

Law makes order out of chaos

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Jacinta Le Plastrier Aboukhater meets a woman who makes it her business to restore domestic bliss.

SHE used to keep house for actress Juliette Binoche in London; before that she managed Jamie Oliver's upstairs kitchen at the famous Fifteen, as well as cooking for Antonio Carluccio.

Now, after returning to Australia two years ago, Justine Law has streamlined those skills into a domestic management service, Domestica, whose mainstay is organising the right place for everything in a client's home.

Sounds like a dream? Well, it is a luxury, admits Law, who says she focuses on offering her organisational solutions "for the discerning home-maker".

"Most people are scared I'm going to come into their house and make them throw all these things out.

"But I don't. I just find the right place for them. And if they want to get rid of things, I just help them decide if it's important in their life anymore."

Thus, vessels and containers of all sizes and shapes are brought into the picture.

An undergarment drawer will be filled with lots of little boxes, to house each category of items; or a laundry will be turned into an official service room, with dirty laundry containers for each person in the household, plus a general household container.

Clients will be shown how to organise their space to store out-of-season clothing.

"It's cited a lot but it's true," she says, "most people wear only 20 per cent of their clothes 80 per cent of the time."

Shoe storage is another favourite request; at the moment she is sorting through a client's 80 pairs, to put them in all-clear boxes, obviating the need for photos or labels.

At the time of this interview, Law is at the home of glass artist Mark Douglass and his partner, style consultant Zoe Edquist.

A large room, filled with all kinds of stuff, has been cleared out, objects categorised and boxed, and the space converted into a laundry service room, the main need of the household, says Law - "to keep up a system for washing and then storing clothes".

In the walk-in robes, each drawer has been resorted and shoes organised in a logical fashion on shelving.

Law's services are a great gift idea for new mothers, suggests Edquist, who has just bought a voucher for a friend.

Otherwise, says Law, her main clients are "time-poor professionals, empty nesters, people with home offices, families and those who are moving house". Organising toys and bathroom cabinets is another niche: "I love chucking out all those out-of-date things and if it's medicine or chemicals, I dispose of through a pharmacist."

Law grew up with parents "who were extremely meticulous about order, so it just comes naturally".

"I think one of the real advantages for people is just to have someone come in to their home and look at it with a pair of fresh eyes and who doesn't have any sentimental attachment. That makes it easy to decide whether to keep, store or chuck an item," she says.

Law tries not to encourage people to rely on her service to maintain her systems: "I try to teach them how best to set up systems they can maintain themselves though I might come in every six months or so to fine-tune them."

Law is also very keen on what she calls "kitchen culture" - how to buy and store food and keep their kitchen clean.

And her own space is perfect order? "Absolutely not!" she laughs. "I spend so much time organising other people's."

Though you suspect that's not entirely true: from the tip of her shining hair to her well-heeled shoes, Law presents as a devotee of domestic order: "It's

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