

There was a time, not so very long ago, when almost everything a fashionable woman put on was custom-made. France's small but much-loved world of haute couture—and Italy's long tradition of artisanal craftsmanship—still provide a vestige of that era, but most cultures have had thriving industries devoted to various local specialties: Japanese kimono artists, Indian sari manufacturers, Belgian lace makers, English cobblers. In upper New York state, the town of **Gloversville** was once home to hundreds of glove manufacturers; by the early 20th century, it was producing, by one estimate, one out of every three gloves in the world. Today, Gloversville has just **one custom glove maker**—but his work is as fine as (and in some ways, more extraordinary than) that of his French or Italian peers.

Daniel Storto comes from a family of dressmakers, tailors and shoemakers, but he found his way to Gloversville by a circuitous path. He hails from **Toronto, Ontario**, and by his teens he was already making glamorous “evening swimwear” (accessorised with his own gloves, and meant for lounging around a pool, not for going in the water). He often travelled by bus to New York City, where he went from magazine to magazine hoping to catch the eye of influential fashion editors. One regular stop was the office of **Anna Wintour** (then at *New York*); he also met *Women's Wear Daily's* **Bobbi Queen**, who gave him significant coverage in the trade paper. However, as his swimwear business started to grow, the far-sighted young man realised he'd be better off building his label in sunny Southern California. By the early '80s he was in Los Angeles and running with a well-connected crowd that included Rudi Gernreich (designer of the first topless bathing suit), American couturier James Galanos (a Nancy Reagan favourite) and the irrepressible Bob Mackie (the costume wizard behind so many sight gags on *The Carol Burnett Show*).



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Glove Affair

A custom glove maker travels the world only to settle in a tiny community called Gloversville.

By Mark Grischke | Photography by Stephen Piersanti

Over the next decade and a half (which he fondly calls “The Hollywood Years”), **Storto honed the craft of glove making to something approaching conceptual art**, making contributions to movies like *Dick Tracy*, *Batman* and *Death Becomes Her*. He also made custom items for celebrities, including long black gloves that were part of **Cher's** ensemble the night she won an Academy Award for her role in *Moonstruck*. Suddenly, he was fashion's go-to glove maker, and designers from around the world came calling. **Dries Van Noten** and **Alexander McQueen** were particular fans: For several years Storto travelled between Antwerp, Paris and Los Angeles. He also established a long-term working relationship with the late **Geoffrey Beene**, who sent him fabric swatches for each collection and placed no limits on his creativity.

Ultimately, though, all of Storto's roads led to Gloversville, which he stumbled upon in the late '90s. Although the town was a shadow of its former self, Storto sensed potential and decided to settle there. He opened a storefront atelier; scoured sales and local auctions to build up his collection of original 19th-century and early 20th-century tools; and now runs a small global business from America's once-mighty glove making capital. Shoppers can stop in at the world's only glove shop with a glove maker at work on the premises and buy a hand-sewn pair. Or for a custom pair, clients meet with him to have some 15 different measurements taken of their hands, wrists and arms. Others may correspond with him by e-mail or telephone and send him tracings of their hands. Either way, it's a lengthy process, not least because Storto still makes everything himself. We suggest contacting him immediately, as there's already a waiting list. www.danielstorto.com **45**

Mark Grischke has for 20 years covered the world of luxury goods as an editor and writer.