

A FASHION MAGAZINE FOR SEEK

# THREAD SEEK

ISSUE No.2

SEEK

CONTEMPORARY FASHION  
TRADE SHOW  
KÜHLHAUS | KREUZBERG  
JANUARY 18-20, 2012

**FEATURES** **Skye Parrott:** Exclusive Skye Parrott interview. **Boo George:** An interview with the Irish born photographer. **Levi's:** We encounter Jonathan Kirby. **Peter Jensen:** We catch up with the great Dane. **Edmund McNulty:** We profile the Irish knitwear designer. **Molloy & Sons:** Guardians of Irish Donegal Tweed. **Plus:** Exclusive editorial shoots.



FALL / WINTER 2012  
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Lenehen | Ellis Boyle | Joanne McLaughlin

# Editor's



## Note

There is no better time than the beginning of the New Year to set out on a journey with the hope of meeting some new friends and developing collaborations. With this our second edition of **THREAD X SEEK** we are introducing a platform that will tie together the brands and labels showing, providing a common stomping ground for the seasons to come.

Thread is all about loving the local but showcasing our traditional skills and homegrown talents on the bigger playing field. Designers, photographers and creative directors talk to us about how they've made their own way in an industry heavily dictated by the mainstream, acknowledging their environments and early lessons as pivotal to getting them to greater heights.

With this special edition of **THREAD** issue 2 especially for our friends at **SEEK** we hope to see you at the show (and hopefully at our party), to bounce ideas, make plans and kick start 2012.

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XX AISLING



# SEEK



AUTUMN/WINTER 2012/13 JANUARY 18-20/2012

NEW LOCATION KÜHLHAUS KREUZBERG

LUCKENWALDER STRASSE 3 10963 BERLIN

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CORNELIA WEBB DENIM DEMON DIEMME EBBETS FIELD FLANNELS ETUDES

FORGOTTEN FUTURE FRED PERRY LAUREL WREATH HOWLIN BY MORRISON

INDIGO FERA JACK FLYNN JOFAMA JOHN SMEDLEY JOSEFIN STRID KITSUNÉ TEE

LAUREL WREATH X BLANK CANVAS LAUREL WREATH X RICHARD NICOLL

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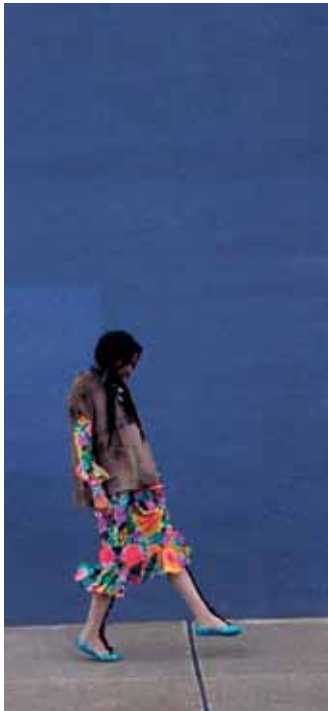
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# Skye

## Parrott



SKYE PARROTT IS AN ARTIST, PHOTOGRAPHER, CREATIVE DIRECTOR AND FOUNDER OF ICONIC ART-FASHION MAGAZINE DOSSIER. AS HER WORK HAS EVOLVED, HER CAREER IS DEVELOPING TO ENCOMPASS NEW AREAS, BUT ALWAYS WITH PERSONAL EXPERIENCE BEING FORMATIVE TO HER WORK. DOSSIER HAS BEEN BUILT UP THROUGH COLLABORATIONS AND A NETWORK OF SUPPORT FROM LIKE MINDED CONTRIBUTORS AND IS A CLEAR INSPIRATION TO GETTING THINGS OFF THE GROUND.

...  
INTERVIEW BY ROSA ABBOTT

*All Photography by Skye Parrott*

**Did you move to Paris with the intention of becoming a photographer? Your degree is in political science — when did it first occur to you that you might end up working in an entirely different field to what you were studying?**

I moved to Paris in 2001. My boyfriend at the time was living there and I went over for the summer. I had been taking pictures for myself for several years and knew I loved photography — I just didn't think it was going to be my career. While I was there, I ended up doing an internship at Art and Commerce and I found I was really interested in commercial photography. From that internship I went on to intern at a photo studio, and after that started working freelance as a photographer's assistant. After about a year of assisting, I gradually realized that I wasn't going to come back to New York and go to law school — that I was much more interested in pursuing a career as a photographer. That summer in Paris turned into five years and by the time I came back to New York I was a photographer.

**You managed Nan Goldin's studio whilst in Paris. Would you count Goldin's work as a big influence on your own photography?** Nan's work was my first major influence as a photographer. I saw her show 'I'll Be Your Mirror' at the Whitney in 1996. I was 17 and had just started taking pictures and it completely changed the way I thought of photography as an artistic medium. It had never occurred to me that the kind of photographs she took could be considered art. When the opportunity to

work with her presented itself, it felt like a dream. In reality, working with her was an incredible experience, but for different reasons than I'd imagined it would be. I think there's something very cathartic about getting to know your idol as a human being. It made her real. I also got to know her work on a much deeper level — to hold all her slides in my hands, to see the shots that came before and after on the roll. It was an invaluable experience for me as an artist.

**What other artists or people had a formative influence on your career — either in photography or otherwise?** My mother is a photographer, and I grew up around art. She took us to museums and exhibitions constantly and art was very much a part of my experience of being a kid. I loved running down the spiral at the Guggenheim, I had a favorite wing at the Met, and I remember being very little and sitting under the drinks table at openings eating grapes. I always had a camera growing up and she was very encouraging saving and framing the art I made. Beyond that, my boyfriend who I moved to Paris to be with and who I was with for almost of all my 20s, is the son of artist Robert Longo and the actress Barbara Sukowa. I knew them from the time I was a teenager and they have both had a huge impact on me. My parents are both artists, but they always worked at other jobs, doing their art on the side. I knew I didn't want to do that, which I think is why I pursued something so traditional in college. But getting to know artists whose job it was to be artists really changed my

way of thinking. It showed me that creative endeavors can be your full time occupation, but that in many ways they need to be treated like any other job. Being successful isn't just about the work you make, but also about the work you put into your career on so many other levels, and that those efforts are just as important as the creative ones.

