

SHULY WIGS

INTERVIEWER: Candacy Taylor
INTERVIEWEE: Minky Wellinger
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Brooklyn, New York 11218
(718) 851-7778

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KEY: CT: Candacy Taylor
MW: Minky Wellinger

MW: We have two different brands that we sell, it's called the "European Line" and we have the "South American Line." The European Line is more finer hair. It's silkier, it's our more expensive line and we also have a studio line, which is from South America — Argentina, Brazil. These hairs are a little more processed, you know, to get the color we do have to process the hairs. It is a little firmer hair, a little more rougher, yet still beautiful, beautiful pieces. We don't sell Indian Hair. Our European line is basically out of Russia. It's European-Russian hair, it's extremely fine quality, it's more expensive, it's hard to find. Our price range can go from \$1,500 to \$4,000, depending on the length, depending on the quality, depending on the hair, usually depending on the length. The studio line which is our South American line, is a little bit cheaper than the European because it comes from Argentina, Brazil...it's a little bit coarser hair yet it's still magnificent and it's processed hair, yet it's still custom and still human hair.

CT: Can you give me a general breakdown of your clientele?

MW: Our clientele can range from a girl who's getting married to a woman who in her 50s and wants to buy her 5th wig to a director who is shooting a film. We also have editorials, Vogue, Elle, Cosmo, we have numerous magazines that call us. There are models. We do New York Fashion Week. We're dealing with New York Fashion Week now, we're dealing with many designers who want our pieces, whether it's a wig...we have many different kinds of hair pieces, we have wigs, we have extensions, we have toppers that go on top of the head, we have head band falls, where it's not a full wig, there's no bangs, nothing in front. It's a band, a little...it's empty, you can take your own hair out and put a headband on and you have a long hairpiece. We have half falls where the whole top is empty, but there's hair you can wear underneath a hat. We have drama pieces, meaning New York Fashion Week, the women who wear the long ponytails. Or pieces that you can add to the back of your head to give it more volume, more hair.

CT: So do you have people on site at Fashion Week or do they come to you?

MW: Stylists come to us, they tell us what they want and how they want it and we work with them, we always send a representative from our company to make sure that our pieces are still intact, there are thousands of dollars' worth of pieces, they're not cheap, no synthetics, only real human hair and they are expensive pieces so we do send representatives to watch over our pieces and take care of them and see how things are going.

CT: What percentage of your clients have cancer?

MW: We have numerous cancer patients. We have numerous alopecia patients. People who have alopecia and cancer call us up because we do have special caps made for them, we do have special services just for them, we have amazing customer service and they feel very comfortable coming to us. We're advertised in their magazines and their organizations on their websites.

CT: How many do you actually have to shave?

MW: We don't shave their head. If they want hairstyles or if they want haircuts, they are more than [welcome] to come here, we are always willing to have stylists come and take care of them, if need be. They usually come here if they want to buy a wig.

CT: What percentage of your clients are Jewish?

MW: I would say 60% of our clients are Jewish and the other 40-50 are non-Jewish.

CT: Can you explain to me why women who are Orthodox should cover their hair?

MW: In the Orthodox community, in the Jewish community, our laws are once you get married you have to cover your hair, if you're a Jewish woman, a married woman, you cover your hair.

CT: All the time?

MW: All the time. When you're at home you can [take it off] wear a hairpiece [inaudible] when you're out in front of anybody, you cover your hair.

CT: So they cover their hair with these wigs?

MW: Yes. You can cover your hair with anything. You can cover your hair with a wig, you can cover your hair with a kerchief, you can cover your hair with a hat, or a bandana.

CT: And why are you supposed to cover your hair?

MW: It's a modesty law of ours [inaudible], it's a Jewish law for Jewish women.

CT: I've heard this but I thought it was really because [covering the hair] was to not make the woman sexualized or be attractive, is that the...?

MW: Right, so we try to keep our attraction only for our husbands.

CT: Okay, but if you're wearing a beautiful wig aren't you still....you know?

MW: You do want to feel beautiful though, a woman who covers her hair...it's hard to cover your hair, you do want to feel beautiful and you want to feel pretty, you know and a lot of women do it for themselves. When I put on my wig, I feel beautiful in the morning. I can't decide on my outfit until my wig is on.

CT: How often do you wear wigs?

