



## CLASSICAL SUIT STYLE OF MIKHAIL VORONIN: EUROPEAN TRADITIONS IN UKRAINE

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**Abstract.** Classical suit occupies the leading place in every man's wardrobe and represents the characteristics of international and democratic fashion. The classical suit has the specific differences in construction in every country, facture and colour preferences, and also in wearing manner. The formation of classical men's style in Ukraine was influenced by the famous modeler Mihail Voronin. His life line started from the simple cutter at atelier to the president of concern named «Voronin», he suggested the suit models, which were suitable for any figure, and suit well for people of different posture, stoutness, height. Looking for suit constructions, which would be most appropriate for the dynamic way of life of Ukrainian people, climatic specific of the region, cultural specific, the master leaned on English and Italian suits. The article highlights the main stages of Mihail Voronin suit style formation, substantiated the correlation of style formation with tailor methods and author technologies of the master. Accept achievements in mass production, the designer is also famous for his masterly individual orders thanks to certified vest- maquette method, which allows to make a suit without fitting. The article also includes the separate innovative strategies for trade brand promotion in Ukrainian and international market.

**Keywords:** classical suite, textile, fashion, Mikhail Voronin, style, history of fashion, Ukrainian fashion.

### Introduction

Pre-eminent among the most famous fashion designers in the world Mikhail Voronin (1938-2012) is a successful Ukrainian designer, academician and the president of a unique concern «Voronin», innovator and author of 35 inventions, constant winner of the prestigious international contests. Respectability and restrained elegance, convenience and comfort are the main peculiarities of Voronin's suits that are designed for successful and self-confident business people. More than 50% of Ukrainian men give preference to this fashion brand. Presidents, politicians, businessmen, sport and show business celebrities are the clients of Voronin, who used to say: "I'm trying to support the men's endeavor to classics, cause to great extent that's what corresponds to a true image of a person, plunged in different affairs".

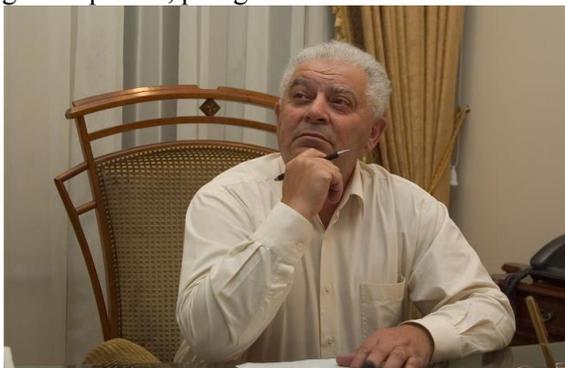


Fig. 1 Mikhail Voronin, 2011 year

After his death in 2012 the whole country mourned the loss of a truly outstanding personality in a domain of Ukrainian fashion. Larysa Voronina, the daughter of the tailor continues her father's business and has pursued the most important task of her life, keeping up the traditions of real classics.

During all his life, starting from young and unknown cutter to distinguished and publicly recognized designer Mikhail Voronin has accomplished an extremely important mission of spreading classical traditions

formed in such European countries as England and Italy into Ukrainian culture and everyday life. It is no exaggeration to say that through his actions not only as a designer but also as an educator and philosopher fashion, Ukrainian men – as politicians and diplomats, heads of major international companies and entrepreneurs as middle managers - gradually mastered the basics of social etiquette in wearing a suit. An intensive life of a businessman demands unmistakable comprehension of various dress codes, such as “Formal dress”, “White tie”, “Black tie” and “Semi formal”. Voronin’s clients have been friends with him since their first meeting. Apart from the perfectly-fitted suits they have also acquired certain knowledge of a secular fashion where everything was counted for much starting from white dinner coat to the rules of business cards exchanging.

The purpose of this article is to present the basic stages of the Mikhail Voronin’s suit style establishment, to point out the interconnection of stylistic forming together with sewing methods and author’s technologies of the tailor.

