

The ultimate female status symbol isn't a designer handbag; it's the closet that holds the handbag—plus a few hundred pairs of shoes and a vanity sink.

four super-deluxe closets

BY H. M. EPSTEIN
PHOTOGRAPHY BY PHILIP JENSEN-CARTER



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1 Denzer's jackets, sweaters and suits are by designers Yves St. Laurent, Valentino, Ungaro, Roberto Cavalli, John Galliano, Etro, and Agnona. She organizes her clothes by category, e.g., suits, pants, jackets.

2 Mary Jane Denzer in the doorway between her dressing room and in-season closet (out-of-season clothes are stored elsewhere in the apartment) in her favorite new Valentino ensemble of cream cashmere sweater and black flared pants. On the floor is a pair of green velvet pumps by Sergio Rossi.

3 Denzer organizes her shoes by color and heel height. She also displays them heel side out, so it's easy to find the correct-height heel quickly. The bronze metallic evening bag is by Clara Kasavina.

4 Denzer's dressing room has built-in dressers with drawers for belts, scarves, gloves, and lingerie. There are also sweater shelves hidden behind the doors. The forest-green silk chiffon evening gown hanging on the door is by Robert Danes. All of Denzer's closets were designed by California Closets. "They're fabulous," she says.

5 Among Denzer's possessions: a Zebra-skin and rust leather Valentino tote with turquoise handles; a pair of Rena Caovilla snakeskin sandals; a favorite cashmere sweater with mink collar and cuffs; a sapphire Alexis Bittar cuff bracelet; a Cartier gold case watch with brown leather strap; and a Stephen Dweck necklace made of sterling and carved topaz.

The Versailles Hall of Mirrors

Philanthropist, businesswoman, developer, and columnist Seema Boesky of Mount Kisco may be very well heeled, still she keeps everything she buys. "I never throw anything away," she declares. Boesky's "closet" is a series of rooms and closets, niches, shelving and drawers, some built-in, some freestanding antique—the perfect configuration for her creative process. "When I spot a 'look' in a fashion magazine, I tear it out and clip it to a hanger in my closet and use it for inspiration." The total space is 275 square feet. And, yes, there is a kitchen sink. It's in the mini-kitchenette in the first room of the closet (alas, it's hidden behind trompe l'oeil doors, not shown). "My bedroom is on the third floor. I want the ability to make coffee or get a snack without going all the way downstairs."

1 To get the most use from her closet, Boesky installed a small rotating dry cleaner's rack with 144 openings for hangers. "Often I use wire hangers that take up minimal space," she says. "I bend their tops and slip them into the holes of plastic hangers. This way I put many pants of the same color together."

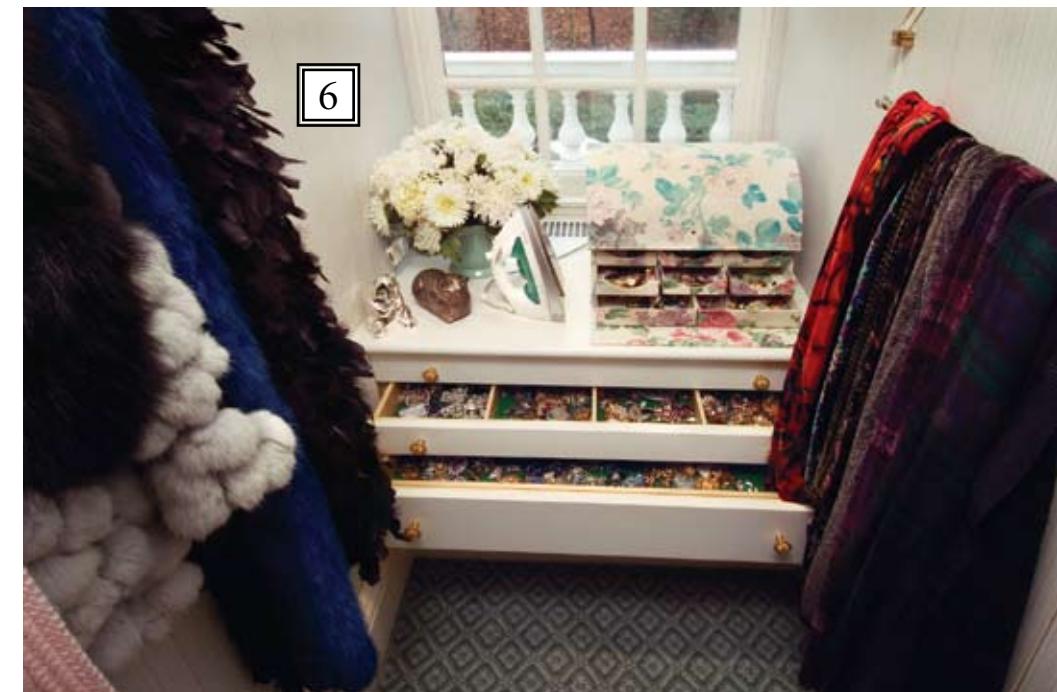
2 Boesky and her Maltese, Sashi, pose in the second room of Boesky's closet, a step-down dressing area.

