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Sew It Goes

Expertly crafted clothing is still the pride of Naples, thanks to the city's top tailors, who are bolstering the tried-and-true Neapolitan style. BY JILL NEWMAN

IN THE 1930s, a jacket made waves in the coastal city of Naples. Vincenzo Attolini deconstructed the traditional English suit jacket, removing its heavy lining and creating softer, more naturally shaped shoulders. He had intended for the design to be comfortable for Neapolitans living in the area's warm climate, but his clients initially shunned

what they considered to be a radical departure from tradition. "My grandfather made the jacket more like a second skin, which was very avant-garde at the time," explains Massimiliano Attolini, Vincenzo's grandson, who now runs the menswear brand Cesare Attolini with his brother Giuseppe.

That reluctance didn't last long,

however. The tailor's unstructured style caught on, and by the close of World War II, men young and old, whether working or simply strolling the boardwalk, were sporting what had come to be called the Neapolitan-style jacket. In the 1950s the Attolinis made Neapolitan-style suits—fully bespoke ensembles—for a number of high-profile clients, including





Top right: Brothers Giuseppe (left) and Massimiliano Attolini oversee operations for Cesare Attolini. Above and right: Inside the brand's workshop.

Below right: Maria Giovanna Paone, vice president of Kiton. Below: The brand's tailors sew every detail by hand.



feel without compromising their ability to hold a garment's shape. This season, Kiton has also introduced a series of sport coats that feature an inner lining designed to adjust to the wearer's body temperature.

Inside Kiton's workshop, 350 tailors (most of them men) work in

and daughter will join one day," says Ciro's daughter Maria Giovanna Paone, who is Kiton's vice president and the creative director of its women's division. The spirit of Naples is evident in everything the company makes, she says, noting that the tailors put their own personality into each handmade jacket.

Technique distinguishes a Neapolitan tailor from a British or even a Milanese one, as evidenced by clothes from Isaia. In the company's atelier in the Casalmuovo district of Naples, where CEO Gianluca Isaia's grandfather established his workshop in 1957, the focus is on the brand's signature cut, which incorporates an unstructured shoulder, a higher and smaller armhole, a larger lapel, and the barchetta (Italian for "small boat") breast pocket. Isaia is also known for its vibrant suit patterns and trademark coral lapel pin. The coral adornment is not only a symbol of good luck, according to the CEO, but also a reminder that the suits come from the Italian seaside. "Our philosophy," he says, "is not to give our clients rules but to help men discover their own style." His brand's colorful clothing has found particular favor among younger men who want suits different from those worn by their fathers.

Individuality is also a driving force at Rubinacci, whose bespoke suits

groups according to their skill set. A circle of about eight artisans might sew the shoulders, for example, while another group attaches collars. The atmosphere feels more like a men's club than a workshop, and the close-knit family of Ciro Paone, who founded the brand in 1968, oversees the work and the company's international growth. "All the family is in the business, and I expect my son



are offered through its stores in Naples, Milan, and London. Established by Gennaro Rubinacci in 1930, the company is now helmed by Gennaro's son Mariano, who runs the business with his son Luca. On a floor above their Naples shop, more than two dozen tailors, all dressed in white coats, cut and sew each garment by hand. These methods allow for the creation of uniquely personalized garments, such as a recent Tanzanian client's lightweight cashmere sport coat lined with a silk print featuring an image of Mount

Vesuvius. More than ever, says Mariano, "people want something special; they don't want something everyone else has."

Cesare Attolini clients also expect their wardrobes to be special—just as they did in the 1930s when Vincenzo presented his groundbreaking design. For the company, meeting that expectation involves, among other things, having its fabrics made in Italy and England exclusively for the brand, in just enough of each fabric style (the color, the pattern, and so on) to make 20 to 25 handmade suits. The brand employs about 130 tailors, including a 64-year-old man who started working for Cesare Attolini when he was 14 years old.

Such dedication to the craft, Massimiliano says, results in a level of consistency and refinement that is impossible to duplicate outside Naples. "I can recognize one of our jackets a mile away in any city in the world," he says. "It's the fabric, the shoulder, the fit and boat-shaped pocket that my grandfather invented, and the way a man walks with confidence when he is wearing a Neapolitan jacket." ■

Above, clockwise from upper left: A tailor finishes a collar at *Isaia*; CEO Gianluca Isaia; swatches of the brand's colorful interior collars.

Right: Mariano Rubinacci, who helms the business his father founded in 1930.



Cesare Attolini, cesareattolini.com;
Isaia, isaia.it; **Kiton**, kiton.it;
Rubinacci, marianorubinacci.net