### **Method**

The study of Classical Suit Style of Mikhail Voronin was based on comparative-typological, comparative-historical, historical-cultural, analytical and sampling methods: from the creative legacy of designer those models, that are based on classical forms, were selected and analyzed. By compositional and stylistic analysis, each model in terms of shape, silhouette, nature structural and decorative lines, masters innovative approaches are described.

The author are based on the personal impressions while communicating and working with designer upon the projects in 2005-2010, the reference to the published works about his creativity and materials of fashion shows of Ukrainian Fashion Week.

### **Results**

The invention of vest-maquette method.

The whole designer’s way is clothes construction improvement. All his discoveries could be interpreted by an enormous striving for speeding up and improving the sewing process. In 1986, hired a team of tailors and cutters, Voronin founded his own tailoring shop. Because of a growing flow of clients he decided to find a new method, available to diminish the quantity of fittings from three to one. At those times Pankrativ, the cutter of Leningrad, used this method, therefore Voronin took chances to learn the principals of Pankrativ’s scheme of work, though it took him half a year to organize the work of one fitting-room.

From now and then the clients have no need to stand in a long queue but nevertheless the workshop could not meet the demands of all comers at once. Voronin was always wandering whether it’s possible to sew a perfectly fitted suit only by taking measures without a fitting. Two main circumstances helped him to find the best solution.

First of all he read a newspaper article about the scientists who discovered the finger of the Neanderthal man and regenerated his look by its dimensions. He suggested certain general patterns to be typical for any kind of figure and could be applied and put into the tailor’s practice. For two years Voronin had been investigating anatomy, physiology, psychology, and communicating with lots of experts. Finally he came to the conclusion that with the help of a figure’s module it would be possible to make a device that would keep a required form.

The second circumstance influenced on the search of the decision how this device should move on a person. He had an idea when he discovered the secret of cutting a sail. Valentyn Mankin, a friend of Mikhail Voronin, world three times champion in sailing sport in the Soviet times was telling lots of stories to Voronin about sailing sport and preparation to the competitions and the way the sails are sewed.

Being a designer Voronin was keen on cutting and sewing technologies of designing the sails, he was interested in details of this craft. During the Olympic Games in 1968 when V. Mankin needed to make new sails, Voronin agreed to help him. In such a way he “peeked” how to use Velcro and applied his knowledge to his designer’s practice (Voronin, 1968). Due to such Velcro he had managed to decide the movement of so-called reserved parts and in such a way he didn’t duplicate a person but inserted in a typical figure or in some kind of workpiece creating a perfect image.

In such way he created a particular pattern of a waistcoat – some kind of a workpiece for any figure. In 1970 Voronin received a patent for unique method of tailoring menswear without fittings, called the vest-maquette.

This conditional item was cut according to a constructional documentation and made of the cloth with taking into consideration a work piece designed in a construction. Additional horizontal lines (waist and hips) and vertical lines (detached sides and side foreparts) are marked on a model by a seam of a contrast colour. Those lines helped the cutter to find the correct position of a waistcoat details on a client's figure. With the help of a chalk the details of future goods are done by ready-made patterns with a fitting of a ready model according to an individual size of a client. The goods are designed without fitting but with taking into consideration individual features of a figure. The waistcoat is worn on the person and moved in such a way so the key lines were vertical and parallel to the line of floor. Then the deviations of this or that figure of the client can be replaced according to the typical pattern. After the patterns are ready, you need to cut and sew them, so that the fitting would be ideal. Apart from speeding up the process of sewing he also facilitated the technology of sewing a suit. Due to its usage it is became easier to serve more clients. People didn't have to come for a fitting, one fitting was enough and consequently so that the orders could be done by the telephone from any part of the country.



**Fig. 2** Voronin's waistcoat for a without fittings method, 1968



**Fig. 3** Young but famous M. Voronin teaches co-workers to sew without fitting, 1975

*Learning the European experience and traditions in suit.*

The most important for Mikhail Voronin was to dress Ukrainians in contemporary and high-quality fashionable clothes of high European level so that every client of his brand had a worthy look in any country or society and could be proud he's from Ukraine. It was his first professional experience abroad when Voronin had a business trip to Poland in 1964. At that times, before going into another country the group was obligatory gathered and was taught how one should treat himself or hold the fork or the knife in a foreign society. He was warn that first he was recognized as a tailor he would be paid attention to his clothes, because they are sure the clothes aren't sewed well in Ukraine.

