

VOGUE

IN STORE & DECOR

Style that suits

With a sparkling new showroom in New York City, designer Patrick Johnson is introducing the world to the sophisticated simplicity of Australian tailoring.
By Tiffany Bakker Photography by Adrian Meško



IN PROFILE

CLOCKWISE, FROM BELOW: Patrick Johnson in SoHo, the site of his new P. Johnson Tailors; the appointment-only store is distinctive for its crisp, white interior and display of Australian contemporary art; photographs by Josh Robenstone are particularly eye-catching.



Johnson's interior designer wife Tamsin, BOTTOM LEFT, created the look of the SoHo store, and custom-designed its travertine tables (shown on the previous page paired with a locally produced sofa). BOTTOM RIGHT: the marble side table is by Jonathan Zawada.

PEOPLE ARE COMING BACK TO TAILORING in a big way," says Patrick Johnson, surveying his newly minted showroom in New York's fashionable SoHo district. "We're about working with our customers' lifestyles — what it is and what it's going to be. We make clothing for men who need to wear suits. Recently, there's been this very peacocking, over-the-top kind of thing in suits. It's a very un-Australian way of wearing clothes. We don't do that."

Indeed, his P. Johnson label, with stores in Sydney and Melbourne, is renowned in Australia for its soft, lightweight suits. Johnson, however, was keen to get himself out of his comfort zone, and he felt that New York was the place to do it.

"I think you can start to believe your own bullshit after a while," the charismatic Johnson says, grinning. "It's pretty comfortable for us in Australia; the business is established there, we have a great clientele and we're pushing forward, and it's good. But as Australians we need to get out there, push ourselves overseas and have confidence in it."

Johnson's wife, Tamsin — an interior designer — created the look of the New York store; she wanted to keep the palette even more natural and fresh than the label's Australian showrooms. "We wanted

a space that was very easy for people to come and relax in," she explains. "We wanted to make it more of a living-room situation." Johnson adds that his US clients love the freshness: "Americans tend to over-decorate things," he proclaims.

The store also showcases a fine array of Australian contemporary art. A large photographic print on the wall was a moving gift from the acclaimed Bill Henson ("I have a crush on that man," Johnson says with a laugh). Also on display are works by Melbourne photographer Josh Robenstone as well as side tables designed by another Australian artist, Jonathan Zawada.

Johnson credits his always-dapper stepfather for sparking his interest in tailoring when he was just a boy. "He's a very elegantly dressed guy — one of my favourite-dressed men," says Johnson. "He would go to England twice a year to get his suits made on Savile Row. He would ride his horse in a three-piece suit."

Johnson, however, could very nearly have travelled down another road. He studied agriculture and science at university, and planned to become a winemaker. Instead, his brother urged him to follow his passion for tailoring, which took him to renowned fashion school »



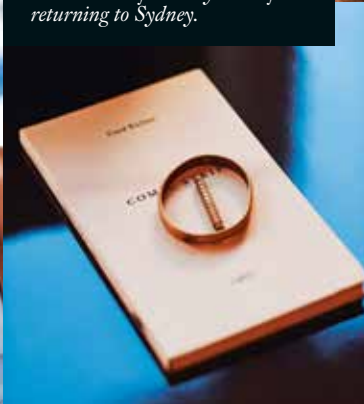
"As Australians we need to get out there, push ourselves overseas and have confidence in it"



IN PROFILE



CLOCKWISE, FROM RIGHT: the store's black-glass-and-perspex wall light is a mid-century Italian piece found at Los Angeles antiques store JF Chen; custom brass bracelets, designed by Johnson with an orthopaedic surgeon client, are held in place by screws; the Johnsons plan to base themselves in New York for two years before returning to Sydney.



« Central Saint Martin's in London, and then onto a job honing his skills with London tailor Robert Emmett. "I worked with him, learnt from him and travelled with him for seven years," Johnson recalls. "And I'm very lucky to have that."

After returning to Australia, Johnson started his label "out of the boot of a car" in 2008, driving between Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide to show off his wares. Though he admired the work of Savile Row tailors and the suit designs of Giorgio Armani, he felt that Australian men needed something different.

"Coming from Australia and coming into tailoring, it's been a really great thing for us, because we look at clothing really casually the whole time," he states. "Aussies are just thinking, 'Okay, how can I wear this in about 50 different situations, because I don't want to have to get changed for this and that.'"

Recently, Johnson was awarded the 2015 Woolmark Prize for Menswear. Even though he likes to play down the achievement, it's an award that has had significant meaning for the boy who was raised on a South Australian sheep property.

"My family has been involved in wool forever," he says. "I grew up around wool so it was a big thing for me, and I use it every single day in my business. I do feel proud of it."

As for the future, Johnson says he hasn't looked too far ahead. "Right now, it's very much about establishing ourselves in America. I don't like to plan more than six months ahead. But," he adds, smiling broadly, "I've got delusions of grandeur here." *VL*

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