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Robb Report

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THE BESPOKE ISSUE

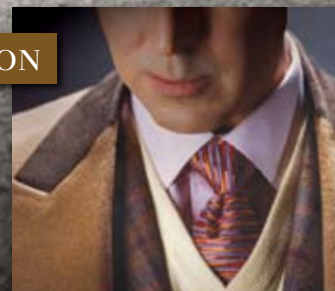
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Fall FASHION

WRITTEN & STYLED BY WILLIAM KISSEL ✪ PHOTOGRAPHY BY SUSAN ANDERSON



CLOTHIERS MAKE *the* MAN

CUSTOM CLOTHIERS bring their tape measures, fabric swatches, and refined tastes to your door to create a complete, personalized wardrobe. They never handle a needle and thread. Their talents lie in their abilities to measure with precision and determine which fabrics, colors, and designs best suit you. And through their connections to the world's finest cloth houses, suitmakers, and shirt suppliers, they can outfit you with one-of-a-kind fashions from head to toe. ➡➡

HOUSE CALLS

THE DIFFERENCE between personal tailors and custom clothiers, according to Jeff Landis, can be a matter of taste: The former often are unwilling to suppress their judgment and will reject requests that offend their sensibilities; the latter tend to be more flexible. A custom clothier, in addition to consulting on your wardrobe, will try to fulfill even your most radical sartorial visions, regardless of whether he approves of them. “I had a client who wanted a suit that looked like it was literally painted on his body, and every tailor in town refused to make it,” recalls Landis, a custom clothier based in Chicago. “We deal with clients who don’t like to hear the word ‘no.’ It’s our challenge to find a way to have it done.” In the case of the very tight suit, Landis did have it done—for better or worse.

Landis’ company practices the type of old-world custom tailoring that thrived in Chicago until the 1960s, when the profession faded with the rise of mass-produced menswear. In 1992, Landis purchased Strahorn Tailors, a century-old bespoke shop, from custom tailor Joe Montopoli, and two years later, he acquired the shop that belonged to Fred Mazzei, another popular Chicago clothier, who was known for his suits’ distinctive, clipped peaked lapels. After combining the two operations, he christened the new entity Mazzei Montopoli & Strahorn. He

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retained the shops’ craftsmen (including Frank Perri, who has been making coats for more than 44 years—first for the late Mazzei and now for Landis) and acquired their client lists. Then Landis took his business on the road.

“I started going directly to the customer, taking care of what he needs on the spot, in his home or office, and that’s where custom tailoring shines,” says 49-year-old Landis, who worked at Richard Bennett menswear stores in Wisconsin and Chicago during the 1980s. He found that business’ traditional brand of retailing confining and limiting. “With direct sales,” says Landis, “I’m able to show my client a whole store’s worth of clothing and accessories and have everything made to his personal specifications.”

Landis caters to his clients at their convenience, instead of during normal retail hours. “My customers are in the financial markets or are futures traders working with the Far East and London, so they keep strange hours,” he explains. “I have one gentleman who likes to see me at 10 pm on Sunday because

that’s the only time he has available.”

Landis’ forte is mixing color and texture into the wardrobes of his predominantly conservative customers without pushing them beyond their comfort zones. “We’re not in Los Angeles, where men might be looking for more of the wow factor,” he says. “My clients want something unique and luxurious to pamper themselves, but it can’t stand too far out from the crowd. It might be a \$10,000 suit, but they don’t want it to scream that.”

Tweed sport coat made from Dormeuil wool cloth by Montopoli Tailors, \$2,450; corduroy trousers made from Dormeuil cotton/cashmere cloth by Antonis Stefos for Montopoli Tailors, \$825; Carstarphen Sea Island cotton sweater vest, \$250; Holland & Sherry cotton shirt, \$285; silk tie by DeAluccia for Executive Wardrobe, \$140; Robert Talbott silk pocket square, \$45; beaver felt hat by DeAluccia for Executive Wardrobe, \$250; Martin Dingman calf suede gloves, \$250. Previous page: topcoat made from Rosenthal Woolens vicuña/cashmere cloth by Adrian Jules, \$4,700.

Mazzei Montopoli & Strahorn,
312.987.0987
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Jeff Landis is always on call for his clients.

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