For this occasion Voronin sewed a new suit for himself. In Warsaw at the meeting with some students he was asked whether his suit was of foreign production. He didn't confess he made it himself but he said that it was from domestics producer. The students' answer was: "But we are told that there is a bad sew in your country". This conversation was an incitement to his further growth and desire to prove that a real classical suit can be designed and made in Ukraine.

Realizing a high level and standards of sewing a suit in European countries, Ukrainian designer always sought to master high technology. Mikhail Voronin often mentioned about his first trips abroad: "I went to an expensive restaurant; I paid five dollars for a glass of juice or a cocktail and observed people and their manners while they were dancing. I made drafts of the suits on the napkins, especially the details and the patterns I liked the most. I noticed the details of a local style, for example, checkered cloth as it matches to the motif and its direction. Then I came to my hotel room and made sketches of everything, creating a catalogue. It was a part of me, wherever I was, on the street or reception in one of the European countries I made an attentive study of people's clothes. The garments speak for its owner before one start to speak of himself." Everything Voronin saw, became a part of his taste and practical skills. European market helped him to understand the concept of fashion branch running.

In one of the interviews he was asked: “What particular elements, borrowed from those of other countries, do you add to Ukrainian clothes?” First of all, – Voronin said, – it is a strict English style, traditional business suit, diplomat’s menswear. Italian- is a suit for fitter businessmen, according to the physiological specifics of this nation. French would rather prefer a loose style. Though successful people are striving to change their style at a certain period of time anyway they should follow their country’s style. As for Ukrainian suit I should say with certainty that it should be something between Italian and English. Also it should give a sense of freedom, close to that of American. Owing to certain elements of a suit construction, this style becomes quite attainable (Remarks from Voronin).

*Style, constructions and Mihail Voronin technologies.*

In a course of discussion with A. Shtrai, who wrote a book about M.Voronin, Ukrainian designer confessed that he hadn’t realized at once that tailors and especially designers not only sew a suit, but create a real image of a modern person. Working on the design of suit he was thinking of a professional activity of a client as well as nationality and regional features of his country. “The most essential are regional differences that influence the diversities of forms and men’s figures. Creating a suit for a broad-shouldered and a fit citizen of the North requires quite different approaches and methods of work than designing a suit for stout from the South birth” (Shtrai, 2011, p. 123). Presenting his collections in the USA, Voronin realized impossibility of selling it in Canada because of the differences in taste of anglo-canadian and franco-canadian society.

He was flabbergasted when unexperienced designers bought Italian constructions and patterns to produce suits that eventually weren’t in great favour. It won’t come to their minds that in the North of Italy people wear tight clothes while Ukrainians prefer free style. Mikhail Voronin has perfectly mastered the secrets of aesthetics and those of English, Italian, French and American tailor and cutting academies, skillfully used its peculiarities and found a unique and suitable construction in creating a Ukrainian classical suit.

The production is concentrated on different groups of population and the main segments of the market therefore its output is set up for producing several lines of clothes. “De Luxe Men” collection is designed especially for a business and political elite of high and middle range. “Exclusive men” collection and a separate shop were created especially for customers with high level of an income. This collection has a limited edition because of the exclusiveness of an expensive cloth and handmade elements of fabric. Simultaneously from 2011 together with “Voronin” concern there are women collections “De Luxe Women” and “Exclusive Women” and collections for wide sections of the population as “Classic”, sportswear collection “Sport”, shirts, ties, knitted wear, lingerie, accessories, perfume. There is a particular price policy for each collection as its necessity is time-approved.



