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Taking the Clutter Out of the Garage

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The latest addition to Leigh and Carrie Munsell's home in Palos Verdes Estates, Calif., has granite-like flooring, cedar-lined cabinets and pricey recessed lighting. An elegant new pantry? A library? No -- a \$20,000-plus bespoke storage space in the couple's two-car garage.

With everything from fly-fishing gear to clothes now arranged in an orderly way, the garage is "pristine," says Mrs. Munsell, 41, a stay-at-home mom. "No cars are allowed."

Aiming for the high-end homeowner with a glut of stuff, garage specialists around the country are urging customers to invest in storage space as refined as the rest of their home. Ranging up to 500 square feet, the spaces are typically created along garage walls, often with weatherproof cabinetry in woods like maple and birch. In some cases, cabinets are hung on slatwalls, or storage platforms are installed above the cars.

Marble Flooring

Garage Envy, a three-year-old garage-storage company in Pasadena, Calif., offers features like retractable benches (\$650 apiece) and marble flooring and granite tops for work tables for \$35 per square foot. Business has been so good the firm just opened branches in northern California, Arizona and Oregon

The boutique garage shops are banking on growth in two areas -- super-sized garages and clutter. According to the National Association of Home Builders, 19% of single-family homes constructed in 2004 had room for three or more cars, up from 11% in 1992. Because a third of two-car garages have so much stuff in them that there's room for only one car, according to a 1994 survey by the Department of Energy, garage shops are betting that, with more space, homeowners will stockpile more stuff -- and need more organized storage.