

INTERNATIONAL EDITION

THE RAKE

THE MODERN VOICE OF CLASSIC ELEGANCE

PRINCE *Michael of* KENT

*Stable Style
Personalized*

Collectable Fakes

HOW THEY'RE FORGING GENUINE
CLOUT IN THE ART WORLD

Sartorial Studies

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE
NECKTIE, BRACES AND WOOL FABRICS

Adventures in craftsmanship

WITH JOE MORGAN, VITALE BARBERIS
CANONICO AND BELL & ROSS

Plus

THE PRINCE OF WALES,
HANI FARSI,
JEREMY HACKETT,
CHARLIE CHAPLIN
& DOMINIQUE SANDA

ISSUE 32 £5.99, SGD10, HKD60



9 771793 791406



The hand-sewn, unlined seven-fold silk tie.

Brown and cream striped floral-motif seven-fold silk tie, **Tie Your Tie**; violet and navy striped seven-fold silk tie, **Armys** (both property of *The Rake*).

“Today, people wear neckties not as a necessity, but as a pleasure.”

**— Jean-Claude Colban,
Director of Charvet**

After World War II, with England in the grip of rationing, Americans expressed affluence and ease by wearing wide ties (colloquially termed ‘belly warmers’) in exuberant colours and patterns, often hand-painted onto the silk. The most coveted, both for their quality and scarcity, were limited-run Countess Mara ties (a favourite of Frank Sinatra), made by Lucilla Mara de Vescovi, who once said, “Tell a man you like his necktie and you will see his personality unfold like a flower.”

Moving on to the ‘50s and ‘60s, neckties at this time thinned to widths of less than two inches. The new style then was sleek and slim, with brands like Rooster making narrow square-bottomed ties for the modern minimalist. Like the broad belly warmers, which saw rebirth in the ‘70s as the short, wide and garish kipper ties by Michael Fish at Turnbull & Asser, skinny ties returned to fashion in the ‘80s, sometimes in shoelace-thin and leather incarnations.

The narrow tie, especially the knit tie, has fared better in the ‘timeless’ stakes than its broader counterpart. Luca Rubinacci is a particular fan of knit ties, because they offer a “young and more sportive look”. They are indeed more casual; a silk knit contrasts nicely with a rough-tweed or dry flannel jacket.

So, what of international trends these days? “When I was young, I could stand on the corner of 57th and Fifth [Streets] and tell exactly where guys were from based on their ties,” recalls menswear

writer G. Bruce Boyer. Things are certainly different now. Colban, for one, doesn’t “agree with identifying ties by nationality”, while Hill qualifies Drake’s aesthetic as follows: “It’s English, but not necessarily English as it’s always perceived to be. It’s a little softer, a little subtler.” The market does reveal regional differences, though: Drake’s sells more woven than printed ties in Japan and the US, but more prints in Italy and an equal split between the two in the UK. What’s more, they sometimes add an extra layer of lining for certain Italian buyers who want a proud-standing tie to go with a higher collar band.

Ties can be conspicuous by virtue of their absence — not wearing one can be a statement. Since Lord Byron went open-necked in the early 19th century, going sans-cravat has been the sign of healthy rebellion. In 1998, Prince Claus of the Netherlands melodramatically cast off his tie, calling it “a snake around [his] neck” and urging people to “venture into open-collar paradise”. Virgin Group boss Richard Branson has occasionally been vocal about his disdain for ties, being one of many CEOs of a particular generation for whom the symbol of success became not having to wear a tie. Hill once asked a Facebook employee how many people in the office wore a tie. “A tie? Some of them don’t even wear shirts,” the latter replied. José Mujica, meanwhile, the consummately rumpled President of Uruguay, has criticised ties as symbols of European oppression.

In the Islamic Republic of Iran, selling neckties is illegal because the mullahs have declared them a symbol of Western decadence. Actually, wearing one isn’t forbidden, but it can send a message of where one’s political sympathies lie; in this case, the necktie is a symbol of defiance. In my first week of college, some fellow students were discussing the necktie as a symbol of conformity — until I pointed out that their logic made me the only conformist in the room. “Today,” says Colban, “people wear neckties not as a necessity, but as a pleasure.”

In short, it would seem that men, being no longer forced to wear ties, are learning to appreciate them as an object of beauty rather than a silk millstone around their necks. ■