

The New York Issue

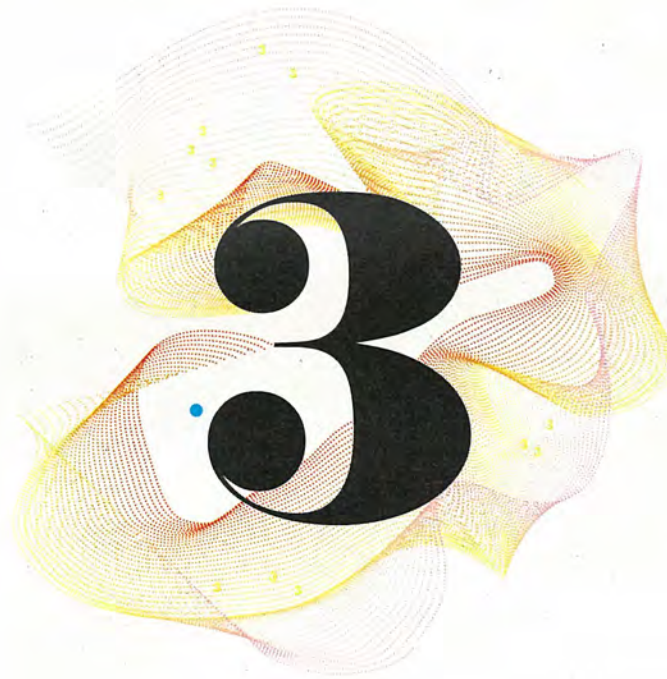
The New York Times Magazine

OCTOBER 14, 2007 / SECTION 6



City Life in the Second Gilded Age

HOW MUCH MONEY DO YOU NEED TO FEEL WEALTHY HERE? (A MAGAZINE POLL REVEALS WHAT NEW YORKERS THINK), THE NEW MONEY ARTS PATRON, BY JOE NOCERA WHEN WALL STREET GETS OUTSOURCED, BY DANIEL GROSS THE SELF-SEGREGATING SUCCESS OF SYRIAN JEWS, BY ZEVI CHAFETS WHAT DOES A MEDICAL CONCIERGE DO, EXACTLY? (AND OTHER NEW WAYS TO SERVE THE RICH) DRESSED UP LIKE A SUIT, BY SHALOM AUSLANDER ALSO: NEW YORK'S WEALTHIEST BLOCKS, GROUP THERAPY FOR MILLIONAIRES AND QUESTIONS FOR THE GUY BEHIND 'GOSSIP GIRL'



At Their Service

Beyond the nannies, maids and assistants: the superspecialized workers who serve the superrich.

Photographs by Nadav Kander

We don't associate extraordinary wealth with the life of leisure anymore. Our standard for the so-called masters of the universe is not how little they work, but how hard and continuously they feel compelled to work; the idleness which was once affluence's goal now comes off as vaguely shameful.

Yet it remains true that the great gift of money is time; and as the demands they place upon themselves proliferate rather than diminish, the rich subcontract their time in ways most people could never dream of. With enough resources, it turns out, you can pay an astonishing array of niche professionals to take any number of daily tasks off your hands, tasks whose very simplicity makes their relegation to the business sphere seem almost baroque. Certain

needs are themselves luxuries, or at any rate status symbols.

What follows is a gallery of professionals whose very existence most New Yorkers might never have suspected. They work in niches that may strike us as products of an ultramodern Gilded Age. In fact, they owe their livings to a profound conservatism, for their clients are stubbornly out of step with a culture that distrusts the expert and celebrates the amateur. The moneyed class's faith in the cult of the professional seems at something of a zenith: they seem to think little of paying someone to perform tasks — talking about money with family members; waiting to see a doctor; ordering food in a restaurant — the rest of us might consider ineluctably personal. — JONATHAN DEE

● New York's state and local tax burden is the third-highest in the nation, according to the Tax Foundation.



Contemporary Art Conservator

JOHANNA HOFFMANN

HER CLIENTS: Modern-art collectors, museums, gallerists and artists, who might need to replace the elephant dung from a Chris Ofili work or (in the case of the artist Kelley Walker) refine a recipe for chocolate. **RESTORATION EMERGENCIES:** "A lot can happen in someone's home," says Hoffmann, the chief conservator for Contemporary Conservation. "One client's daughter had a pillow fight and knocked a painting off a wall. The daughter tried to fix it herself. A disaster! Other people have artwork damaged by, say, someone vacuum cleaning."



Postnup Lawyer

WILLIAM D. ZABEL

"Postnups" — or postnuptial agreements — "are usually for couples without prenups," says Zabel, a trusts and estates lawyer with Schulte, Roth & Zabel. **WHY PEOPLE GET POSTNUPS:** "Either the nonmoneyed spouse — usually the wife — in a 30-to-40-year marriage wants to know what she's worth and gain some financial security, or the moneyed spouse in a newer relationship — usually the husband, and these days, often a young hedge-fund manager — wants to see if the wife is in it for the money and wants to cap the assets paid out if the marriage were to end in divorce." **DO HIS POSTNUP NEGOTIATIONS EVER LEAD TO DIVORCE?** They usually help a marriage, because "everybody knows where they stand."



Family C.F.O.

DARCY BHATIA

Bhatia, of Highmount Capital, helps families manage their money and assets. **HER CLIENTS:** People with assets between \$5 million and \$300 million. **THINGS SHE'S DONE:** "Everything from get up on a ladder and photograph art masterpieces as part of an appraisal process to help a client find a private school in a yurt."



Family Wealth Counselor

ELLEN M. PERRY

Perry, of Wealthbridge Partners, offers programs on finance and family dynamics to help younger generations cope with family wealth. **MOST COMMONLY ASKED QUESTION:** "How do we ensure that the wealth doesn't have a negative impact on our children?" **AVERAGE NET WORTH OF HER CLIENTS:** At least \$100 million.



Baby-Room Decorator

MARY RABINER

MOST UNUSUAL SERVICE: She finds out the baby's sex, but the parents stay in the dark. **BIGGEST MISTAKE:** "On my first job, I charged the fabric to the mother-to-be's credit card. She knew the price differential of the boy's fabric versus the girl's and figured out immediately what she was having."



Kids'-Party Planner

POLLY ONET

"We once rented an empty warehouse for an 8-year-old's birthday party with 75 kids," says Onet, of Ober, Onet & Associates, who mostly plans adult events. She created a "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory" candy land "where everything was edible, even the flowers." **COST OF A PARTY LIKE THAT:** At least \$120,000.



Medical Concierge

DR. MILES VARN

WHAT HIS COMPANY DOES: PinnacleCare makes sure clients don't lack for top-notch medical care, anytime and anywhere in the world — for an average annual fee ranging from \$8,000 (for a healthy person) to \$40,000 (if the client has a serious medical condition). **HIS CREDENTIALS:** Varn was an emergency-room clinician at Inova Fairfax Hospital in Virginia. **MOST EXTREME CASE:** "A member began to experience heart palpitations while on a business trip in China. I called the hospital; arranged for a translator, who was there on arrival; and followed that with faxed medical records within minutes. The patient was seen immediately. His EKG's indicated an acute heart attack. I reviewed faxes of the EKG's with a Chinese-speaking cardiologist at Johns Hopkins University and confirmed the diagnosis. The particular hospital was not equipped to handle an acute heart attack, so our team arranged emergency air evacuation."