**Fig. 4.** The suit of «Voronin DeLuxe» collection with hand-made elements. The cloth SUPER 220’S



**Fig. 5.** «Alex» line suit «Voronin exclusive». Wool+adzes SUPER 100’S

«There is an English, French and Italian fashion, but I’m an admirer of classics that balances between English and Italian style» – Voronin said. The specificity of a classical suit is in its convenience, when you’re not tired and don’t feel like taking off your coat while working in an office. Besides, Voronin suits are ecologically save articles. A complex of measures is taken while its production, starting from water

purification system on a factory of material steaming to an ecological choice of the light “breathing” fabric. Voronin was challenged to supply various sections of population, school leavers and elderly population with high-quality clothes. Voronin also took individual orders for different people, including Ukrainian and other countries’ presidents. In everyday conversations with clients the designer always noticed the most important: features of the character, manners, intonation and the way of person’s behavior and speech.

Construction and materials and especially equipment and organization of enterprise were the object of the study in Europe. «When I became the holder of a controlling packet of the factory, first of all I visited home and foreign enterprises in order to improve the production and the work». Nowadays the factory is completely supplied with particular equipment of foreign companies’ production of Germany, France, Switzerland, Sweden and Japan such as “Pfaff”, “Durkopp”, “Test”, “Union special”, “Strobel”, “Juki”. It is also equipped with a set of cutting and preparative tools and presses of “Indurpress” and “Mayer”(Germany). Information processing and software are put into practice with the help of a local computer web “Netwear” (USA). Home materials and equipment are not used on an enterprise. “Today English and Italian clothes are considered to be the best. Apart from English and French, Indian, Chinese and Yugoslavian fabrics are used.” Applied materials are just from the leading producers : “Lenor de PekAarde”, “Jabu-Ley”(France), “Henzel”(Germany). As Mikhail Voronin states: “We have to travel around the world and bring the best” (Trade Business, 2004).



**Fig. 6.** Youth suit «Rokko» line «Voronin classic». Wool+adzes SUPER 100'S



**Fig. 7.** Suit «Biarrts» line «Voronin classic». Linen



**Fig. 8.** Suit «Voronin DeLuxe women» line. Wool Silk



**Fig. 9.** Suit «Voronin DeLuxe women» line.

During all his creative activity Voronin analyzed the creativity of different couturiers, especially those of England and Italy, who set an examples for him. He tried to understand the preferences of the sailor who prefers more Armani or Gucci and came to the conclusion that it depended on the type of consumer's figure as most of the designers creating their style are turned to a certain silhouette. Whether it is an athletic build or a round-shouldered. Brioni or Yves Saint Laurent, the choice is perfect just when it corresponds to a certain type and no made to the fashion please. That's why Voronin aimed to improve the construction in a way the suit correspond to any type of the figure and was suitable for people with different posture, stoutness and height. He spent the years of persistent and continuous work creating everything.

*The strategies of trade brand promotion.*

The separate word should be said according Mihailo Voronin's brand strategy promotion. Participating in traditional shows as "Ukrainian Fashion Week", and having his own in Ukraine and abroad he resorted to the extraordinary measures. On September 8th in 2012 a giant tuxedo was designed and presented at Kiev's central street Khreshchatyk. It was in 2002 in Paris at designer's forum when Voronin has heard a thought that a tuxedo can be sewed successfully from 48 to 58 sizes. Such a thought pushed him to think of advertising campaign. After some time, a giant tuxedo of 1000 size was ready. Using the colours of the Ukrainian state flag, blue and yellow, had been a symbol of a tuxedo as a garment of British origin but produced in Ukraine. To create this, the whole factory team was working for 64 hours. To make this idea come true the 174m. of Italian fabric was used, 126 m of linings, 146 m of diablerie, 30 m of collar, 30 thousand hrv was spent for its creation. The buttons are 35 sm. in diameter. The tuxedo was lifted for the buttons sewing with the help of the hoist.



**Fig. 10.** x1000 size tuxedo



**Fig. 11.** Giant tie-bow and mannequin are registered records

The presentation of a world-record holder was a vivid event in the history of fashion brand. A giant tuxedo was listed in the Guinness Book of Records as all the demands were kept.

