shelf, and Houzz reports photos of glass cabinets appearing 38,000 times as one of its top 10 luxury items for closets. Larger, more luxurious room closets are definitely on-trend in homes with extra space.

Want to learn more? Venture into California Closets in Birmingham to investigate the latest in the brave new world of closets. A bit like going down the rabbit hole; you'll find an alternate world of products calling your name, such as these:

- A tilt-out hamper with two removable bags, one for the laundry room and another for the dry cleaners.
- A pullout valet rod to hang the next day's outfit, instead of using the handles of plastic shoeboxes that frequently break under too much weight.
- A convenient jewelry drawer to

consolidate the go-to pieces under lock and key.

- And the biggest surprise, a full-length mirror that doesn't take up valuable wall real estate; it hides in place and pulls out when needed. The glass shows the entire figure regardless of where you stand. Good-bye bifold closet door mirrors with the lopsided split reflection.

A CLOSET MAKEOVER

But what about your 25-year-old standard builder's grade closet? It's unlikely that much could be done without a rebuild and expansion.

Sheila Markham, California Closet store owner, suggested I get a complimentary consultation from one of her designers.

Before I knew it, Sarah Cormier was at my door asking questions about my

primary objectives while measuring every inch of closet space.

"I see you've tried some closet organization systems; it looks good," she said.

Then she pulled out her laptop and began to redesign the closet while I perused photo examples and chose finishes and features.

Before I finished viewing samples, she created a 3D CAD display of my closet that incorporated everything I wanted — and more.

"If you're going to have shelves, it's good to have them on either side of the door because it makes a larger, more welcoming entrance."

Noticing my pant wardrobe stretching across much of the space, she arranged a large pullout pant rack. The hangers are custom-designed to hold pants folded over extra-long,

non-slip hangers; the rack can also hold skirts. A locking jewelry drawer is placed above this space and a second clothes rack for shirts, tops or jackets is positioned above that. The bulk of my daily dressing routine was consolidated in one part of the small closet! As Taylor says, "Get everything in its place so you can see it at a glance for quick changes."

In addition, longer-hanging garments and dresses are placed where nothing had gone before — dead space on the back wall. Best of all, the shoe rack rests on a drawer, which is really a tilt-out hamper. The back of the closet area is also the location for pullout belt racks, a valet hook and the concealed mirror.

LED strip lights illuminate the top of each section to make it easy to find what's needed. Maddalena agrees with the value of a well-lighted space because "LEDs give off a natural color rendition. Always use LEDs in a dark space when you're matching clothes."

The closet they designed in my space is called a "suite configuration," meaning it's built-in from floor to ceiling like furniture, instead of shelves and clothes racks hanging from the wall or ceiling. It provides a bottom shelf for additional shoe storage and every shelf and clothes rack is movable, providing height customization for purses, boots and hats. The finishes and choices to decorate the closet are endless and remarkable, each with a custom price.

The closet can be installed in four to six weeks. The price includes materials and installation, except for tear-out of the old system and painting, which can be provided by California Closets. An electrician needs to be involved if lights are added to shelves, but the rest is turnkey.

I'm still deciding whether to come out of the closet, but the cost is less than expected for the custom-design provided by California Closets. I'll let you know what happens, but I think they had me at the concealed mirror.

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FOR MORE INFO

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