**One of your first solo shows, 'First Love Last Rites', dealt with the heavy topic of teenage heroin addiction. Was it difficult to open up so honestly and publicly about such a personal issue?** Everything I'd shown up until that point had been curated from my existing body of work. I'd known for a while that I wanted to address that period in my life, my late adolescence and the change in me that occurred after it, but I hadn't been sure how to approach it. I started taking pictures just after that time, and so I had this incredibly intense and formative time I'd been through, and no photographs of it. Because all my work is quote personal, that just felt so weird. What was interesting about the project was that the execution of it – having someone dress up and play me in those scenes – came about from my experience working as a commercial photographer. It seemed to make sense to utilize that experience of creating moments to show these memories that were so strong but that I hadn't photographed. The fact that we were teenagers strung out on heroin is definitely salacious, and I knew it was going to be something that people focused on, but in many ways it wasn't what the work was about. I wanted to talk about the veracity of memory, about being young, about that incredibly powerful experience of being completely in love for the first time. My experience with that just happens to have also included this relationship to drugs, which I guess was lucky for me as an artist, as it provided a real intense lynchpin to focus the work around. However, on a certain level getting over that love took a lot longer than leaving behind the drugs. It was something I carried around for a long time.

I had mixed feelings about presenting the work publicly. While I was making it I just didn't think about it, because if I had I don't know if I would have done it, or at least done it in the same way. But the night after the opening I had a complete panic attack about having gone so far with it. My mother and father were there for the opening – almost everyone I knew. *The Times* did an interview where I talked about being a heroin addict. I felt incredibly exposed. It was challenging because it wasn't a part of my life I was particularly open about prior to doing that show. I mean, my friends and family knew, of course, but in my work relationships, it just wasn't something I was talking about, so I got a lot of very surprised responses from people I knew fairly well. Overall though, the response was very positive, and ultimately there is something quite freeing about having the totality of who you are out there. There's a great quote from Kurt Vonnegut where he said, 'I want to stand as close to the edge as I can without going over. Out on the edge you can see all kind of things you can't see from the center.' Exposing myself so publicly felt like one of those experiences. I had to push the limits of my own comfort to do it, but what's the value in only having experiences that feel comfortable? You don't get to experience very much – or grow very much – that way.

**You founded Dossier with a childhood friend, and the early content in particular seems to have been sourced largely through personal connections. Do you think having a strong artistic community around you, and whom you can pool your resources with, is what allows ideas to take form?** I am definitely someone who does my best work in a collaborative setting. I love working with other people and find that other peoples' creativity fuels my own. One of the things I love about living in New York is all the creative energy here. It seems like there are always interesting people doing interesting things, and that encourages me to push myself forward. Being here I'm always aware of how much more there is that I want to achieve.

In terms of the early issues of Dossier being so personal and connected, I think that's just a by-product of growing up in New York. A lot of the people Katherine (my partner in Dossier) and I grew up with ended up doing creative things, and when we decided to make a magazine we obviously wanted to include those people in it. Even now, of the six people who form the core editorial staff of Dossier, five of them I have known since I was a teenager. That wasn't a conscious choice we made, but it's interesting that it ended up that way.

**Out of all the cities you've lived in, which do you think has shaped your own attitude and aesthetic the most prominently?** That's actually kind of a hard question. I am a true New Yorker. When I lived in LA and in Paris I always felt the pull to come back here, and since I moved back in 2006 I haven't really felt an itch to live in another city. I love New York like nowhere else. However, I'm also very aware of how much the experience of living in Paris shaped me. I still spend a great deal of time there and I have a real love/hate relationship with the city. Whenever I get there, I feel like I'm home, but if I stay too long I start to feel stifled. It seems appropriate, somehow, to have a complicated relationship with Paris. It's a complicated place.

**Dossier places a strong emphasis on experimentation and creative freedom, yet still manages to hold a thread of continuity. How do you balance diversity and consistency?** One of the premises upon which we founded the magazine was the idea of providing a space where people could experiment creatively. We decided from the beginning that we wouldn't work with themes, or even have any set features, from issue to issue as we didn't want to feel restricted by some predetermined structure. But we also have a very small team, and the magazine is a very personal project for each of us, so even within the diversity of content we print, I think our voices are always going to come through. Speaking for myself, my final barometer for what visual content goes into Dossier is if I like it. That's about as personal and as subjective as you can get.

**You've also published books and curated exhibitions. Do you deliberately try and push yourself into new fields, or do new ventures tend to arise spontaneously?** When I first started Dossier I remember feeling conflicted about calling myself a creative director. I wasn't sure how that was going to affect me professionally as a photographer, if people would be confused, if I would be distracted by doing several things. What I've actually found is that the longer I've done both, the less I've felt the need to define myself as one thing. Over the past few years I've been asked to curate shows, expanded into doing outside projects as a creative director, made videos, shown my personal work, published books, and all the while continued to work as a photographer. I've found that all the different projects I get to do reinforce each other and make me feel more inspired overall.

**Finally, what's a field that you've not delved into yet, that you'd like to get involved in?** I've started making small videos over the past few years, but I would really love to make something longer. I love documentary, so that's an idea that keeps bouncing around in my head. But right now I'm eight and a half months pregnant, so for the next few months at least I have a very new project on my hands. We'll see what happens after that.

