



## ALAN FLUSSER CUSTOM

*Fade to black at the sleeker, chicer and more modern Alan Flusser Custom Shop.*

by **christian chensvold** photography **f.e. castleberry**

**A**s a man ages, he may become more conservative or liberal, more adventuresome or more prudent, more ambitious or more wont to stop and smell the roses. The point is that the older-and-wiser man is often quite different from how he began, full of the self-imposed ideals of youth, since where a journey leads depends largely on where it begins.

Over the past 25 years, Alan Flusser's journey in the custom clothing business can be neatly summarised by his changing taste in footwear. Flusser used to wear brown suede shoes almost exclusively, whereas today he's most likely to wear Belgian Shoes that are as black as a moonless midnight.

This change in Flusser's footwear mirrors other changes in his universe: that of his shop, his wares, and of society as a whole. He recently renovated his Midtown Manhattan shop: The result is sleeker, simpler, *plus chic* — with chrome-armed chairs and black furnishings. The ascendant house suit model is sleeker and chicer as well, with higher armholes and gorge, trimmer sleeve and body, a three to three-and-a-quarter-inch lapel, and plain-front trousers. "It's more modern, for lack of a better term," says Flusser, "though it remains something that I can tell someone they're still going to wear in 20 years."

The revamped shop and silhouette were necessary to attract a new generation of successful men to the rarified world of bespoke clothing. The man 45 and under who's reached the point where he can afford Flusser's \$5,000 custom suits has also grown up feeling it's perfectly appropriate — 'cool' would probably be more apt — to wear that bespoke suit jacket with a pair of jeans when the occasion allows.

Acknowledging this contemporary, high-low, dressed-up/dressed-down approach to clothing may seem surprising to those who've read Flusser's books, such as the lavishly illustrated *Dressing the Man*. For years, he championed an approach to masculine elegance rooted in the Savile-Row/1930s-Apparel-Arts/Fred-Astaire/Duke-of-Windsor mode. It's a timeless look — Flusser is fond of the term 'permanent fashion' — that 50 years later perfectly captured the spirit of '80s high finance in the guise of Gordon Gekko from Oliver Stone's movie *Wall Street*, for whom Flusser made the power-oozing wardrobe.

But there is more than just one timeless look, and more than one path to elegance. Flusser says his personal style "has changed a lot, actually", and nowhere is that better symbolised than in his newfound taste for black, the verboten hue for so many dressers



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Author of the canonical classic menswear how-to guide, *Dressing the Man*, New York tailor Alan Flusser (seen opposite) has recently completed an upgrade of his 48th Street shop, designed to ensure the business retains a contemporary edge in keeping with the house's updated, more modern silhouette (which nonetheless, continues to boast the perennial 'permanent fashion' appeal that ensures a Flusser suit will look great for decades).

aspiring to gentlemanly status. "If you're in the fashion world," he says, "and I have one foot in it, at some point you have to come to terms with black. Black can be very chic, and guys who are into tradition or 'sartorial' style are generally not into chic."

A typical Flusser outfit today consists of a patterned grey suit, striped shirt, solid black necktie, and black bit loafers or Belgian Shoes. He ties four-in-hands instead of Windsor knots, wears plain-front instead of pleated trousers, and sports barrel cuffs instead of French. "Lately, the idea of wearing anything but a solid tie is almost too much to consider," he says, "and six years ago, I don't even think I owned a belt. Today, I own 20 and only wear braces with a dinner jacket."

Change — the kind that comes from within, at least — is a good thing. "Consistency," quipped Oscar Wilde, "is the last refuge of the unimaginative." ❧

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