MW: Well I'm divorced right now, but I wear it every day, all day. I have a little bit of a migraine right now. I ripped it off for a minute. I have a migraine.

CT: Oh, I'm sorry to hear that.

MW: Don't worry about it. It's fine, getting better. We wear them all the time, from morning until we go home, there are many different ways to cover our hair, but they are beautiful and you do want to feel like you're not in prison and we put on a wig and make ourselves feel special. And also our husbands like it too. There's so many things you can do with it. You can create it like it's your own hair, but the law is to cover your own hair and that's what we do...with another hair [laughing].

CT: That's what I thought and I understand about the covering but what is it the fabric...?

MW: Kerchief, or a turban or a hat, anything that covers the hair is permissible.

CT: And it has to be entirely covered.

MW: Yes.

CT: Ok, is the use of the wig more recent?

MW: No, Jewish women have been wearing wigs for hundreds of years.

CT: Ok, but have they been like this [so glamorous]?

MW: Well every year they get prettier. And every company has a different style of wigs. Nothing compares to a Shuly [wig]. We have so many beautiful pieces, the hair is magnificent, you know the job they do regarding the dyes and the highlights...styling...it doesn't compare to [inaudible] the salons around.

CT: And I don't see very much blonde.

MW: Those are our monotone blondes. We do have lighter blondes for example that one in the back there. We do have very, very strong blonde. If a woman comes in and wants a blonde [wig] we will grab those bags [inaudible].

CT: But this must be the majority what you sell? Auburns?

MW: We sell blondes all the time. Behind you we have two pieces right there. We do have blondes. Right now we have some blowing them out. Blondes are a little bit harder to obtain. But we do sell them.

CT: And then black, I see...

MW: Yes, we have a lot of black. She's wearing a black on actually.

CT: Wow, I had no idea that was a wig. What is "Shuly?"

MW: She's a woman. She started the company. She's a wig manufacturer. She's a hairstylist herself and a make-up artist herself. She started this out of her own basement, she built it up and now she has this magnificent salon. She's famous, worldwide. Oh, you mean, "What's a Shuly?" [ad campaign] Oh my gosh.

CT: I drove by here, I was in New York about 4 weeks ago and I was driving around and scouting places, and it was on a Saturday and you were closed and there was a big gate down so I had no idea that this was in here. I thought it was a place where people dropped off their wigs to be serviced. I didn't realize there were [chairs]. Do you do any hair that's not a wig?

MW: Sure, people come in for haircuts all the time. We do haircuts, we do styling, we do brides, we do makeovers, and we sell make-up. People come in and say, "Do me, I want to look pretty." We do their day-to-day make-up and do them for weddings. We have make-up artists on call, celebrity make-up artists, we have celebrity stylists that come in constantly wanting to buy pieces, wanting for their celebrities. We have wholesalers coming in.

CT: Do you know what celebrities or would that be [private]...?

MW: No, we've worked on Michelle Branch, Michele Williams. We've worked on Coco, you know the supermodel. We've worked on Serena Williams. We've worked on numerous, numerous celebrities. Right now we're doing a film for Paradis, John Turturro was just here. Yes, I love him [laughing]. I was star struck. I got a picture with him.

CT: Did he get his hair done?

MW: No, he came in looking for a wig for one of his actresses. It was very interesting.

CT: What do you do here?

MW: I deal with PR. I am a Public Relations Manager here and I do the wholesaling department.

CT: Can you state your name?

MW: Minky Wellinger.

CT: So what else can you tell me about....?

MW: What else can we tell you...we are here for the customer. We have amazing, amazing customer service. If you have an issue with your wig, we have a year warranty. You get it serviced here, it's the best quality. People love us because we work with them. If they have an issue, we're here for them.

CT: Where do you get your hair? Are they manufactured off site? Or are they manufactured here?

MW: Shuly hand-selects each hair. She does not buy any hair that she does not feel comfortable with.

Each hair is hand-selected by her.

CT: And where does she buy them?

MW: The sellers come to her. The sellers and the manufacturers come to her, because she's so wanted, they come to her and they show her the pieces and she agrees, ok, I want this and that. We do have a factory that we work out of. We have a factory that creates our wigs. If someone walks into a store and says, "I want a wig." And we find a color for her. It can take 6-8 weeks to create a wig for her, in that factory. We also have women on call here that are fixing wigs in the repair room. If there's a patch of emptiness or if something is ripped or the scalp needs to be fixed, or the ribbon needs to be added, we have women on call to fix those repairs.