**Stella**

**Maria**





jacket: **Isabelle Marant** Costume leggings: **AF Vandevors** Smock, beanie: Urban outfitters,  
fingerless gloves: Topshop











shirt dress: Fred Perry Laurel Wreath Indigo & Cloth, print sweater: Isabelle Marant Costume





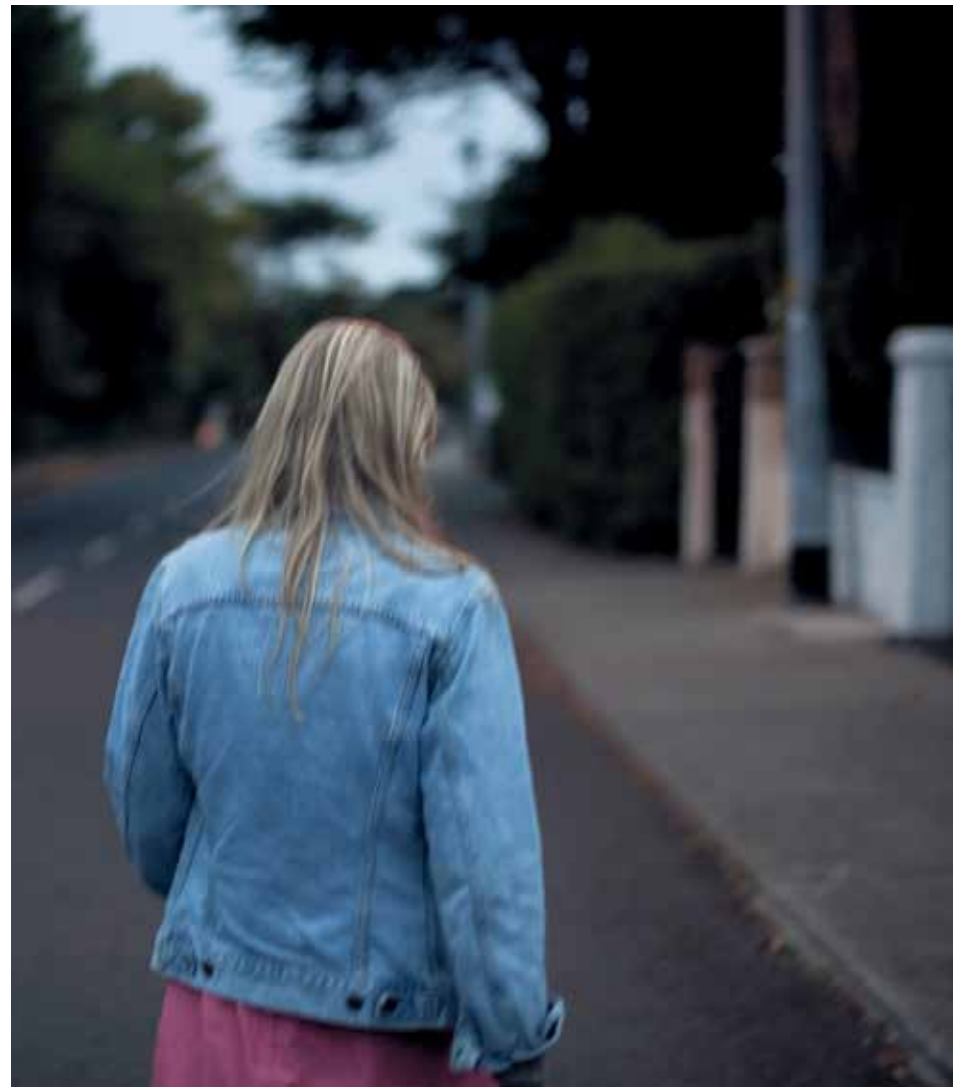
plaid check dress: Peter Jensen Dolls, 'kurt cobain' cashmere sweater: Sphere One Havana  
fringed leather belt: Havana, earrings: Momuse Bow



black felt overcoat with slit sleeves and white poplin shirt: Simone Rocha Havana,  
earrings: Momuse Bow, love-ring: Dolls







dress: Peter Jensen Dolls, vintage denim jacket: Levis Bow





black knit embellished cardigan; silver platform boots: John Rocha Havana, jeans: Superfine uCCa



WE KNEW THAT PHOTOGRAPHER BOO GEORGE WAS FAST BECOMING ONE TO WATCH AND AN IMPORTANT EXPORT ON THE INTERNATIONAL FASHION SCENE. WHAT WE DIDN'T KNOW THOUGH WAS QUITE HOW SOUND HE WAS AND HOW EASY AN INTERVIEW WITH HIM WOULD FLOW. PASSIONATE ABOUT DEVELOPING HIS WORK, HE TALKS US THROUGH HIS PROCESS, LESSONS LEARNT, INSPIRATIONS AND AMBITIONS

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INTERVIEW BY GILLIAN BRETT

*All Images by Boo George*



**You're originally from Dublin, is that right?** Yeah, I'm from Bray. Lived in England... Just give us two secs ('Look after the dinner will you? Those potatoes are nearly done just mash them'). Sorry, yeah from Bray but I've lived in England for ten years probably; I studied over here and then moved to London and it kind of just went from there.

**Do you like it in London; can you see yourself staying there?** Yea, big time, I've just got my American visa so I'm over there a good bit at the moment too. But yeah, I think London's a brilliant place. There's more and more Irish coming over, because of the economic crisis at home. So I'm just another Irish lad over here working away you know.

**So for young up and coming photographers and journalists would you recommend for them to come over to London?** Oh at the drop of a hat. It's the best city in the world apart from New York for doing fashion or photography or illustration or anything like that. It's so hard, I think it's so insular in Ireland and even in most places in London but then when you come to here or New York, all the magazines are here all the ad agencies are here, all the models are here, all the clothes eventually end up here so it's there on a plate no matter what you do. The quality is much better than most other cities. It literally is New York or London you know.

**You started out assisting Julian Broad, how did this come about?** I moved over here in December and by April I was assisting Julian full time and I assisted him for about a year and a half or so. My first job with him was to go to Namibia to photograph Brad Pitt in the desert. I flew straight from there to Ireland to give my Mum away at her wedding. Then went on to assist Phil Poynter for another year and a half or two years and then a little bit with Bruce Weber. I went around the world with them, learned how to take pictures obviously and learnt how to be respectful to clients and how to be in the presence of famous people, older people and how to become a man and develop as a person.. And then just applied that to my own photographs. So yeah it was cool you know I absolutely loved Julian's and Phil's pictures. You just kind of stand there and absorb everything, as much as you can and just not to fuck up too much along the way.