Another vivid event for a "Voronin" concern was an invitation of an Italian opera singer Alessandro Safina to Kiev. There was a struggle among the best fashion brands for the right to dress a world-wide celebrity, but he chose a Ukrainian brand and now he is singing on the stage and using it in his everyday life, he is always dressed in Voronin's suits. On one of the press-conference Voronin told the journalists the mysterious circumstances of their meeting in Moscow. Safina refused to wear a suit he was suggested for the concert, so the managers immediately got connected with Voronin so to order the suit for a singer (Voronin, 2010). After a meeting with designer Safina said: "It seems we studied in the same class".

In March 2012 during the ceremony of awards "Lyudyna Roku" ( The Outstanding Man of a Year) the spectators were presented a show of "Voronin" concern performed by a popular singer Volodymyr Tkachenko. The fashion show of the evening collection "De Luxe" impressed the public with a luxurious performance, exclusiveness and impeccable elegance.

It is quite symbolic that the last Voronin's fashion show was accompanied by a world hit "Show Must Go On" performed by Volodymyr Tkachenko.

Today «Voronin» concern clothes are sold in 14 countries of the world. There are 63 Voronin shops in Ukraine, where any man can find clothes that suits his taste and fits him, taking on account his high, choosing from the suggested 450-th sizes his own, including his stoutness, his figure specific, height from 1,5 till 2,10 m. Constructions are developed including all body types, that provides the maximum comfort. The suits are made in 15 sizes, five heights and six stoutness in 450 constructions. There are more than 150 models versions. For one model only, more than 5,000 construction-patterns are worked out. Custom tailoring takes only 6 to 7 percent of all the production; the rest is mass produced. 500 units are produced daily. The Voronin factory can produce up to 250,000 items a year (500 items per day).



**Fig. 12.** Alessandro Safina and Mihail Voronin during the press-conference on famous tenor's occasion arrival in 2010 year



**Fig. 13.** Mihail Voronin shows his factory to Alessandro Safina



**Fig. 14.** Italian tenor Alessandro Safina dressed in suit from «Voronin»



**Fig. 15.** The show cast of the last life collection of the evening outfit from «Voronin» performed by «The Show Must Go On», 2012

Creating the fashion collections he tried to change the philosophy: his suit is available for fit and young as well as for men with non-standard figures of any size or age. Voronin sets a classical style and an excellent taste starting from the student's age. He established a student's movement "Student" that is hold in the of higher education establishments. Thus, a classical suit is worn by those who considered it to be too official.

Ukrainian designer is a multiple winner of international competitions of tailoring skills: "the best trend"(Italy, 1997), international golden star of quality "The Goden Arc of Europe"(Spain, 1998), "Lyudyna roku-1998" a nomination for "The trand of the year"(Ukraine), "golden medal" association of trade facilitation of France (France, 1999), platinum of peace prize "Prestige" for production of high quality(the USA, 2000), Certificat of Guinness Book of Records (Great Britain,2012), International certificate of quality ISO 9001, "Kyivska yakist" diploma (Ukraine, 2005) and many others. The secret of his success is not only in fashion design but in exclusiveness of high quality fabric, methods and technologies of sewing, organization of production and staff.

## Discussion

Excluding the high productions standarts and international market success, Mihail Voronin claimed : «I am always not satisfied with my products`s quality. Today`s work does not satisfy me tomorrow. I always strive and shall strive for the best, but the highest perfection level won`t be achieved by me for the rest.» The great hopes in Ukrainian fashion are connected with heiress of the favourite brand – Larisa Voronina: the hope for The European classical traditions continuation, connected with the contemporary Ukrainian way of life dynamic.



**Fig. 16.** Larisa Voronina demonstrates the father`s discovery – the vest for sewing clothes without fitting in The Mihail Voronin Museum opening in one of the factories. April, 2013.



**Fig.17** After show cast Spring / Summer 2013- first collection after Mihail Voronin death. The collection was named «Aquamarin»



**Fig. 18.** Branded shop «Voronin» in Kiev

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