

MERCHANT TAYLORS' COMPANY

THE GOLDEN SHEARS TROPHY

In the mid 1970's, during Sir Peter Studd's Mastership, the Company decided to rekindle the connection with its original craft trade through the Federation of Merchant Tailors.

Liverymen and Past Federation Presidents, Angus Cundey and Robert Bright (who together with Michael Skinner in the late 1980s were the first Master Tailors for several hundred years to become Free of the Company), played prominent parts in launching a training related competition, for which the Company presented the Golden Shears trophy in 1984. The trophy comprises a pair of traditional cutting shears mounted on mahogany - the shears as used by cutters and tailors and the mahogany representing the boards on which they worked.

The Golden Shears were originally awarded to the tailor whose clothes were judged for fit, style and the suitability to the wearer; in addition to the traditional skills of cutting and tailoring. After many successful competitions, the Merchant Taylors' Company



decided to support craft training by awarding the Golden Shears to the business with the best training record. Marks were awarded according to the trainees' City & Guilds examination results and the Company with the highest overall score was declared the winner.

In 1988, always conscious of its traditional support for education, the Company decided that the Golden Shears should in future be focused on stu-

dents who were on dedicated tailoring courses at the LONDON COLLEGE OF FASHION (LCF) and other colleges up and down the country, as well as trainees in industry. The Golden Shears are now awarded to the student or trainee with the highest marks after being judged on design, cutting, handcraft tailoring and style. The final judging takes place at a catwalk show at Merchant Taylors' Hall sponsored by the Company. In addition to the Golden Shears, the Silver and Bronze Shears, given by Dedge and Skinner and Henry Poole & Co. respectively, are awarded to the second and third placed contestants.

The 2003 Golden Shears Competition was jointly sponsored by the Merchant Taylors' Company, City and Guilds and Skillfast-UK, in addition to support from the London College of Fashion. The final catwalk show was held on 20 October when the 22 finalists showed their work to a distinguished audience from the City, the fashion world and press.





The winner of the Golden Shears and 1,250 Pounds was Verena Unger from Savile Row tailors Maurice Sedwell. Her winning entry was a man's double breasted dinner jacket and trousers. The Silver Shears and 750 Pounds were won by Anthony Martin from Gieves and Hawkes with a blue and grey mohair tonik man's suit. The Bronze Shears and 500 Pounds went to Buffy Cottrell, also from Gieves and Hawkes, for a man's electric blue worsted suit with pleated matching beret.

The Company also sponsors five Practitioners in Residence. 2003 Practitioners at the London College of Fashion were

Karl Pinfold & Carla Alder, Andreas Edbauer, Christopher Brogden and Ryan Hackett. Practitioners at Central Saint Martins were Teerabul Soingvitch and Anna Nicole Ziesche. All five Practitioners made presentations of their work during the final judging of the Golden Shears contest.

The next Golden Shears contest will be held in 2005, with the catwalk show on 14 March.

For many years, the Company has provided annual bursaries to deserving students attending the London College of Fashion and makes annual contributions to the two trade charities, the Master Tailors' Benevolent Association (MTBA) and the Tailors' Benevolent Institute (TBI)

The annual Festival Dinner of the MTBA has been held in the Hall each February since 1994. A magnificent marble bust of Joseph Stultz, tailor to Beau Brummel and founder of the TBI, now stands proudly in the Garden, a generous gift of the TBI.

The Company now has one member of the trade on the Court, three tailors on the Livery and three Freeman. To strengthen further its trade roots, the Company has embarked on a programme of inviting members of the tailoring trade to become Free by Redemption.



Young talent from Savile Row scooped the big prizes at the annual Golden Shears tailoring competition, organised by the Merchant Taylors' Company and judged by leading bespoke tailors. The top prize of £1,250 went to Verena Unger (centre), an apprentice tailor at Maurice Sedwell on the Row, for her dinner suit. The Silver Shears went to Tony Martin, an under-cutter at Gieves & Hawkes, for his piped blue-grey suit. The Bronze Shears went to Gieves & Hawkes trainee tailor Buffy Cottrell, for her electric blue worsted suit. The competition was sponsored by City & Guilds and Skillfast-UK and supported by the London College of Fashion.

FROM GUETERSLOH TO SAVILE ROW

GERMAN APPRENTICE WINS TOP TAILORING AWARD

Verena Unger, an apprentice at Savile Row tailors, Maurice Sedwell, won the prestigious Golden Shears tailoring award at the annual competition for talented fashion students and trainees in the industry. The catwalk show was held at the Merchant Taylors' Hall in the City of London on 20 October and she received a cheque for 1,250 Pounds and the coveted Golden Shears trophy.

Verena's winning entry was an elegant man's double breasted dinner suit made of Holland & Sherry black super hundred worsted barthea doeskin wool. The lapels and waistcoat were in eye-catching basket weave patterned silk and the jacket and waistcoat was lined with vibrant fushier pink. To receive her award Verena stunned the capacity audience with her own creation, a full length dress that she had designed and made in the same silk which coordinated perfectly with lapels and the waistcoat.

Before the deciding professional catwalk show on 20 October Verena's work had been judged by five of London's top Savile Row bespoke tailors. The focus at this stage, when 22 finalists were selected, was on technical skill - design, cutting and handcraft tailoring. At the catwalk show finalists were judged for style by five experts from industry. The Golden Shears were awarded to Verena for having gained the highest total of marks in both stages of the competition.

Verena (23) presently resides in Walthamstow, London. Prior to coming to London Verena worked for four years

as an apprentice at bespoke tailors, KleeGraefe & Strothmann in her home town of Guetersloh, Germany. There she learned the intricate skills of sewing.

Verena has always been passionate about sewing and with a hunger to become the best, she travelled to London to further her career. Impressed by the international reputation of Savile Row she came to London three years ago to join the renowned Savile Row tailors Maurice Sedwell Ltd. as an apprentice learning to make jackets, waistcoats, trousers and skirts.

"When I first met Verena I instantly agreed to train her", says Professor Andrew Ramroop, the master tailor who personally trained her for the competition. "I cannot say exactly why I agreed but there was something about Verena that immediately made me feel that she would be a charismatic person to have at Maurice Sedwell Ltd." "Her dedication to her craft is second to none, all credit to Verena for winning what is the highest award for trainee tailors."

After the results were announced Verena said her long-term ambition is "to become a very good master tailor."

One of the judges at the technical skill stage of the competition said, this was the best example of craft skills he has ever seen.

None of the judges knew who the entrants were; all they had for each entry garment was a number, comments Chairman of the Judges, Robert Bright. Mr. Bright added, "The Golden

Shears competition highlights the talent and skill of some of the most promising students and apprentices with this prestigious prize and financial reward. Savile Row is known throughout the world for its fine tailoring. If this excellence is to continue we must encourage our talented young tailors, which is why The Merchant Taylors' Company began renewing its connections with the trade about 30 years ago."

This year the Golden Shears competition was jointly sponsored by the Merchant Taylors' Company, City and Guilds, and Skillfast-UK, in addition to support from the London College of Fashion.

The Merchant Taylors' Company is one of the Great Twelve City Livery Companies, founded in 1327 as a religious and social fraternity for tailors and linen armourers (makers of padded tunics worn under suits of armour). Today it devotes its energies to educational and charitable activities, as well as being a social organisation. The Company gives tailoring bursaries worth 5,000 Pounds a year and also supports, at an annual cost of 30,000 Pounds, five Practitioners in Residence - promising young fashion designers attached to the London College of Fashion and Central St Martins College of Art and Design. The Practitioners showed their work on 20 October.