**When did you start to branch out on your own then and begin to work with LOVE and i-D?** I did my first editorial two and a half years ago. It was the January of 2008, I started doing pictures for i-D, then Streeters took me on pretty much straight away and they gave me a big commercial job in Zambia to photograph diamond miners so I went there. The mine was 52 square miles and it was 10 miles from the Congo border. You got searched everywhere and it was scary as fuck. There's a massive army presence and all the soldiers walk around with AK47's pissed on homemade maize hooch. The people were a casting agent's wet dream: naive, beautiful black lads. They're not self-conscious about their appearance at all. There's no vanity, you can photograph them for ten minutes and they just stare back at you. Yeah I did the big commercial job in Zambia and then Katie Grand who runs LOVE kind of gave me some pictures to do and one of them was Donatella Versace so I went and shot her for about two and a half minutes and Katie loved the pictures so I started doing small things for LOVE and then it began to escalate and I started doing stories and more pictures for different magazines. It was good because I didn't have to start out shooting for what the industry would deem as bad magazines. I was lucky enough to shoot for L'Uomo Vogue, i-D and LOVE and all the decent ones you know. I didn't have to scrape up the ladder too much I sort of started fairly high so it was good.

**How did you achieve that so quickly, was it just through Streeters they saw your work and gave you a call or how did it happen?**

I was basically on a Louis Vuitton job in France in Saint Tropez and I came back and showed them my book for the second time and they took me on that day, it was the second time I'd seen them and from then I stopped assisting and went from there on my own. With agencies, they do get you editorial work but you really need to be able to take a decent picture, like if you fuck up a shoot they'll just drop it, it doesn't matter who you're with. If it's a crap shoot they just don't care because the magazines are more powerful than the agents are. So it just kind of went from there and I just kept taking consistent pictures and it grew from there. People saw my pictures and they liked what I was doing, I probably wasn't doing the same pictures that everyone else was doing, which was just a girl in a studio, I was doing harder pictures, like more documentary-esque I suppose. My work is sort of social documentary.

**How else would you describe your pictures, what qualities do you make sure they have?**

I always think it has to be nice, you have to want to put the picture up on your wall. My pictures are quiet. People rarely smile although I'm a chirpy fella. I don't really want to go and take some jazzy picture of a girl in a full length Balenciaga dress and it look crap, I'd rather just shoot something that's interesting to me that I can relate to. I didn't really grow up surrounded by Chanel or Balenciaga dresses or any other big brands. So, I have to just adapt it all to the picture and hopefully the girl and the clothes look well in the situation. So far they do, I hope, I think.

**So why fashion then?** I actually started off doing a lot of social documentary. For my final project in college, I spent nine days on a North Sea fishing trawler. I got the bus down to Whitby with my camera and got on the boat. I didn't even tell my Mum. So I spent nine nights taking photos of real men working in harsh conditions on a Pentax 6X7 which I borrowed from college. When I was assisting in college, I assisted a portrait photographer and then obviously Julian is a portrait photographer, so I sort of just slipped into fashion from there. As well, there's not as much interest in real photography anymore, some people are, but the viewer doesn't get shocked by a young black baby with flies on its face anymore, which is a sad thing. It's not as impactful as it was twenty years ago, we can't be shocked anymore so for social documentary, things are on the decline. Viewers are more obsessed by celebrity now which is a sorry state of affairs but it's just the reality.

**So you're off to America tomorrow?** I'm going to Utah to shoot the Wrangler campaign. So I'm going there for four days and then I'm flying straight to Shannon because my folks have a place in Connemara so I'm going there from Shannon. I land there next Sunday to see my folks and my family.

**Just to discuss the Wrangler thing a little more, that's been a big ambition of yours to shoot that hasn't it? You have an interest in cowboys is that right?** Yeah I just think they're fucking cool. I remember seeing the Marlboro man on the back of a magazine cover as a kid and ripped it out and always thought it was a cool picture. I find it interesting: a bunch of lads riding around in the Wild West. Even if they were Irish gypsies. The whole concept is fascinating. It always interested me more than football, since I'm not hugely interested in sports. I've always loved horses so it sort of came from both of those. I'm obsessed with American history too, Indians and cowboys and all that. I think it was just a natural progression to go photograph this and thankfully get paid to do it.

**Model-wise you seem to gravitate towards more androgynous looking girls such as Eliza Cummings and Freja Beha Erichsen. Why is that that?** Yeah I love Eliza, love Freja, love Agyness. You get access to these good girls when you're shooting for the good magazines which is a joy. I just think they're really interesting. I think a girl with a shaved head or a gap in her teeth looks a little more interesting.

**We shot Jerome for this issue and in the process discovered you were actually responsible for scouting him. How did that come about?** I was walking down Oxford St and I saw him, he looked like that old Australian outlaw Ned Kelly, so I started talking to him and got his number etc, then I asked him could I shoot him for Le Monte, the French broadsheet, and he said yes but he wouldn't trim his beard, he was a bit too rough for the French so we had to leave it. Then I saw him again walking his dog about 2 months later and I was to shoot for Arena Homme+, so I said for him to come by the studio and that I would pay him £100. On the second day of shooting he arrived at about 5pm. I was thinking, 'I'm knackered...' and I don't want to shoot any more, so we stuck him in an outfit and the second he got in front of the camera I was like BANG, and he was killer. I shot him for most of that evening.

**Outside of shoots where do you like to hang out and what do you like to do?** I suppose drink alcohol. You know, just normal stuff. I love travelling, love going swimming, love cycling. Of course I love looking at photographs, I spend a lot of my time doing that and reading books on it. Just living the dream as they say. Travelling is a big one too, I can't wait to go to Utah, can't wait to go home to get drunk with my little brother in some dingy pub in Mayo. Just regular stuff and then strive to do well and make my mother proud.





**Are you quite family orientated, do you miss you family a lot when you're away?** No, I've lived away for ten years now and London's so close and there's so many Irish people over here, half my mates are over here. Don't get me wrong of course I miss my family, it's natural to miss your family but it's not like I'm down a mine in Chile — I'm not a million miles away. You meet so many Irish people on the streets over here, but of course you still miss the people and miss the pubs, you miss the culture and the little things you know. But Ireland can't offer lots of things that England can offer, so if you weigh it up in your mind, what's more important at the start of your life, is it to be with your family and your mum in Bray for ten years or is it to make a career and a name for yourself, so I obviously chose the latter. You know when it comes down to it she's your mother she's not going to not be your mother because you move away. So, I came over here and am just trying to do well, and it seems to be going okay. But I've only been shooting on my own for two and a half years, so I'm hoping that I'm only just scratching at the surface of what I can do.

**I lived in London myself for a while and its tough trying to make it and still pay your rent. Did you find it hard initially to establish yourself over there?** Yeah it's tough, it's really tough. I was skint for eight years and even when I started to make money I put most of it back into taking photos. It's a real pain, I've been skint for years.

