

# Fine Living

With her signature style and impeccable taste, Amy Fine Collins was born for high fashion—and she has the closet to prove it.

by Sue Hostetler

**AUTHOR AND VANITY FAIR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT** Amy Fine Collins is this city's quintessential It Girl. For more than 15 years she's reported on design, art, society, and fashion, and is a favorite of innovators like Karl Lagerfeld, who even sketched a portrait of her that now hangs in her dressing room. Collins was also a muse to design deity Geoffrey Beene; that relationship left her with a true love of his clothes and a collection of several hundred of his pieces. She also boasts nearly as many Manolo Blahniks. "Manolo actually predates Beene in my closet," she says. "I acquired my first pair in 1985, when I was a Columbia student."



**GOTHAM: How did you originally meet Geoffrey Beene?**

**AMY FINE COLLINS:** I was working as an art historian, and wrote an article for the *Village Voice* reviewing his 25-year retrospective at the National Academy of Design in 1989. I approached his clothes as works of art.

**G: And how did you become his creative muse?**

**AFC:** It was a very gradual process—kind of like a shy romance, slowly falling for each other. He would have me try on pieces during the course of designing. Eventually he had an "Amy" mannequin made.

**G: After working with him for several years, you decided to sell all of the clothes you owned that weren't designed by him?**

**AFC:** Yes, in the early 90s—I wanted to purge myself of everything except Beene. I sold all of my Pucci, Alaïa, Gaultier, Saint Laurent... and held on to some vintage Galanos and maybe two Gigli jackets. There are a few items I regret giving to the Met's Costume Institute, as I think my daughter, Flora, would appreciate them now that she's older.

**G: But aren't you wearing a dress by Ralph Rucci today?**

**AFC:** Yes—since Mr. Beene's death I've cautiously moved on to some other designers. To me, Ralph Rucci is the best living designer working today. He's the future of elegance. I adore him as a friend; I don't wear clothes or shoes by a designer who's not a friend, and whose sensibility and creative process I don't understand intimately.

**G: What's your favorite custom-made or couture piece?**

**AFC:** That's like asking someone to name their favorite child—so my answer is, the body that goes under the clothes, custom-made by my parents!

**G: What was your fashion worst?**

**AFC:** A very 80s mistake, false nails—and the fungus infection that came with them.

**G: I understand that the desk in your closet has an interesting pedigree?**

**AFC:** It's black lacquer and ormolu, with a leather top. I got it from an

antiques dealer who didn't tell me until years later that it had been owned by Hugh Hefner. I think the dealer thought I'd be offended if I knew!

**G: If your closet caught fire, what would you grab first?**

**AFC:** I'd rescue our cat Jane, who often naps there—she's the reason why you sometimes see Abyssinian cat hairs on my clothes.

**G: Which celeb closet would you like to raid? And who's your style icon?**

**AFC:** The closet I'd love to raid is the Costume Institute's. And my style icon is my daughter. [G]

"I got [my desk] from an antiques dealer who didn't tell me that it had been owned by Hugh Hefner."



Amy Fine Collins in front of her collection of Manolo Blahniks; her black leather and ormolu desk has a *Playboy* pedigree.

photographs by Sari Goodfriend; hair by Yves Durifit; makeup by Maysoon Faraj; dress by Ralph Rucci; earrings by Mish NY; jacket (ON CHAIR) by Dennis Basso