Tailored Stories: Lottery grant to uncover history of



A Savile Row tailor at work

The iconic home of bespoke menswear has dressed everyone from actors and foreign dignitaries to our own Royal family and its showcase at London Collections: Men this week came with the reminder of the fact that ‘London is the world capital of masculine style, and has been for over two centuries’.

But what of the tailors, seamstresses and other workers in the industry whose hard work and skill has ensured Savile Row is such an important part of the fashion world?

Arts and educational charity digital:works has teamed up with fashion students and volunteers to explore their story and provide a ‘behind the scenes’ insight into the famous street.

Research, interviews and footage of people showcasing their incredible skills at work will be used to create a documentary film and website which will be shown at a major launch event and colleges and venues across the country.

A guided tour of Savile Row, led by a tailor who has worked in the industry since his apprenticeship, will give the students the chance to interview a number of people who work in, or are retired from, the trade including a master tailor, one of the first female tailors and a man who worked in family sweatshops in Soho.

Sue Bowers, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund London, said: “In the week that sees men’s fashion take centre stage in London, we’re delighted to announce our support for a project which will provide an insight into a fascinating part of our city’s heritage. From the training tailors undertook and the materials that were used, to the changes in processes and motivations of those in the industry, Tailored Stories will tell the sartorial and personal stories of Savile Row and its enduring legacy.”

The project will also include a visit to the Merchant Taylor Company, which has historic links with the trade as a livery company. The students will explore the regulations, extensive training and apprenticeships system which ensure the high level of skill and quality for which Savile Row is known.

The students will also have access to the Museum of London’s rarely seen collection of clothing and other items relating to the street and will be working closely with Curator of Fashion & Decorative Arts Tim Long who will be on hand to explain the production processes and their fashion heritage significance. The Guildhall’s collection of photographs, indentures and sketches will also be explored.

Nina Vella, one of the students involved, said: “It’ll be interesting to see the change of bespoke tailored clothing over the centuries and by hearing from people who have experienced it first hand for decades.”

Arianwen Shoring, Lecturer at Kensington & Chelsea College which has also provided funding for the project, said: “This is a great project to delve into the history and heritage of Savile Row. It is a great opportunity for the students to understand the industry and the growing popularity of menswear and its association with London through the Mens Collection.”

The full interviews will be archived at the Guildhall Library and the Bishopsgate Institute.

Notes to editors

About digital:works

digital:works is an arts and educational charity that works with communities, providing training and creative assistance to produce arts and media projects.

Further information

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