**But it's worth it?** Yeah, obviously home is where the heart is but I think when you're young take whatever opportunities come your way and do it on a quid if you can. As I said, I've got my American visa now so I can go over there as much as I like. I get to the US customs now and they're like 'Welcome sir, come on in.' Of course I miss Ireland, I miss Grogans, I miss Keoghs, I miss the Ha'Penny Bridge, I miss it all but you've got to do your thing, especially in your twenties and thirties. Then in your forties you can come back to Ireland and reap the benefits. ('Just leave them on the counter there, good mash isn't it? Is it hot?') Sorry about that just talking about dinner, I'm obsessed with food.

**Still eating your spuds?** I'm still obsessed with spuds thought. I eat them every day, I even have them on my pizza!

**What's your ultimate goal?** Consistency is probably my ultimate goal. I don't want to peak and then be at a low point where I'm listening to Leonard Cohen alone in my room on a wet Tuesday in January. As long as I'm consistent for the next thirty years and keep taking pictures like Peter Lindbergh and Richard Avedon did I'll be happy. I'd never want to be at a high point and fall from grace so I'm going to keep working hard to prevent that and keep improving.

**A favourite Richard Avedon quote of mine is 'All pictures are accurate. None of them is the truth.' What's your opinion on this?** Yeah of course, it's true. I suppose when you take someone's photograph their lending themselves to you so if you're going to take their picture you've got full artistic right to do whatever you want with them. Portrait photographers have a great way of putting things in perspective, creating that scene. That's why Bruce Weber and Steven Meisel's fashion pictures are so believable. With Bruce Weber you believe that young lad really is a boxer or a farm boy. Richard Avedon was someone who mastered that. When he did the American West project he probably took hundreds of photos but only selected a certain few for the edit. I'm sure there were pictures of some people looking smiley and a little bit happy but every picture in that book was just completely downtrodden. Some people might think his work is a load of drifters standing against a white sheet but it's not. The photographs and crop are so considered. When you do the edit and you chose between the happy or sad looking picture whichever you choose is basically going to personify that person, whether they're really like that or not. You control the viewer's thoughts.

**Is there anything you think people would be surprised to know about you?** I doubt it, I'm an open book. I love photography, music, Ireland, women. I'm just a normal lad from Ireland trying to do some pictures in England, make his way in the world and keep his mum happy. I haven't got any weird tattoos or illegitimate children!

**Great, well that's all my questions thanks so much for your time.** No problem, if you've any more just email me and I'll send you some of my pictures. Just do me one favour though, will you try and take all the curses out cause my mum will kill me!

A black and white portrait of a man with a full, dark beard and mustache. He is wearing a dark, wide-brimmed hat and a plaid shirt. The background is a blurred outdoor scene with hills and a fence. The name 'Jerome' is written in white text in the upper right corner.

# Jerome

textured walscoat: John Rocha, check shirt: Oliver Spencer Indigo & Cloth, hat: Kennedy & McSharry



**Photography** Sean & Yvette  
**Stylist** Aisling Farinella  
**Photography Assistant** Yvonne Ryan  
**Stylist Assistant** Sarah Ruxton  
**Model** Jerome @ Models 1



felt textured coat, metallic wool mix trousers & brogue ankle boots: John Rocha, round neck sweater: Oliver  
Spencer Indigo & Cloth, knit socks: Donegal Kevin & Howlin, turf rings: Julie Connellan



pea coat, check shirt & grey wool trousers: **Oliver Spencer** Indigo & Cloth, fringed scarf: **Edmund McNulty**  
Gentleman Please, recycled tin brooches: **Julie Connellan**





textured waistcoat; brogue ankle boots: John Rocha, round neck sweater: Oliver Spencer; trousers:  
 Levis Indigo & Cloth, knit socks: Donegal Kevin & Howlin, hat: Kennedy & McSharry,  
 silver vessel necklaces: Julie Connellan



