

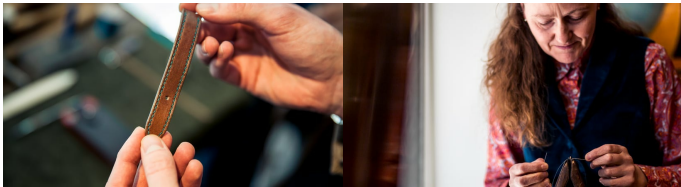
# CLASSIC DRIVER

## [Mia Sabel's bespoke watchstraps prove traditional saddlery is still alive](#)

### Lead

As part of London Craft Week, Mia Sabel from the Sabel Saddlery upped a small part of her East End workshop and temporarily relocated to Bentleys' antiques shop in the heart of Chelsea, where she gave us a first-hand demonstration of how her bespoke watch straps are designed and crafted...

### The most traditional sense



We're here at Bentleys in Chelsea to see Mia Sabel at work. A qualified saddler in the most traditional sense, her eponymous business the [Sabel Saddlery](#) offers completely bespoke leatherwork, from watch straps or belts to furniture restoration services - she's worked on several of Bentleys' vintage steamer trunks, hence the London Craft Week collaboration. "This is traditional hand-stitching, using two needles and one linen thread," explains Mia. "I handcraft made-to-measure watchstraps to fit the piece exactly, and I make them without any holes, so then when the customer comes for a fitting I can put in a single hole for them. It's just like buying a tailored suit." Using period correct tooling where possible and the finest quality English vegetable-tanned bridle leathers available, Sabel's work is meticulous, to say the least.

### Join the queue...



So, how does one join the 150-strong waiting list for one of Sabel's straps and what does the process entail? "You'd come to see me, you'd bring your watch and you'd choose the style, design, leathers, thread colours, lining colours, clasps, etc.," she comments. "The entire process is bespoke down to the last detail." Interestingly, saddlery wasn't always on Sabel's radar; she was formerly a graphic designer. "I was doing CD-ROMs and web design when it all started, but I needed to do something with my hands, something tangible," she explains. "I went to a two-year course, and then worked for a 'master' for two more years. Nine years later, I'm here as part of London Craft Week to show that the art of saddlery is still very much alive..."

### For the man who has everything



"I think Mia's work ties in really nicely with everything else in the shop," comments Tim Bent, the founder of [Bentleys in Chelsea](#). "Just like her work, everything in here was originally bespoke - take these driving goggles, for example." He points to a small chest teeming with vintage goggles, apparently a small portion of a wider 100-pair collection, each of which is different to one another. The business, which predominantly deals with vintage Louis Vuitton luggage, caters to the man who has everything, and the newly opened Chelsea store is a treasure trove of fascinating collectables, obtained from collectors around the world. "It's everything you want, but don't necessarily need," says Tim, neatly summarising the Bentleys philosophy.

*Photos: Tim Brown for Classic Driver © 2016*

#### **Gallery**

















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