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Autumn—Winter 2012
11th Edition

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A SCABAL INITIATIVE TO PROMOTE A TAILOR-MADE LIFESTYLE

CHANGING TIMES ON 'THE ROW': WOMEN TAILORS STEP FORWARD

Scabal provides its fabrics to the most renowned tailors worldwide – the majority are men, but there are also some dynamic women, such as Kathryn Sargent and Emma Martin from Savile Row, London.

By Janet Prescott



Kathryn Sargent



Kathryn Sargent's workshop
© Janet Prescott

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CONFIRMED TALENT: KATHRYN SARGENT, GOLDEN SHEARS WINNER

Kathryn Sargent, Master Tailor, winner of the prestigious Golden Shears award for the best womenswear, has a high profile, striking out on her own at the beginning of 2012 to set up her eponymous business providing luxury tailoring for men and women in the elegant premises of erstwhile tailors to Beau Brummel, Meyer & Mortimer in Sackville Street. Kathryn has moved on to develop her business after 15 years at Gieves & Hawkes, where she became head cutter.

Kathryn puts her success down to changing times: *"The trade is generally a little bit less secretive, tailors such as Oswald Boateng and Richard James use marketing companies and clients are more aware of different options. Women would have been regarded as a business risk in the past, but that has all changed. Customers also have evolved quite a lot, there is a wider range of people who come in to order a bespoke suit."* She finds that modern customers tend to do their research before they arrive for the first time, but they still need advice on their choices. *"It's important to find out where they live, what sort of lifestyle they have and advise on the sort of fabric suitable for where they're going. There is much more interest from the Far East and China, Korea and Japan as well as the Middle East."*

"One big change is that fabrics have become much lighter weight as requirements have changed. 250g cloths are now favoured, which would have been judged exceptionally light even recently. Some customers from overseas choose specifically luxurious clothes, such as Scabal's Diamond Chip, Gold Treasure and Summit. I have made two or three of these for clients who are looking for luxury and image."

Training at Gieves & Hawkes, for which she has a great affection, Kathryn Sargent went from the trimming room to the shop floor, and then became an apprentice cutter. *"The first garment I cut out for a customer, I was a nervous wreck."* She realised early on that much of the job is down to communication: *"I observed fittings and saw how the staff managed the clients, asking the right questions."* She understands fabrics intimately, and has a personal preference for colours and textures with a lot of depth rather than a flat look, admiring cashmeres for softness. She picks out Scabal's Cool Wools as being very good new qualities.

Kathryn finds that being a unique female tailor has a certain appeal, but she is cautious: *"People come and find me as there is a particular skill-set they want. I think business people are less hung up gender-wise, the cut is the main thing and I know how to design things beautifully. There is such an interest now in Savile Row, and it is one of the last genuine great trades. I just love men in suits, the tailoring and technical aspect."* This engaging young woman is not short of ambition: *"I'm starting my business now, and who knows where it will take me? I believe in bespoke principles and I want to challenge myself."*

**'BUSINESS PEOPLE
ARE LESS HUNG UP
GENDER-WISE'**

Kathryn Sargent