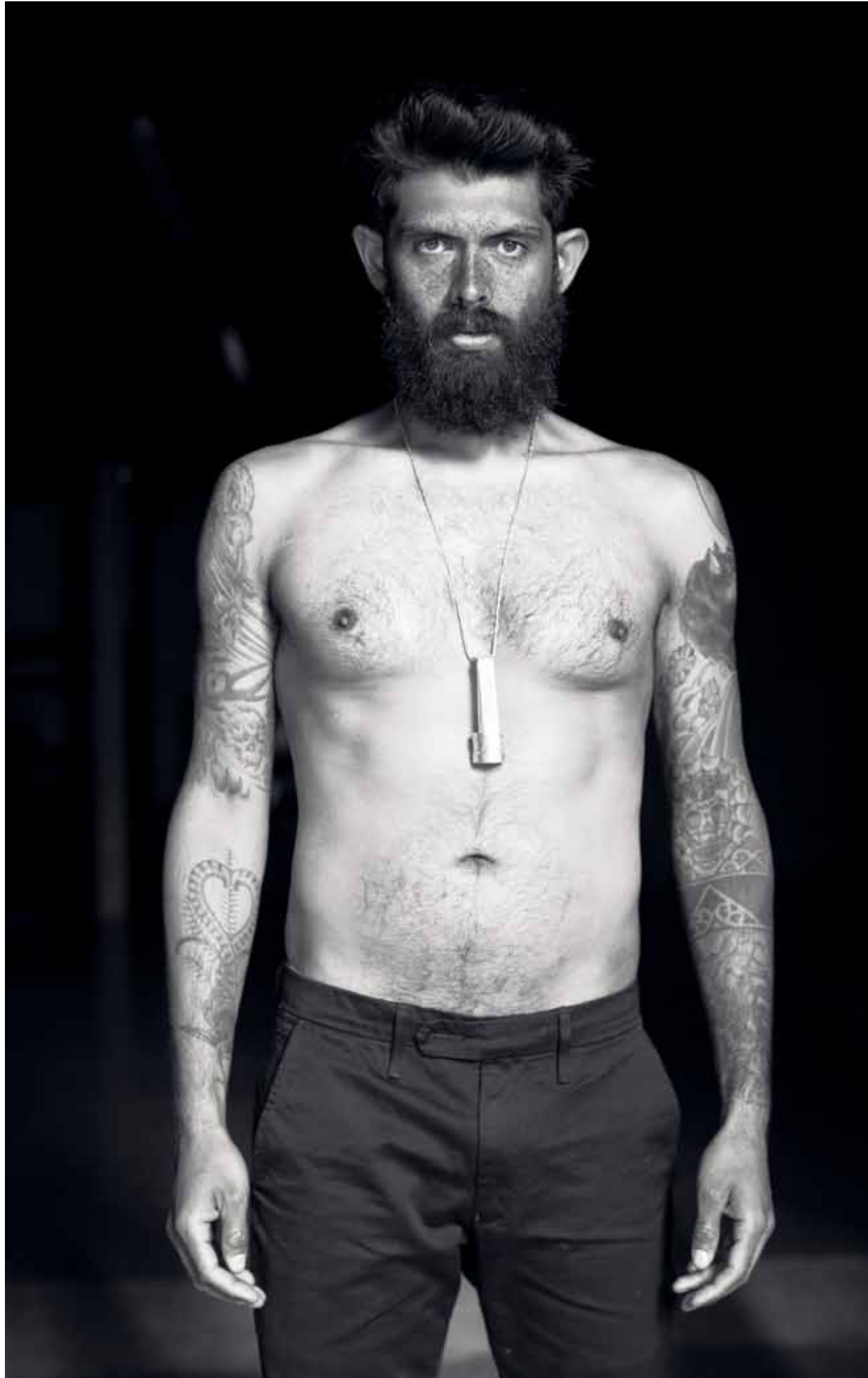


check shirt: **Our Legacy** Indigo & Cloth, knit jumper: **Edmund McNulty** Gentleman Please,  
silver vessel necklaces: **Julie Connellan**





shirt: 1906; trousers: Levis Indigo & Cloth, knitted waistcoat: Edmund McNulty Gentleman Please,  
turf & silver necklace: Julie Connellan



trousers: Levis Indigo&Cloth, silver vessel necklace: Julie Connellan





Kirby

Jonathan

Levis

Interview

JONATHON KIRBY HAS JUST TAKEN THE HELM AS VP OF DESIGN FOR DENIM MECCA LEVI'S STRAUSS. WITH MODESTY AS HIS BEST POLICY HE MADE HIS WAY TO THE TOP WORKING WITH INTERNATIONAL FASHION HOUSES LIKE MOSCHINO AND VALENTINO. IF BLOOD COULD RUN BLUE HOWEVER IT PROBABLY WOULD IN THIS DENIM EXPERT, INTRODUCED TO THREAD BY FELLOW FANATIC (RETAILER AND OUR VERY OWN COMMERCIAL DIRECTOR) GARRETT PITCHER.

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INTERVIEW BY GARRETT PITCHER

*Denim from the Levi's Archive*

While attempting to cover broad ground the conversation continually leads back to denim with Kirby confidently citing it as his topic of choice. ‘LVC [Levi’s Vintage Clothing] is a real conversational product; people want to talk about it. It has such rich history that everybody has an opinion on it’. Nonetheless we piece together a picture of what it takes to get you to one of the biggest jobs in fashion.

**Did you always want to be in fashion or what else could you have ended up in?** I originally wanted to do furniture design because my father owned a furniture store. It was down on Parnell Street in North Dublin and in behind him was this amazing carpenter who carved all the seats for the house of parliament, banks and everything by hand. He was an amazing guy. He was about seventy at the time and I was about fifteen and I remember wanting to do something like that. I definitely wanted to do something in design, to make something with my hands.

**After being refused from NCAD (Dublin) you studied Fashion Design at Salford University in Manchester and then onto the MA under Louise Wilson at Central Saint Martins. What was that journey like?** Manchester was an amazing place to go to college because it’s just party town. Salford was like *‘Fame’*. It was Drama and Fashion, bizarre almost. You’re walking down the corridors and there’s people singing and dancing, totally unstructured but totally cool.

At St Martins they didn’t train you in anything really, you had to find it yourself and you had to be hungry to go and get it. [Louise Wilson] will never tell you what it is you need and she’ll push you the point where you are nearly at breaking. Many times you could have a collection ready to go onto the catwalk and she’ll say absolutely no way, do it again.

I guess I was one of the lucky one’s with her as she had time for me. She is exceptionally talented and can spot talent from a mile away. She’s seen it all. She’s a bit of an institution having brought through all the big names like Galliano and McQueen.

What Wilson really did was; she wouldn’t just accept fashion for fashion sake, there had to be a purpose to it. It had to mean something to you and by making you take responsibility for it, it made you ready for industry.

**Lvc [levi’s vintage clothing] is a real conversational product; people want to talk about it. It has such rich history that everybody has an opinion on it.**

**You worked for a time in Italy as a consultant for the denim industry. What was that like?** When you go to work abroad you are going to come up against a lot of challenges. I’m always interested in things I know nothing about. You have to be entrepreneurial. You’ve gotta be naturally curious, nobody’s gonna hand it to you on a plate. If you have that it opens so many doors. People are keen to share their knowledge, if you have the patience and curiosity.

**What is the XX division of Levi’s and would you have been involved in both brands as Creative Director?** XX is the halo for the brand. It’s the best expression of what [Levi’s] do. XX only officially started two and a half years ago. Levis Vintage Clothing started in 1999 in London and was really really small. For XX we moved it over to Amsterdam, it was a separate company to design the best possible product we could make. It has separate distribution, sourcing, everything. A lot of it is made in Italy; a lot of it is made in America. The best of the best. Two brands, one vintage, one more contemporary that was the flex.

XX is a really interesting company to work for. It’s small so you do absolutely everything. You’re design, retail, and marketing. You are everything, sometimes even selling to key buyers. A lot of denim heads are aware of LVC of course. We got an email one day from a Japanese buyer who wrote to us to say that our rivet was wrong compared to ten years ago, that it should be two prongs not one and I’m like that’s really cool – how did you find that out? – *‘Because I took it apart of course’*. I took a new job about three months ago as VP of Design for the whole of Levi’s. XX will stay a family division but we can start to take those learning’s and start implementing them into the global brand.

