

## Bronxville stylist preps models for runway

By [Heather Salerno](#)

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Hairstylist **Federico Calce** knows all about the glitz and glamour of fashion shows, having spent years dressing the tresses of models for Fendi, Gucci, Prada and Valentino.

But sometimes, he says, all a perfect coiffure requires is a trip to Home Depot.

Bobby pins, you see, are a hairdresser's *bête noire*. They slip and slide. They can't withstand a supermodel's stomping strut, or anchor a skyscraping updo.

So when the cable guy visited Calce's home in Bronxville one day, he realized that hard plastic ties - used to hold excess wires in place - were the answer to his ponytail-securing problem.

"I got hurt because I tied (one) to my finger," he laughs, while taking a break at his namesake Manhattan salon. "Then I tried it on my daughter's hair, and it worked."

Now those ties - as well as a pistol-shaped, cable industry-standard gun used to snip off the ties' long ends - take a place of honor in Calce's traveling suitcase of tools, right next to the best brushes, dryers and rollers in the business.

Calce will need every weapon in his arsenal next week as he and his team of a dozen stylists work on nine fashion shows in three days - with only about 90 minutes to prep 24 models at each show.

Calce is the mastermind behind the hairstyles that will be seen at **Couture Fashion Week**, an independent showcase of emerging designers like Lebanon's **Jean Fares** and Kuwait's **Haya Al Houti**, which starts next Friday at the Westin Times Square hotel.

The event isn't officially associated with Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week - the industry behemoth that kicks off today in Bryant Park - but it's clear that organizers hope influential tastemakers will stay in town to check out some up-and-comers.

Calce can boast of collaborations with legends Oscar de la Renta and Giorgio Armani. But the Italian-born stylist is equally excited to help fledgling designers like Romania's **Catalin Botezatu** bring their vision to an American market.



Carucha L. Meuse/The Journal News

Hairstylist Federico Calce of Bronxville, who has had a long career creating looks for fashion shows, tests hair styles on model Kayla Skogh at Federico Salon in Manhattan. Calce will be styling models at Couture Fashion Week, an independent showcase of emerging designers, which kicks off on Feb. 8.

### LEARN MORE

For more information on hairstylist Federico Calce, click on his Manhattan salon's Web site at [www.federicosalon.com](http://www.federicosalon.com). And to check out some of the designers that Calce will be working with at next week's fashion shows, go to [www.couturefashionweek.com](http://www.couturefashionweek.com)

He's been working for weeks on potential styles for the upcoming shows, poring over magazines for inspiration. Designers have been e-mailing sketches from their Fall 2008 collections to Calce, who then offers suggestions for accompanying hairdos.

"Sometimes I get correct. Sometimes I'm a little bit off. So there's a little back and forth," says Calce.

He's having fun creating some of the more over-the-top styles: One possibility is a tight, high ponytail with cascading "three-dimensional" layers.

Obviously, it's not a look for the average gal. Runway hairstyles are "more couture, more big, more bold," says Calce in charmingly accented English. "Nothing to do what anybody use for regular life."

These kinds of concoctions wouldn't be for any of the bold-faced names who frequent his salon, including Katie Couric and Sarah Ferguson, the Duchess of York.

Located four stories above a Christian Lacroix boutique on East 57th Street, Calce's salon cultivates more of a subdued, living room atmosphere than a chatty beauty parlor. Haircuts are by appointment only, and clients don't mill about impatiently waiting for service.

"I don't want to have the next client waiting and say, 'Next!'" says Calce. "You come in, we enjoy the cappuccino, espresso, and we take care of you."

A cut with Calce himself costs \$200, which is relatively reasonable, considering that high-profile artists like Sally Hershberger and Orlando Pita charge \$800.

His publicist keeps encouraging him to raise his prices, but he refuses

"I think that's outrageous," he says. "It's not what I'm about."

What Calce is about is treating an A-lister as well as an executive assistant.

But he still knows how to navigate the quirks of the rich and famous.

Since his salon offers 24-hour service, Calce's staff is always on call for beautiful people who need to be even more beautiful at ungodly hours.

Victoria Beckham, for instance, recently beckoned at 4 a.m. for a round of early morning TV appearances. And Calce is who the Saudi royal family often calls while in town.

The Middle Eastern royals, he says, insist on round-the-clock attendance. They usually pay in cash from a suitcase stuffed with bills. And the women sometimes require blowouts twice a day.

"They are high maintenance," he says.

But high maintenance doesn't begin to describe Calce's work with more than 200 celebrities who attended New York's Fashion Week for three consecutive seasons, starting in February 2005.

Calce was part of the beauty team who got famous faces camera-ready for photographer Timothy Greenfield-Sanders, who was snapping their portraits in a special studio constructed behind the Bryant Park scene.

The resulting book, "Look," sold out of its first printing in 2006; a second, revised edition was published last month.

So Calce got to tame the locks of Beyoncé, Mary J. Blige, Eva Longoria, Nicole Richie, Parker Posey, Carrie Underwood and dozens of others.

But the star he remembers most clearly?

Supermodel Naomi Campbell.

He doesn't recall any cell phones thrown, but Campbell's infamous diva demeanor was definitely on display. She kept everyone waiting, he says, and she insisted that the cramped, chaotic studio be cleared before her arrival.

"She was completely crazy bananas," he chuckles.

Calce is used to dealing with challenges, however.

He came to New York from Milan in the early 1980s, leaving his family's thriving chain of hair salons to make his mark in this country.

"I was making more money at that time than now," he says. "But I would not be myself. I want to create my own life, create my own image, my own skills."

Just weeks after arriving, Calce was appointed artistic director of Bergdorf Goodman's salon.

Soon he was dealing with fashion designers and magazine shoots, and for a short time, he went Hollywood. Calce was a hairstylist for Meg Ryan and Michelle Pfeiffer on such movies as "When Harry Met Sally" and "Batman."

Film work paid well, he says, but he wasn't happy with what he felt was a lack of creativity.

"Plus, sitting in that trailer for many hours," he says, shrugging. "I went bananas one day and said, 'Forget it.' "

By the early 1990s, Calce had opened his own salon. And he says his workplace will practically shut down next weekend to accommodate the fashion shows.

But that's fine with Calce.

"I'm glad they still choose me for this kind of work, because it proves I'm still good to do that," he says. "The moment they stop to choose me, I will stop to work because I'm passé."

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