3 Drawers in the closet hold, among other things, Boesky's 40-year collection of crocodile and alligator handbags, including one drawer dedicated just to Hermès bags. Most were found at flea markets or thrift stores.

4 The middle mirror in the step-down dressing area slides open to reveal a walk-in closet. The side mirrors each swing open like medicine-cabinet doors to reveal small shelves for evening purses.

5 Open shelving makes it easy to find the right sweater, sweatshirt, or T-shirt quickly. Out-of-season clothes, luggage, and favorite sweaters are kept inside Boesky's walk-in cedar closet. (Not shown is a drop-down ironing board which hangs on the back door of the closet.)

6 Underneath the window sits a jewelry chest for costume jewelry. Boesky keeps an iron handy for last-minute touch-ups.



The Iconoclast's Closet

When you're the lead singer of a rock band named Housewives on Prozac, spiritual leader of a women's movement, and executive producer of Mamapalooza, Inc., an international music festival, you're not just permitted to do things a bit differently, you're *expected* to. So, when Joy Rose decided the solution to her overflowing closet was to remove the closet entirely, it surprised no one. Instead of turning a spare bedroom into a closet, she just turned her master bedroom into a theatrical dressing room.

Theatrical clothes, designer clothes, and a few items she created hang like artwork on the walls, doors, and window curtain rods around the bedroom. They spill over into the living room and band practice room as well.

Rose, the mother of four, keeps most of her off season clothing in storage so she doesn't have to spend a long time worrying about which outfit to put on. "I make certain to have one great business outfit each season, one or two pairs of the latest jean style, and a few stage outfits on hand," she says. "I only keep out what appeals to me that season."



1 A leopard-pattern Betsey Johnson shrug is wrapped around a 1950s-era dress found at a consignment store.

2 Rose found this pink prom dress at TJ Maxx during a prom special.

3 Joy Rose in her bedroom/dressing room is wearing one of her signature stage pieces, a pink robe trimmed in marabou feathers that, she says, "I found at a 'tranny' store in San Francisco called the Piedmont Boutique."

4 Her four-inch white platform boots have become a key stage piece. They were a gift from the crew of a Christmas special she did in 2004 for the WB in New York (Channel 11). The song she sang? "I Broke My Arm Christmas Shopping at the Mall."

5 This vertical striped jacket was designed especially for Rose by Bill Blass in 1995.

6 Rose, with her children's help, created a mini-dress out of sampler Kellogg's cereal boxes, laminated and connected with safety pins. Meant to be ironically reminiscent of the American Express credit card dress from the 1990s, it is a staple of her public performances.



The Clothes Horse's Stable

Equestrian, game-bird hunter, markswoman, and knitter Lena Gershenov has a strikingly beautiful closet. Combination apparel, home office and museum, Gershenov's 16-by-22-foot closet is built in maple with saddle-leather drawer pulls, double-deep shoe drawers, and quadruple-deep belt drawers. Along with Judith Leiber bags and Daum Frères glass art, she houses her collection of Barry Kieselstein-Cord bags, belts, and belt buckles in the closet's glass-topped island. If you're unfamiliar with those names, their work can be found at the Smithsonian or the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Oh, and did we mention the Picasso sketch on the column above the island?

Gershenov is a clothes horse. In addition to her usual get-up of jeans, cowboy boots, and sweaters that she herself knits, her closet is filled with Prada and Dolce & Gabbana shoes, Roberto Cavalli and Escada day and evening wear. The Studio Becker closet was designed by Vic's Kitchens of Scarsdale.