**How do you go about approaching a collection at Levi’s?** These days it’s very different than how you use to. For us at the moment we are very into cultural trends and understanding youth around the world. As the world goes global, and you have the internet and things are at your fingertips I think people can be afraid that localism is gonna go away but I’m of the other frame of mind – that’s what connects us. It could be Tarlach [de Blácam] in *Inis Meain* [Knitwear] connected with a Japanese indigo dyer in Okayama. Their roots are the same; their values are the same. That’s what interests us, how to connect it rather than individual countries aesthetics.

**What’s your opinion on the era of collaboration and is there anyone you would like to collaborate with through Levi’s?** I don’t think brand collaboration is part of the future, I think that it’s more interesting to collaborate with an expert in what they do, who doesn’t think the way you do. It’s just two companies together otherwise. It’s more interesting if it’s something for a purpose but I do think it will go on and it is important for marketing. The one that stands out for us and me is [Junya] Watanabe in the true sense of the word as he’s the real driver there; it’s his obsession with Levi’s and how to do something else with it.

**As you get ready to take over VP of design in San Francisco is there anything in particular you aim to change?** The big thing is that it is a brand that’s always been relevant. It’s had huge peaks and huge declines. It’s been relevant when it’s been an innovator. It brought new things to new people, especially youth. It always went with culture. Youth and culture go hand in hand. That’s something I will be putting at the forefront and capture again because it’s only as relevant as the consumers say it is. The idea is really to connect it again and bring a lot more innovation again.

**It’s one of the biggest jobs in fashion, in denim anyway. It must be a dream job?** Yeah it probably is. It’s the biggest brand, a brand you get obsessed about once you get into it. Once you get immersed in that Levi’s world you get obsessed. I wanted to work for them for a long time and where do you go after that? I can’t see myself working for another denim company. If I stopped I’d just do something totally different. I’d like to in the future, maybe go back to furniture design.

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*Unsurprisingly when we ask him for pictures of himself to go with the interview, he sends us images of two of the oldest and most famous denims in the world.*



# Peter

# Jensen

# Interview



PETER JENSEN HAS SLOWLY CREATED AN IMAGINATIVE AND QUIETLY UNCONVENTIONAL WORLD IN FASHION, FUELED BY HIS INDEPENDENT AND PERSONAL APPROACH AND INSPIRED BY HIS MANY SPIRITED MUSES. HE MARKS HIS DECENNIAL ANNIVERSARY THIS YEAR WITH A BEAUTIFUL CELEBRATORY BOOK DOCUMENTING PAST COLLECTIONS. BOUTIQUE OWNER PETRIA LENEHEN HAS STOCKED HIS DESIGNS SINCE OPENING DOLLS AND TOOK THE OPPORTUNITY TO MARK THE OCCASION AND SPEND SOME TIME IN JENSEN'S EAST LONDON STUDIO

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INTERVIEW BY PETRIA LENEHEN

*Photography by Rich Gilligan*

**Having graduated from St. Martin's in 1999, you began to show your own menswear collection in Paris almost immediately. What were some of the biggest challenges you faced initially?** To be honest, it was never my ambition to have my own label. After my graduate show at London Fashion Week (LFW), I was approached by a group of Italian investors who had also backed Alexander McQueen when he graduated from St. Martins. I was very surprised to be singled out by them as I never felt a menswear show would attract much attention, always aware that the women's wear graduates were more hungry for press and reaching a level of immediate success. A stable job working for another designer would have been much more what I was driven towards, while maybe working on small design projects on the side. Instead I managed to get caught up in a promotional whirlwind, showing my first menswear collection at Paris Fashion Week just two months later. I was represented by a powerful French PR company and urged to sign a contract with the investors. After three seasons of producing collections, I decided to break away, having avoided signing a contract that would have bound me legally and financially to the group for the next 25 years.

**The clothes must have an independent life and tell their own tale. I also like to believe that I select and research women who might never have been considered as fashion icons.**

**Menswear is now no longer your main focus. What then led you to designing your first women's wear collection?** After the experience of showing the menswear in Paris, I felt I needed a change and decided to design a small women's wear collection. This allowed me to have a more imaginative focus and more freedom in the creative process. With the menswear, I was more concerned about the placement of a button or the cut of a single piece. My good friend Tim Walker took a look and decided to use some pieces in a shoot for Italian Vogue. Off the back of this I managed to put together a presentation for LFW without any real budget. Suddenly I had orders from Barneys in New York and Maria Luisa in Paris.

**How did you then form the working relationship with your creative and business partner, Gerard Wilson and how much input does he have in designing each collection?** I met Gerard at St. Martins where we ended up modeling in a show dressed up as ventriloquists. Unfortunately for us the designer kept winning awards and we were committed to sitting with heavily painted faces far more than we had anticipated! It was during this time that we really became friends and then felt we could also work well together. When we begin designing the collection, I draw and map out each piece in the collection and then Gerard will give his opinion, add some ideas and make some fine adjustments.

**The last ten years have brought a kind of slow and steady success? Do you see this as a positive thing?** Over the years myself and Gerard have both felt that our personalities don't particularly lend themselves to playing the game and I do feel this has held us back at times. We have witnessed fellow graduates attracting much more immediate attention. It took us years to be accepted for the on schedule shows by the British Fashion council and perhaps this has been due to our lack of interest in PR and networking. Yet this has enabled us to grow our business organically and make our mistakes without it ever being too public. We have also had the time to build a strong foundation for the business and gain a deeper understanding of what the company represents. I have been teaching on the MA menswear course at St. Martins for nine years now and feel that the quickening pace of the industry and the pressure put on graduates to become an instant success quite worrying. They are being advised from all sides

over what to do and not to do and aren't given any breathing space to take stock and tackle things in their own natural way.

