

A MADE IN CANADA SUCCESS STORY: SMYTHE JACKETS

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In curating the Ryerson Fashion Research Collection, I wanted to be sure to seek out Canadian design success stories and the first label that came to mind was Smythe les Vestes. Designed by Canadians Christie Smythe and Andrea Lenczner, this brand of beautifully tailored jackets has been a made-in-Canada success story since it was first launched in 2004. In fact, I can vividly remember buying a Smythe jacket from their first collection when it was launched at Holt Renfrew. This bolero-like jacket with 3/4 sleeves in a shade of robin's egg blue continues to be one of my favourite jackets. Of course, I'm not the only Smythe fan. Her Royal Highness Catherine Middleton, Duchess of Cambridge, wore a Smythe jacket when she came to Canada for the first time in the summer of 2011, at the Olympics, and again recently in her first appearance after giving birth to Prince George. Also worn by celebrities such as Blake Lively, Jessica Biel, Kirsten Bell, and Rachel McAdams, this label was named one of ten iconic Canadian products by Flare Magazine for the Collectors Edition: Icons from Summer 2013.

Last fall, I asked designers Christie Smythe and Andrea Lenczner if they would be willing to donate one or two jackets to the collection. They readily said yes and let me select anything from the F/W 2012 Collection. I chose a black & white houndstooth single-button jacket with leather elbow patches - a classic style that seems to survive the test of time. I also chose women's version of a men's tailcoat, which I keep on a rack to demonstrate the influence of menswear on womenswear, as well as the cyclical nature of fashion - something that journalist Nathalie Atkinson mentioned in her recent article about the Ryerson Fashion Research Collection called "Lanvin in the Library".



Tweed Smythe jacket, ca. 2010s. Ryerson FRC2012.02.001.



Tweed Smythe jacket, ca. 2010s. Label detail. Ryerson FRC2012.02.001.



Black Smythe tailcoat, ca. 2012. Ryerson FRC2012.02.002.



Black Smythe tailcoat, ca. 2012. Lapel detail. Ryerson FRC2012.02.002.