CT: So if somebody buys a wig, how often does it get serviced?

MW: Usually the healthiest amount of time to go is one month. Every month they would come in, have a wash and blow, wash and set, they come in after the wash and set, have it styled on them and this is usually once a month.

CT: So they drop it off and then they come back...

MW: They drop it off, we wash it, we set it to the style they want, they come in, they sit down and we make them look perfect.

CT: What are the rules when you take a wig home, to manage, to keep it?

MW: We basically give them the good ideas of how to handle them and upkeep them and how to take care of them. We tell that we do style them and if they need, or want to go elsewhere, it's not a problem, they can go elsewhere to style them. We prefer it here that way we have more control over the wig, we can take care of it better and we know that we can take care of the wig and we know that it was done by us. They do take it home. If it's a curly wig, we tell them ok, "Put your fingers through it. Don't fully brush it. This is how you do it." But they usually come in and style it here.

CT: I don't see many curly wigs here.

MW: I can show you some African American hair, the weaves. We do have curly hair. Do we have any up here? [she's looking] Well they are curled. We curl them ourselves.

CT: Do you actually apply any weaves?

MW: Do we apply weaves? We don't do...we do do weaves. We have a weave-looking hair. If a woman comes in and says she wants weaves on her head, we don't put weaves on their heads. It's more expensive to do weave on a person. The upkeep is so expensive. How many times a year do you have to go in and take care of your weave as opposed to buying a wig and buying something and throwing it on?

CT: So is the issue that [wigs] are comfortable? I mean are weaves...?

MW: Weaves are annoying. They're itchy. They hurt your head. And the braiding takes time and money; It's a very annoying thing to do. Weaves are annoying and it's a hassle. And they're very expensive. Where as opposed to buying one wig for say \$2500 and that lasts you a good 4-5 years. It's a very big difference and the only thing you're doing to this wig on a monthly basis is washing and setting it and

all you do it throw it on and opposed to braiding that hair and getting those weaves in. A lot of clients [would] rather [have] a wig over a weave. It's a lot easier and cheaper.

CT: Why do you think people get weaves?

MW: Why? I believe that they feel like it's their own head, they're more comfortable with it It's their own "natural" look as opposed to a wig. We do have many customers who like the wig better. If they can find a natural looking one, which we have, they like it, it's easier. And you feel beautiful. Throw it on.

CT: Well thank you so much. I'm learning a lot. Is there anything else you wanted to talk about with Shuly that I didn't ask you?

MW: Hmmm. No, I would just say that we service anyone and everyone. We have our little 90 -year old women who come in...

CT: Ok, but when do they start?

MW: They start the day they get married. The day after actually. Depending on how religious they are. They extremely Orthodox ones, the real...the Hassidic ones, the do wear them the day of their wedding after the ceremony.

CT: So what does it mean if you don't do it, if you're a rebel?

MW: They're just the more modern kinds. You know a lot of our customers will take out their hair, over their wigs, we have customers who put the wig all the way back here and take out all their hair, it just depends on the preference of their level of religiousness.

CT: So what's the punishment in the religion?

MW: It's between them and God. You don't get thrown out of your community. You don't get punished.

CT: So it's a mark of respect?

MW: It's a Jewish law. If you don't follow Jewish law no one's going to put you in jail. We follow God. We don't have someone controlling us on a day to day basis.

CT: I'm just wondering, you know within in every religion there are different variations, is it really shocking [if the hair isn't covered] or is it just, oh, she's not wearing...

MW: Well by now it's the norm. I'm saying 30 years ago if people would take out all of their hair in the front they would be like, "What is she doing? Oh my Gosh, she's not covering her hair. It's so un-modest." Today's age, everybody does, they just take out their own hair. A lot of people do it. I mean the more religious ones, like myself, excluding today, we fully cover our hair. But there are hundreds of thousands of women who take out their hair because they like it and it's prettier and that's what they want to do. No one's going to look at them and say "You did something wrong." Or, "You're no longer allowed in our synagogue." You know. It's not like that.

CT: So it's not a shaming thing. It's a personal relationship with God?

MW: Yes. It's your and your husband's preference. If that's what he wants.

