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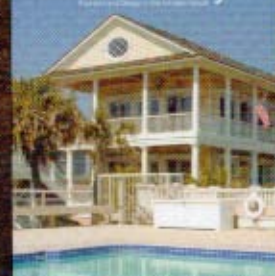
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Personal Stylist Tells All

by Alison Lukes

Alison Lukes, formerly with Michael Kors, is a personal stylist and shopper in Washington, DC. She is relocating to Raleigh this summer.

When I was 3 years old my mother refused to buy me a bikini. I took matters and the scissors in my own hands and "altered" a brand-new Florence Eisman bathing suit. The bottoms, without an elastic waist, didn't stay up very well, but I was determined to get the look I desired.

My first job out of college was working for fashion designer Michael Kors as assistant to the CEO—John Orchulli, Michael's business partner. I was the 22nd employee and my desk was in the sample closet. Later,

as Michael Kors hit his stride, winning the Womenswear Designer of the Year Award from the Council of Fashion Designers of America (CFDA) and selling a third of his business to LVMH (owners of Louis Vuitton, Christian Dior and Marc Jacobs), I became the Creative Image Manager. During my tenure, we launched eyewear, footwear, handbags, fragrances and a men's wear line and I upgraded out of the sample closet to a new windowed space.



Lukes

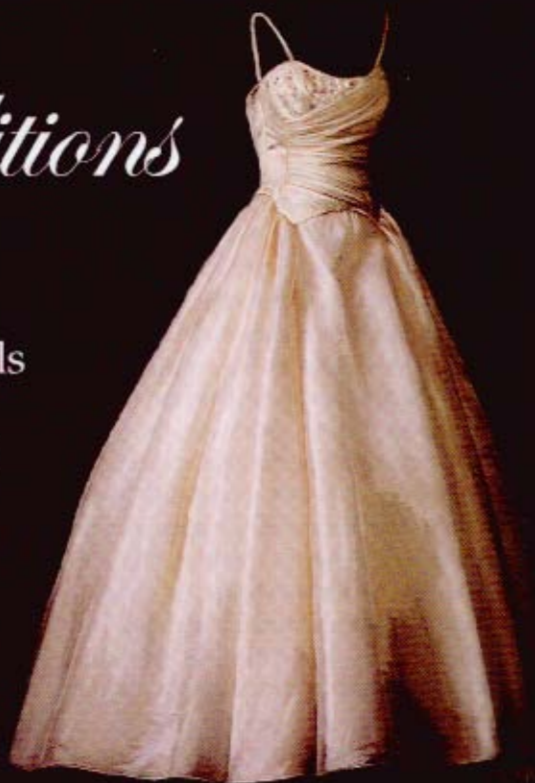
After living in New York for four years and Paris for another, I was ready to move

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home to Washington, DC. A friend suggested creating a business using one of my best skills—shopping. And Alison Lukes et Cie was launched. I immediately printed business cards and marketing materials and hoped for the best.

Almost three years later, I have consulted with socialite ladies who like designer clothing, corporate men and women and new mothers looking to me to help them look and feel their best. The consulting process is different for every client. For some, it's a special occasion, for others a seasonal or even monthly appointment. Each client has different frustrations and fashion tribulations. Together we work to dispel their fashion difficulties.

Walking into someone's closet is meeting his or her fashion ghosts, insecurities, aspirations and dreams. I try to help people to like how they look, spend less on their wardrobes and feel more comfortable and confident. I don't believe in making people over, but in making the most of what they have, as in the case of "Courtney."

Courtney is 46 years old. She has three children and her husband is a partner in a law firm. She takes great care of herself and her family and enjoys her part-time interior design business. Courtney has wonderful taste and likes to look chic while driving carpool, polished for clients and looking appropriate for evenings with her husband and his business associates.

She has an amazing ability to decorate a room, but dressing herself is much more difficult. Our relationship, as it does with every client, started in her closet. We went through each item; she told me what pieces she loved to wear, what pieces she was frustrated with and what pieces she doesn't wear—and why. Perhaps she would wear the blouse she spent too much money on if only she had the perfect skirt to pair it with. She has a few great suits, but the perfect shoe eluded her.

I created a list of pieces to add, pieces to replace and occasions to shop for. We consigned items of value, donated the rest and pinned pieces to be altered. Courtney was left with a perfectly organized closet, well edited with room for the missing

pieces. Now it was time to go shopping, either together or I went on my own and brought pieces to her house, adding that there was no pressure for her to buy anything. And every piece I brought was returnable. If a piece wasn't absolutely perfect, I wouldn't let her buy it.

With the wardrobe complete, I created a look book for Courtney with pictures of outfits we've put together often using

pieces already in her wardrobe—in new ways for a fresh look. I indicated what sort of an event each outfit is appropriate for so that when I am not around she can easily be perfectly dressed.

The process worked well for Courtney. What about you?

For more about personal stylist Alison Lukes and her work, go to www.alison-lukes.com. ■

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