

## The Fashion of North Andover Designer Darby Scott

By Admin

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Former New York fashion designer Darby Scott found her creative niche years ago, but it wasn't until the opening of her studio in North Andover's East Mill last year that she found her ideal creative space. Every detail in the pristine, multifunctional studio comes from experiences collected over the course of a vibrant fashion career that began in Harvard, Mass., where she once sewed dresses for friends in exchange for their typing skills.

"They'd be in bed long before me, but I'd happily be stitching away," Scott says. She learned how to sew from her mother, and voraciously consumed fashion and pattern magazines such as *Vogue* and *Vogue Patterns*.

After graduating from Smith College in Northampton in 1984, Scott decided to cast aside notions of a law career and pursue her passion for design. She moved to New York, found work in the merchandising division of Perry Ellis, and was mentored in every aspect of the business.

In 1994, Scott began designing cocktail dresses and got her first break at a Saks Fifth Avenue open call. Her handbags, jewelry and clothing have been sold at designer department stores such as Neiman Marcus and Bergdorf Goodman, and are now available at [DarbyScott.com](http://DarbyScott.com), where Scott has launched a high fashion, high-tech boutique. The Darby Scott store features exclusive pieces made

from luxury fabrics and materials designed to endure across seasons, occasions and trends with an easy elegance that's recognizably an extension of the designer herself.

**Tell me about your North Andover studio. What's it been like working in a space with such a rich textile history?**

I love being in a mill that has a historical connection to the New England textile industry. I fell in love with the stately old mill buildings years ago. Also, after years of traveling to factories around the world, my dream was to someday create something akin to what I saw at many of the Italian factories I work with, where home and factory life are so closely intertwined. In Italy, I worked in older factory buildings that are surprisingly modern, efficiently designed spaces inside. I was able to build that kind of dream space in East Mill.

I worked closely with local architects at Approach Architects to design a space that would meet all my needs. It's what I call a 'movable feast.' I can host runway shows, do all my studio photography, design and market all under one roof. The floors are poured epoxy and pristine white for photo shoots. My kids call it the Apple store of North Andover since there is so much white — but it allows me to work with any color without distraction. Also, almost everything in the studio is on wheels and can be easily moved. Pinboards abound for inspiration and pinning sketches and new designs. A stainless steel worktable becomes the hair and makeup station when we are shooting and the stylists are readying the models for a photo. ... The space and light in my studio is liberating after leaving New York City. I wonder why I didn't move sooner! My dog can come to work with me. She is now the official company mascot. ... The commute from home is easy — making it just as civilized as the Italians' work lifestyle I so wanted to emulate.



**What are some of the guiding principles of Darby Scott designs? Are there specific statement pieces, materials or embellishments that define the brand?**

I design products to last. I am not a fan of “fast fashion” or “throwaway” chic. I make things that have lasting beauty and longevity. I was once told that my designs can seem at once modern and also rooted in history but never retro. I loved that description because that is something I strive for: to have a piece that seems to transcend time.

My handbag designs feature many jewelry elements, and the brand or mark on our product is very subtle. I abhor a bag that is a walking advertisement for a brand. Your initials should be on the outside — not mine. We literally do that in our monogram series, where we can hand-engage your initials in sterling silver. There are other features that are pure Darby Scott, like our necklace-handled bags with rich, semiprecious beads that look delicate but have strength to carry. My brand may be expensive to some. My fabrics are cashmere and silk and silk lined, and many bags are made in exotic skins, but we are adding more affordable items to the collection. It will never be priced as low as fast fashion, but then again, how often did you buy something that was inexpensive and wash it or clean it after one wear and it never looks quite as good?

**Maintaining chic style on the go can be a challenge for today’s busy woman. What’s your advice for meeting that challenge?**

Having a photo studio will enable me to better articulate how to meet that challenge. I like the idea that via print image and video we can show a customer several ways to wear the same item. For instance, we will be selling a topper coat and matched skirt. Together they are a terrific suit, but that same topper can be put on over a T-shirt and khakis or jeans, and suddenly the mundane becomes ultrachic. My finer materials may resist wrinkles better, and lightweight cool wool can be worn three seasons. ... How great it would be to be able to go to your child’s school or meet a friend for lunch in a kimono topper worn open over slim pants with flats, and then belt the same item, slip off the pant and put on heels, lipstick and a necklace for a romantic dinner with your significant other. ... We have silhouettes that can be worn by a 20-something and equally well by a 60- or 70-something.

**You’ve recently launched an online boutique at DarbyScott.com. Which pieces will be available there?**

I love the medium of the Internet where I can photograph and merchandise the product all together like an intimate boutique — you can see the stones in a beaded necklace and how beautiful it looks on a blouse or dress, and it’s all in one place, making it easier for you to find the right pieces to mix and match. In a department store, the jewelry is in the jewelry department, even the fine jewelry and the fashion jewelry are on different floors. The handbags are on the main floor, and the clothing up on the second, third or fourth floor.

The newest iteration of our website, which goes live this fall, will even have a wish lists feature where you can pick your favorite items and send it for gift ideas to a friend or husband.

Darby Scott Inc.: North Andover, Mass. / (978) 326-7236 / [DarbyScott.com](http://DarbyScott.com)