CT: You said that you were divorced?

MW: I am.

CT: So will you still cover your hair?

MW: I will. Only because my Rabbi told me I should. I follow my Rabbi and when he tells me to do something I do it. He's amazing and he helped me through everything in life.

CT: So just to be clear, I thought it [covering your hair] was supposed to be [done] after you're married.

MW: Once you are married...the actual law is, once you are married, cover your hair. When you become a woman who has gone through the marriage process, you cover your head. When you're divorced I don't know the legality and the exact law, the different explanations and the different ways to perceive it, but what I've learned is that once you're married you cover your hair, even after you're divorced.

CT: The wigs look so natural though, how do you even know if someone's really covering their hair?

MW: You don't! [laughing] Well, usually you do, but a lot of times you have no idea.

CT: Does your wig look like your hair?

MW: I actually have it over there. It's longer, thicker, fuller.

CT: May as well...

MW: Yeah, you know, you're doing it, do it right! [laughing] You do really feel beautiful. You can pick out an outfit and say oh my gosh, where is my wig, one second. You get up in the morning and oh, my wig is on, I feel so pretty now.

CT: You know some days, I wish I had one. When you don't want to deal with your hair.

MW: You should get one. You have no idea how easy it is, I had to iron my hair yesterday and the day before I was like oh my God where's my wig, I can't even look at myself. It's so easy.

CT: They don't get hot? You don't feel...

MW: No. If you get one from here, we have very natural feeling ones. We have different kinds of caps, we have machine made, the handmade, different kinds of caps to make you feel more comfortable, more natural, they're very airy, so you don't feel like there's something on your head. [inaudible] you feel like it's your own piece of hair. You know, of course, in the beginning, when you get married you have to get used to wearing something on your head, by now, you just feel like it's your own hair.

CT: You get used to most things I guess, we get used to all kinds of stuff.

MW: Umm hmm. You're right, exactly. So what's great about this place is that we have many different kinds of caps, some salons only have one specific kind of cap and many different kinds of hair and only

one kind of cap. We have a numerous array of caps and the caps go underneath, for example these [she shows me the caps]. See this is the cap of a wig. This is a precut, it's a layered wig, this is a netting cap, it's a ribbon...

CT: So that's sewn in.

MW: They're all sewn in.

CT: So it's not like you have different caps for different...

MW: we have different kinds of caps. [she looks at the wig] This is a machine made wig, it's a stretch cap, it's extremely comfortable and then we have the more expensive caps, the handmade caps, that is a wig with a special cap, it's very airy, I will try to find one for you. [she pulls one out] That is one of our most expensive pieces.

CT: Is this one of your \$5,000 wigs?

MW: It usually \$5,000 depending on the length of the wig. If it's an extremely long wig then it gets more expensive, the shorter the wig, the less expensive it is.

CT: Well they are beautiful, they look very real.

MW: Yes they are. We should try some on you.

CT: I don't know about wearing Russian hair.

MW: Well we have two different brands, we have the European, that's the Russian hair and then we have the Studio Line which is the South American hair. Two different kinds, two different price ranges and the Studio Line is also quite beautiful, [she pulls out two wigs out] this is the Studio Line and then this is the European.

CT: I wonder what it is with Russian hair that makes it so...

MW: Finer, much finer hair, much, much finer hair whereas the South American hair is processed. We do process it to get the color to stay and to look beautiful. You cannot tell the difference. This is the Studio [Line] and this is European. You can feel the difference. This is the European. You can feel this is more silky. Feel the difference?

CT: [touching the wigs] Yeah.

MW: That's a silkier, more expensive quality.

CT: Amazing. Well thank you so much, I feel like I've been educated on so many different things. Should I wait for Shuly?

MW: Yes, she should be here any minute. And she can talk to you in detail about who she is and what she does and how she started it.

CT: In the meantime...how long have you been here?

MW: I've been here only a few months.

CT: Wow you know a lot.

MW: [laughing] You know it's something that you know. It's the Jewish culture.

CT: Were you in the industry before?

MW: I've always loved wigs. I've done wash and sets at home, personally. But it's something that you grow up with, something that you know. You know that when you get married, you cover your hair. I had to learn the different brands, the different styles and the different price ranges and all about the brands that we do and what we have.

CT: I need to have you sign the consent forms for the Library and this one is for me, for my company.

[END]

