

NEWS & FEATURES TOP STORIES PEOPLE EVENTS

Restoring the Integrity of Tailoring

ELISABETTA SANTI

Hanging on the wall at a fashion start-up in Whittier, California is a quote, which reads: "The bitterness of low quality remains long after the sweetness of low price is forgotten." We've all been there - buying something we thought was a "bargain" and then see it fall apart. However, what is even worse is when we spend a lot of money for a garment of poor quality.

This is what happened to founder and director of Sartieri, Oscar Santi, and is what inspired him to be a change-maker in gentleman's outfitting by launching his brand in October 2015. Like everything great, Sartieri, the online tailors, started with a good story.

Santi had just finished his Masters degree and was looking for a great suit. His sights were high - he desired nothing short of a perfect suit for his *laurea*. Fed up of the ready-to-buy and standard sized suits the shops offered, Santi decided to go to a tailor in his hometown, Lecce for his needs. After getting measured up and parting with a priestly sum of money, he closed the tailor's door behind him feeling satisfied. However, at home, with the new suit on, his father's words epitomised everything that was wrong:



Geppino is Sartieri's Master Tailor, "an amazing person, with a huge generosity of spirit". Credit: Roberto Tondi ph Lecce

"questo abito fa pena!" Ill-fitted, made from fabric of *bassissima* quality and second-rate sewing, Santi was left with a very bitter taste in his mouth.

"I think this is what sparked my vision, the idea of creating something unique and top-quality - something exclusive but not elitist," Santi said. Fast-forward

to today, and Sartieri is already winning prizes: the team's latest accolade is the Mediastars Prize, where they won best Italian e-commerce of 2015/2016.

Partnered with Giuseppe Ramondo (aka *Geppino*) a "living legend" of Neapolitan tailoring, Sartieri combines innovation and craftsmanship. However, unlike traditional tailoring, the tailor comes straight to you. The customer creates and designs their suit online, choosing from one billion possible combinations. Once the order is made, a personal style consultant will visit the client to take proper measurements and ensure a 100% fit guarantee. This is what gives their brand an edge Santi explained: "Some of our competitors are selling jackets and suits abroad, but because they are not taking physical measurements, they are trusting the customer to be able to take their measurements autonomously. We're not doing it like that." Unknown to many, autonomous measuring can result in dissatisfied customers with clothes that do not fit - Sartieri's solution is sending experience stylists to personally and accurately take measurements.

It is not just about making money for Santi, as he remains 100% committed to Made in Italy, and refuses all offers of outsourcing, despite the cost-

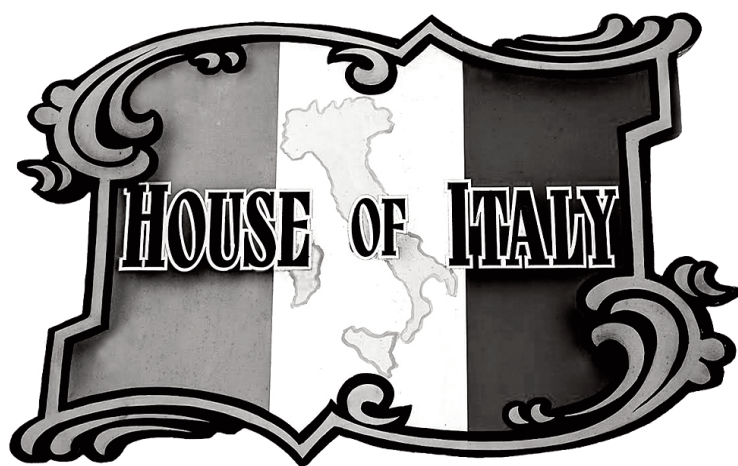
cutting lure: "We get phone calls and e-mails almost every day from Chinese manufacturers," Santi explained. Asked why they have dedicated themselves to Made in Italy, he replied, "It's just too easy to offer poor-quality goods. These days the overwhelming majority of big and small clothing brands manufacture in countries where costs are 10-20 times lower. Fashion businesses rely on branding to help customers forget where their products come from. At Sartieri, we are trying to create a different discourse - reconciling the image of a product at a fair price with the highest quality. This is our challenge."

Adhering to the *Five pillars of the Slow Fashion Revolution*, Sartieri's priority is to provide the best existing raw materials. They accomplish this by sourcing world-renowned wool and cotton mills and so trade with well-established cloth merchants in Biella, Piemonte, *città della lana*. Buying from century-old-mills like Fratelli Tali di Delfino (est.1903) and Guabello (est.1815), the alpine waters of Biella provide a final treatment to the wool, which is unachievable elsewhere. Santi is passionate about the quality of their fabrics, and likens fabric sampling to tasting the finest foods: "It's like when you eat something delicious and your senses go into ecstasy...the same thing happens when you touch one of our fabrics."

Driven by passion and commitment, it is no surprise that Santi draws inspiration from figures as inspiring as himself. He holds great admiration for Italian fashion designer, Brunello Cuccinelli who is famous for saying: "I have always dreamed of creating useful work for an important objective."

Sartieri is achieving just that. As both traditionalists and modernists, they seek to provide a service, which artisans have poured, love, passion and time into. As Santi expressed, "passion and love are the characterising elements that create not just clothes but works of art." It will be interesting to see how Sartieri performs in this fast-fashion world. However as public consciousness is raised on fashion ethics and sustainability in documentaries like True Cost, Sartieri could well be on the winning side.

Sartieri's hand-made, personalised pocket squares and cravats are available to US customers on <http://www.sartieri.com>. They are currently working on their full expansion to the USA.



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