



Kiton
NAPOLI

MADE IN ITALY

– The Story Behind The World's Most Expensive Suit

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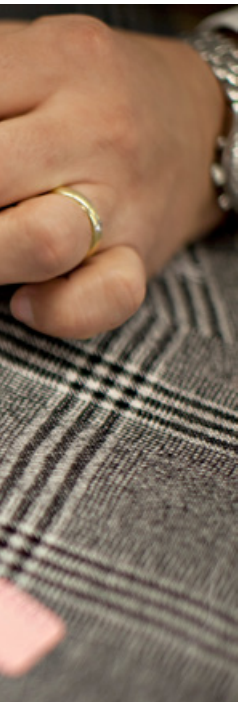
Tucked away on a palm tree lined avenue in Naples, is the Kiton workshop – a magical place where rolls of fabric arrive at one end of the building, and the world's most expensive suits leave at the other, sent out across the world to customers who will happily spend up to 25,000 euros on these exclusive threads.

Zoey Goto received a rare invitation to visit Kiton HQ and discover the mysterious journey that their suit takes from conception, to the rails of the most expensivemenswear boutiques.



**THE PROTAGONIST OF THE KITON STYLE FOR ITS UNIQUE APPEAL.
EACH JACKET IS A MASTERPIECE THAT ALL OUT.**

The name of Kiton comes from "chitone", ceremonial garment worn by ancient greek aristocracy. This is a symbol of classicism, quality and social distinction.



A grand, spacious building, crammed with contemporary art, where the workers enjoy leisurely, home-cooked lunches, washed down with a glass of fine red wine – it is not exactly how one imagines the typical fashion factory to operate. Yet this is exactly the civilised atmosphere that greets the visitor at Kiton's workshop in the suburb of Arzano, where 350 craftspeople are hard at work, displaying the time-honoured tailoring skills that the region has become famed for.

Our story starts with Pasquale Guadagno, Kiton's master pattern designer of 35 years. Pasquale and his small team are responsible for the tailoring blocks, a cardboard template of each section of the final suit. Kiton's classic jacket shape is softly structured, with a shirt-like Neapolitan sleeve that is ideally suited to lightweight cloth and cashmere. Venturing away from this house-style requires intensive work for Pasquale. For example, when Kiton introduced the CIPA 1960; a retro collection of slim fitting suits made from vintage style fabrics, they had to spend many months painstakingly researching and tweaking the standard blocks to get the desired silhouette.

The next stop is the textile room, where hundreds of rolls of fabrics are stored. Kiton own their own mill and the majority of the fabrics they use have been created exclusively for them. Here we find fabrics made from 12.9 micron, the finest thread in the world, alongside vicuña wool, a rare textile from South America. Although other luxury tailoring brands also favour vicuña, Kiton was the first to experiment with dyeing the fabric in vibrant shades. It is worth pausing briefly to mention the Italian use of colour, as Kiton are known for their artistry in this area.

While the average Italian wardrobe may contain an overwhelming spectrum of colours, blue plays a pivotal role - from the azure linen jackets worn in the South of the country, to the razor-sharp indigo tailoring of Milan. The skill is in finding the right shade of blue; too light and you risk looking like a peacock, while a deep midnight blue will be mistaken for the formality of black. If in doubt, take a style cue from Fiat owner Gianni Agnelli, whose combination of blue shirt and blue tie provides a neutral background to experiment with colour elsewhere – a style tactic known as the Italian background.

Hand stitching is part of Kiton's DNA. When they launched in 1968, they took their name from the Greek word 'chiton', a sewn garment that was later renamed the tunic by the Romans. Once the jacket exterior has been assembled, a silk lining is then stitched into the interior, with a layer of canvas sandwiched in between the silk and the suit fabric. This 'floating canvas' provides substance and structure in the jacket and is considered more desirable than a fused canvas, which has been glued inside the jacket and distorts when wet.

Work hard to achieve perfection. And if you can't, start over again.

Back in Kiton's tailoring room, the fabrics are laid out on vast wooden tables and the shape of the blocks are chalked onto the surface. A key element of the Kiton suit is its symmetry, which is particularly visible when fabrics such as check or pinstripe are used. If you look at the suit from the front, both sides of the suit should reflect the pattern on the other side, as if a mirror had been placed down the centre of the body. Another indicator of quality is if the pattern matches at the seams, meaning that it flows throughout the whole garment and gives an appearance of almost being a single piece of cloth. While cheaper brands may economise by squeezing the suit pieces into as small amount of fabric as possible, Kiton's method requires a skilled fabric cutter and a surplus of cloth. To ensure skills such as this are passed through the generations, Kiton also have a tailoring school onsite. The students, dressed in white laboratory coats, spend two years learning their craft, before they are allowed to apprentice the seasoned tailors down on the workshop floor.

Next, the jacket makes a tour of the vast tailoring room, where dapper looking gentlemen construct each section by hand. Every part of the Kiton suit is hand-sewn, apart from the back-seam of the jacket. A hand-stitched garment is desirable as it allows for greater movement, especially around the shoulder and collar, and it also means that a more durable silk thread can be used.

Finally the finishing touches are applied and the buttonholes hand sewn, each one taking 20 minutes to create. This is the only part of the process allocated to the women workers, who are deep in concentration, making sure the minute stitches are accurate. The jacket proceeds to the far end of the tailoring room, where burly looking men are wielding weighty irons that exhale steam. Once the finished product looks immaculate, it is given a final inspection by the unforgiving master tailor and placed on the rail, ready for dispatch to the customer. In total, the Kiton suit will have had around 25 hours of highly skilled labour invested into it.

Kiton's CEO, Antonio De Matteis, explains that despite the premium prices, Kiton is currently holding its place in the luxury market as 'the process, the fabrics, everything we do is very unique and special. When our customers come to visit us and see how we make the products, they always comment that for what we do, we are really not that expensive. And remember, we are the most expensive product in the world!' he laughs. Before making the pilgrimage to their Naples workshop, I must admit I was a little dubious about how the Kiton price tag could be justified. However, witnessing the artisan process involved highlighted that what the customer is really buying into is haute couture for men – the antithesis of our throwaway fashion culture, where a garment is regarded as an investment for life.



CASA KITON - WE DO THINGS AS WE USED TO DO BY GENERATIONS.
WITH LOVE, PASSION AND MASTERY.



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