1 Glass-front drawers display sweaters knit by Gershenov as well as the custom-dyed yarns she gets from The Knitting Niche in Greenwich.

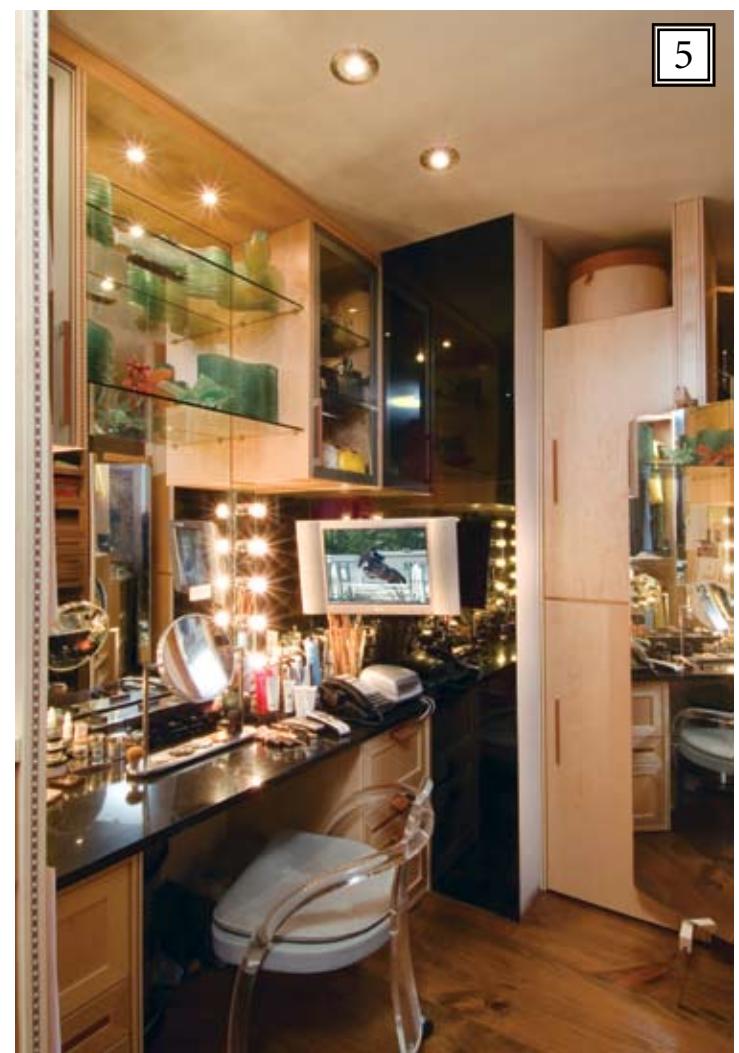
2 An original Picasso sketch from 1956 hangs on the wall of Gershenov's closet. Yes, it's locked—more to keep her cats out than robbers. The cats love to nest in her hand-knit sweaters so much, they've learned to open the door.

3 The closet is anchored at either end with DNA strand-style tubular staircases that hold up to 360 tops each. They spin when you tug on them for easy access.

4 A glass-topped island displays Gershenov's collection of Judith Leiber bags and half of her Daum Frères Art Nouveau glass art. She often places her necklaces on the large, amber glass cat for temporary safekeeping. Her beautiful collection of handbags—including a peacock and poodle by Judith Leiber, which are minaudières (clutches)—have their special place, too.

5 Gershenov has a combination vanity and home office on one side of her closet with good lighting for applying makeup, showcasing art, or completing paperwork. One half of her Daum Frères collection is displayed here in glass cases over the vanity. A flat-screen TV is housed here, too.

6 The right hand side of the Gershenov closet includes shoe drawers that glide open effortlessly for easy viewing. Each is capable of holding up to 10 pairs of shoes. They're organized by color, season, and occasion. Valet rods pull out to help Gershenov assemble a top-to-toe outfit. They slide back behind the shelf edge, out of the way. Evening gowns and other longer items have their own spot in the back of the closet. 



H. M. Epstein is a frequent contributor to Westchester Magazine. She's presently rethinking her own closet.