

## Imtaz – Royal Society of the Arts Fellow’s Profile

"I tailor for clients who want beautiful suits that they can trust, and the craft, quality and work that goes into a bespoke suit or couture commission. I trained as a tailor and worked in Yorkshire for 4 years running a tailoring shop. I studied fashion in London and worked for a couple of companies, then decided to set up on my own, because of the lack of opportunities for women in such a male dominated business. All the tailoring companies I tried to get work experience in were male and didn't seem to wish to open their doors to a woman. I knew I would have to open my own studio!"

"I set up in Battersea, created a small collection and eventually got it accepted by a retailer in the King’s Road. I broke into the industry by making suits for celebrities instead of following the traditional route of building up a client base. Once I got the publicity, the clients followed. I decided to do a second degree in Marketing/Business at Westminster, because even once you have made an impact you have to maintain a profile. And as an Asian woman I did need to work harder to be taken seriously as a bespoke tailor."

"I feel that this experience has taught me about the need for essential skills, and I work with [Skillfast](#), a Sector Skills Council for fashion, acting on various boards and speaking up for the industry and for education in the necessary skills. I teach tailoring in my studio, have taught at various Universities and attend meetings to raise awareness on these issues."

On joining the Fellowship: "I feel that this can help me create more opportunities for Black Minority Ethnic (BME) women in fashion and tailoring. I attend events to help create a balanced view in fashion; I try to change the perception of what people are capable of, the stereotypes of who should do what. The fashion press seem to ignore the Black Minority Ethnic sector, and this needs to be addressed if designers are to become ‘names’ based on the merit of their work, and not on elitism."

On contributing to Fellowship and society: "I am a 'different' voice. I believe in opening doors for people who don't have equal opportunities. With the help of the RSA I can challenge the mainstream to be open-minded and give people like myself a chance to prove themselves instead of being limited by other people's expectations. The Fellowship is powered by people who can open doors and who are willing to listen, so I am hopeful that change is around the corner. I encourage BME's to take part and not get disheartened."

On changing something in society given the chance: "I would create a meritocracy so that everyone would feel motivated to succeed. I would also improve state education so that every one is on a level playing field. I studied in Bradford and felt I had to fight to succeed in my education."

On what inspires her: "When I heard I had received an MBE, it proved to me that if you take a chance you will eventually get noticed. It re-inspired me to continue the work I have been doing over the past couple of decades. I am also inspired by the rise of networks such as the RSA which open discussions on equal opportunities, and how people can break through limits and barriers. When I set out to be a bespoke tailor in the early eighties I didn't expect that I would have to change my personality to succeed. Talent alone is no guarantee; you need to connect and spread the word and get people to understand and buy into your vision. I teach tailoring in my studio and try to attend meetings to help raise awareness on issue such as lack of skills now in the industry."

On connecting with other Fellows: "I would like to connect to anyone who works in fashion who could speak out on the issues of being more inclusive." If you would like to get in contact with Imtaz please contact her [by email](#)