

Discovering the inspiration behind Juozas Statkevičius haute couture Spring/Summer 2013 – a painting from National Gallery London, *The Tailor* by Giovanni Battista Moroni – has brought a smile. *Il Tagliapanni*, painted in 1565-1570 by one of the most accomplished Italian Renaissance masters, depicts a young man in a Spanish doublet with slits, a small white collar and breeches. In his hands that rest on the table top – a pair of scissors and a scrap of black fabric.

I have smiled since I had found the choice of inspiration witty – we live in a small country where the greatest masters of fashion, the couturiers, both native and foreign, sometimes are still called “mere tailors”. I found it also ironic – since *Il Tagliapanni* is a very mysterious painting and, paradoxically, it depicts... not a tailor at all.

It has acquired a title of *The Tailor* almost a century later, probably solely because of the scissors and the black fabric depicted. But to think of it – what tailor, what artisan in the 16th century could have afforded the luxury of commissioning a portrait from Moroni, one of the most acclaimed masters of his time and painter to the kings? Look at the noble, aristocratic features in the portrait; notice the redness of his nostrils and eyes. Yes, he has recently cried and he cuts not a client's garment on the table, but none the other than the mourning dress for himself...

We often complain of our difficult, austere times – and still, our century is nothing in comparison with the Renaissance times – brutal wars are a faraway reality, we have conquered the great plagues, and the poverty of our times could probably seem the abundance to the ancients. Theirs were the times when the politics were conducted with the help of a poison and a dagger, and leaving to the streets in the morning no one could be sure of return in the

evening, a birth was more than often accompanied by a mother's death, but still those times left to us something extraordinary: the art of incomparable beauty that still enchants us even today, centuries later.

The Renaissance people have not only mourned but celebrated as well, not just repented but also gave in to temptations and sensuality and this dualism has affected the fashion as well, now reflected in Statkevičius' collection. Armour-stiff garments – but with the slits that reveal the softest fabric or even naked skin, criss-crossed belts as if to hold the dagger or to remind of the bondage of passion, soft leather over-the-knee boots, breeches, unexpectedly – the small white collar, the eroticism and the austerity, a Venetian feast of intense colours – you shall all notice in the collection which does not remind in the least of a theatre dressing room. It is very contemporary and channelling the trends of today, however it is born from the distant past. It happens, when art inspires the present, and „a tailor“ is so much more than a mere tailor – just like in a Giovanni Batista Moroni painting.

This year Juozas Statkevičius also celebrates the 5th anniversary of his internationally acclaimed eponymous perfume. A dark and complicated incense, revolutionary and unexpected five years ago, it remains unmistakably recognisable today – even among the recent ventures of the perfume world into dark and sophisticated scents. Juozas Statkevičius Eau de Parfum was born out of personal and local inspirations – it captures the incense of Catholic and Orthodox Vilnius churches, opulence and austerity, darkness and light. It has a true character that will not date – just as his couture.

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