



Dressing for Fame: Emily Current and Meritt Elliott Talk Designing, Styling, and Making It Work



Alexis Brunswick

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If celebrity status is conferred in red-carpet appearances, then no actress today can compete without the help of just the right stylist. As Kerry Washington once told Glamour after she noticeably upped the sartorial ante, “There were a couple of actresses whom I felt were having the upper hand careerwise—because they knew how to work that red carpet.” A carefully crafted collaboration between stylist and client, the perfect look can create an indelible impact on agents, casting directors, and those of us watching from the sidelines. Straight from the epicenter of all things celebrity, we’ve asked some of the industry’s top stylists to share their experiences and impressions from their perch above Tinseltown. With our Dressing for Fame series, we bring you an exclusive, insider look at everything it takes to create those iconic moments captured by a million photo flashes.

Emily Current and Meritt Elliott

You probably know stylists Emily Current and Meritt Elliott from Current/Elliott, their namesake brand that launched a million boyfriend jeans. But before they were designers, they were stylists. And after they departed the label in 2012, Current and Elliott embarked on a journey chock-full of twists and turns that have helped them fine-tune their aesthetic. The women currently work on ad campaigns, editorials, and branded partnerships (their most recent collection for PBteen launched last week), and they even released a [book dedicated to denim](#) this past March.

Counting Jessica Alba, Emma Roberts, and Mandy Moore as clients, Current and Elliott further their brand appeal with each new look they create. Here, the power pair speaks with Style.com about juggling design projects and celebrity clients, the aesthetic power of the stylist, and the challenges that come with dressing a new actress.

How did you two get into styling?

Meritt Elliott: We jumped from college into different parts of this industry. We worked for magazines and clothing companies, and we saw that the stylists had the most control in terms of being able to articulate and define a trend. It's actually the physical part of going in and manipulating a garment or a shoe, and it just felt like the most tangible way to achieve what we wanted to see. We both love that hands-on feeling—we share that passion—and we became a team. So it was like, OK, this is the look you want us to do, and this is how we want it to be worn. We felt like stylists had the most power in that respect.

Why did you decide to try your hand at design, and what was it like going from styling to designing?

Emily Current: We were always in fittings and we were always kind of coming up empty when it came to relaxed bottoms and chilled-out denim pieces. A lot of what we were pulling at the time was really dressy. I think our transition into design was organic and it came out of styling—it came out of doing fittings and realizing that there was a hole in the market and that we had the ability to fill it.

As stylists, do you think it's important to have your own recognizable aesthetic?

ME: It's inevitable that you develop your own signature when you're a stylist. I think it's fifty-fifty—you have to read off of what the client needs or wants or what they're aiming for, but I also think you have to bring a point of view, and that's why you're hired for a job. You're not there purely to execute, but to bring an opinion. Over the past decade and a half, we've learned that it's important to have an opinion, to speak up, to stand for something.

EC: I do think, though, that we really pride ourselves on sociologically diving into clients and figuring out who they are, who they want to be, and how to express their personalities through what they wear. So while our point of view and aesthetic is really important, it's more about us being able to translate it through their needs.

Is it difficult catering to varying clients' needs?

ME: I think, organizationally, it makes us understand a little bit more the full gamut of different needs, different designers, and different proportions. But that makes us better designers and better stylists, not being so one-sided. We love working with women with all different body types, needs, insecurities, and things they like to show off.

EC: We look at each client when we're prepping for a fitting, and we sit there and put ourselves in their position, like this is a movie we're promoting, it's a sexier role, it's a racier role, and then we look at what they have just worn and what they need to balance that out. We try and get into their headspace and what they need, and it's always something different.

Do you ever feel a sense of pressure from critics, press, or fans?

ME: We're not totally naive to the constant commentary going on and people having an opinion on best dressed and worst dressed, but I think we've evolved, and at this point in our lives, we care less. The good news is that the clients we work with don't care that much either, and we love that about our client roster. We love that our brand philosophy is that there are no rules, and whether someone likes it or not doesn't define whether it's cool, new, or right for the moment.

Do you find your own partnerships and ventures detract from your styling or does it enhance what you're doing?

ME: Schedule-wise, it's hard to juggle. We have an amazing team that helps us. I think that there will be a day that

ME: Schedule-wise, it's hard to juggle. We have an amazing team that helps us. I think that they all hold hands, that we spend more time running all of these projects through our brand filter than anything else, and that exercise has helped us define who we are so much that now it's easy and it's much less of a discussion. It's become such a joy whether we're writing a book or designing a lamp or a pair of jeans. We now know exactly who our girl is and how [our product] needs to look and feel.

EC: I do think we split our brain into two sections. One is our own design projects, and everything goes through our brand filtering of what our point of view on design is. Then there's a whole other side of our brain that we use for styling clients and consulting projects, where we go in and wear their hat and think, What does this brand need to build out a stronger business? or What does this client need to evolve within the fashion they're wearing? So it's two different hats that we wear.

What are some of the challenges that come along with being stylists?

EC: There are so many, but the one that comes to mind is when you take on a new client who is somewhat less well known, it's a challenge to build their relationships with designers. When you're working with someone new, it's harder to pull the top designers and really vary who they're wearing and how they're wearing it.

ME: Along the same line are resources matching expectations. Sometimes a client will want something, whether it's an advertising client or a celebrity client, and perhaps there isn't the time or the budget or the availability. You've got to work with what you have. Sometimes we have a very narrow amount of resources, and we're still expected to deliver, so we're always challenging ourselves on how to be resourceful.

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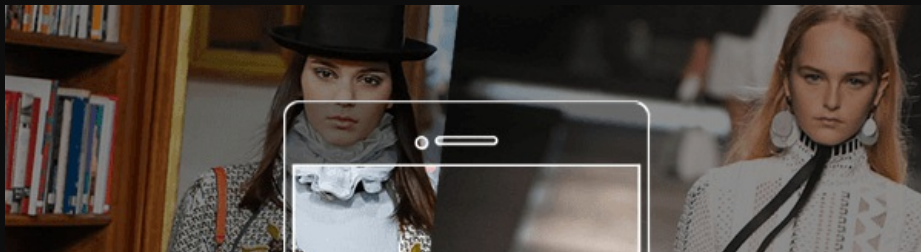
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