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Institchu's James Wakefield and Robin McGowan are fine and dandy

The thin lapel is being replaced by a wide, peaked lapel. Belts are ditched for side tabs. Even the most conservative of dressers are experimenting with pocket squares and funky socks.



Robin McGowan (left) and James Wakefield, photographed in their Institchu office. Photo Louie Douvis Louie Douvis



by Jessica Sier

James Wakefield and Robin McGowan run Institchu, an online, bespoke menswear store, and they've become living, breathing examples of the new trends in menswear. The thin lapel is being replaced by a wide, peaked lapel. Belts are ditched for side tabs. Even the most conservative of dressers are experimenting with pocket squares and funky socks.

HAS RUNNING A FASHION BUSINESS CHANGED YOUR OWN STYLE?

Robin: Oh yes. We're never not wearing [Institchu](#) these days. One of the great things about running a company like ours is having an endless wardrobe and I've definitely found myself wearing more and more dandy looks. Which I have no problem with. I'm very seasonal. For summer I like linen, unstructured blazers, less canvas, patch pockets and little detailing and accessories.

James: I'm motivated by a lot of Italian styles and like one big, bold item with everything else toned down. I'll wear red chinos or a bold check and then wear solid

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colours for everything else. And it's always Institchu, which is great for when people like what I'm wearing. But sometimes on the weekend I'll head out with mates and wish I'd worn a T-shirt instead of an Institchu shirt or blazer.

Robin: Yeah, all of a sudden you'll find yourself at the movies wearing a double-breasted suit.

MENSWEAR HAS A REPUTATION OF BEING RATHER LIMITED, HOW ARE MEN BRANCHING OUT?

Robin: While Australian men's fashion is progressing, I still feel a lot of guys are held back by where they work and stick to that conservative uniform.

James: But they're getting better, especially when they can see what kind of options they have. In the last 18-months, pocket squares are huge. In all kinds of colours. Mind you, some of them push it down when they see the boss coming.

Robin: Party socks are great, guys have always been able to get away with a funky sock. Or a great tie. Also, you can get your initials monogrammed anywhere on your shirt. You can get your button holes stitched. We've seen the lapel go from very thin to quite wide. Cuffs on the pants are coming back in a big way. There's really a lot of choice and it's good to see men embracing that.

James: Side tabs! If you own a pair of pants that fit you perfectly around the waist, there's really no need to wear a belt, especially if you sit down all day. Side tabs are adjustable and you can get them in gold, silver. It's a nice touch that you can't get off the rack.

WHAT DO YOU WEAR IN THE WAY OF ACCESSORIES?

Robin: I'm a big fan of brooches. I've got a few gold, animal ones I'll wear on my jacket. I've also got a few little bangles I like to wear. I like smaller things.

James: I wear a ring but I'm not too into accessories myself. But a lot of guys come in asking about suspenders, particularly for weddings.

WHAT DESIGNERS DO YOU FOLLOW?

Robin: My favourite brand is [Brunello Cucinelli](#), an Italian designer who began by just selling cashmere jumpers. He's one of the most stylish men on the planet.

James: It's also really easy to follow great, stylish guys on Instagram now. And we work closely with these influencer types and get them to create a suit or shirt for our site.

Robin: We also follow all the street style blogs. Offshore we look at [Tommy Ton's](#) streetwear. And I follow anything Nick Wooster does. Then locally, we're good friends with the guys from [The Versatile Gent](#).

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