**Each collection arrives with a moniker referencing a famous/infamous woman. Women chosen have ranged from Jodie Foster to Soviet gymnast Olga Korbut. How instinctive is the process of choosing this muse, how significant is she in the design process and at what stage does the research begin?** This all really depends on who the woman is. The muse can be chosen at the start of the design process and sometimes later on. Somehow I think the ones who emerge later bring more to the collection because I am less fixed on a single idea. It's very important to project my own vision of this person and not the obvious characteristics too literally. The clothes must have an independent life and tell their own tale. I also like to believe that I select and research women who might never have been considered as fashion icons. In the past I have discussed the possibilities of different muses and have learnt to keep my mouth shut! If they are well-known personalities people immediately start forming their own opinions which can really confuse the process and it is this personal interpretation that I feel gives the collection its character and strength, however wayward the choice of muse may be. In a sense she becomes a central theme in the collection and a reference point when explaining ideas to the team. The muse for the SS12 collection was Nina Simone and once she was chosen... we began to research her life, relationships, character and of course her clothing. It's also a great reference point for the print designer with whom I work very closely in creating the signature illustrations for each collection and building up a new kind of visual narrative.

**After growing up in Denmark, you have ended up settling in London permanently. Could you ever see yourself working elsewhere?** I really love the British mentality, with its sense of freedom, eccentricity and humour. I could never see myself back in Denmark which I do find quite sad. There is very little freedom there if you have your own company where being confronted with countless rules and taxes I would find extremely limiting. With a 54% tax rate and compulsory trade union payments, the main pressure is to sell to survive often resulting in more commercial work and nothing very fashion forward or left of centre.

**Having developed the company organically and with a small team, how have you adapted to the demands of today's market which is so dictated by the immediacy of the internet and the constant need for renewal?** The pressure has certainly escalated in the last few years. There is also the sense of fashion being overly available, which makes it feel less special, but I can't really imagine a world before the internet now. There really is no way back from it now, we must take advantage of the possibilities it presents and adapt. The rapid change of seasons, however, is something I do look forward to, taking down images and old references from the studio wall and starting again with fresh ideas. It's not always easy quickly pinning down a new inspiration, but this is something we welcome with so many challenging women to explore.





# Edmund

# McNulty

# Interview



WITH IRISH DESIGNERS ACHIEVING STATUS, CREDIBILITY AND SPOTLIGHT ON THE INTERNATIONAL STAGE, ELEMENTS OF IDENTITY COME INTO FOCUS. CRAFT IS SUCH A TRICKY WORD, BUT TRADITION, TECHNIQUE AND ARTISAN SKILLS ARE WHOLEHEARTEDLY EMBRACED BY THE FASHION WORLD. IRELAND HAS A UNIQUE TRADITION OF KNITTING AND CROCHET THAT IS PRACTICED IN BOTH A TRADITIONAL MANNER AND REINTERPRETED FOR CONTEMPORARY DESIGN.

HOW CAN WE HARNESS OUR TRADITION TO PROPEL US IN DESIGN? FOR A REAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE SUBJECT WE ASKED INDUSTRY INSIDER EILIS BOYLE TO TALK TO KNITWEAR DESIGNER EDMUND MCNULTY.

...  
INTERVIEW BY EILIS BOYLE

*Illustration Rosie O'Reilly*



**Craft & tradition — how important is it for you?** I grew up in North Donegal surrounded by a cottage industry of hand knitting. I remember the care that was taken in making Aran sweaters for the Americans. It was a craft; a necessary sideline for a lot of rural homes but it was also an enjoyable one. I remember the knits my Aunt made, she was described as a ‘tight’ hand knitter and her work was so beautiful, the stitch work so precise and even. I would love to say I can hand knit like that but my training was on the machine end of knitting, which revolutionised knitwear in Ireland in the 1970’s. I am especially aware that I continue a tradition of sorts and it is important for me to keep the quality of workmanship as high as I can, I suppose as a mark of respect really to the craft.

**How is this tradition of knitting relevant in terms of Irish culture?** Knitting is synonymous with Ireland, words like Aran and Donegal Tweed are known the world over and appear every year in the collections of International Designers.

It is important that we protect and promote this heritage now more than ever. During the boom years of the Celtic Tiger, everyone wanted to be ‘European’ and we lost our sense of identity. Now is the time that we really need to look at our archives and rediscover who we were and where we came from to make us a strong nation once again in the eyes of the world.

**It is often necessary to design different collections for different markets. What is it like to work with foreign buyers?** My experience with foreign buyers is mostly the Japanese and they are wonderful to deal with. They look at and examine your work in such a way that they connect with the pieces, it’s like a transfer of energy if that makes any sense. They love innovation and always look for ways to intertwine innovation and tradition together.

If you can manage to do this, then Japan is your market!

Export is the way forward for Ireland. Our population is small and over the years our tourist influx fell dramatically. We need to achieve a balance and to re define our identity. There are many markets we can cater to with knitwear; traditionally Ireland exported thousands of Aran sweaters to the Irish-American market in the States. That market became saturated and China then played a role in the supply end effectively putting an end to a lot of Irish companies. Inis Meain Knitwear kicked started a new generation of high-end consumers looking to Ireland to buy a ‘designer’ modernised Aran sweater in luxuriously soft yarns. This put a whole new focus on our traditions and new Designers emerged and played an important role paving the way for others to follow to an International platform.

**What kind of problems or difficulties do you encounter working specifically in Ireland?** In Ireland, the Celtic Tiger decimated our Culture. Irish Consumers availed of cheap flights and were more interested in shopping international brands. The Irish factories that employed a larger workforce outsourced their production to Eastern Europe and China leaving a void. A skilled workforce wanted to earn more and got better paid jobs elsewhere. Our Fashion College graduates leave Ireland to pursue their careers abroad as the opportunities for experience in this country are rather limited. Right now, we are in a better position to encourage consumers to support Irish brands. One of my most effective verbal marketing tools is to tell people that the Edmund McNulty Knitwear Brand is made here in Ireland. We are in very challenging times, financially, and to stay in Business can be difficult for many. I would urge people to look into export, but develop a product for the export market you are aiming at.

**How do we stand internationally?** Right now there is a lot we have to focus on, we are not strong contenders in the knitwear marketplace, we squandered our knitwear heritage during the recent boom years and it will take time to rebuild that confidence again.

Seeds of growth are however starting to show in the art colleges and designers are looking inwards to Ireland for inspiration for their collections. It’s wonderful to see this happen again as there is an absolute wealth of inspiration in our natural surroundings. It will take time to put Ireland back on the map but we are headed in the right direction.

**Knitting is synonymous with Ireland, words like Aran and Donegal Tweed are known the world over and appear every year in the collections of International Designers**

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# Molloy

&

Sons



IN A WORLD OF FAST CONSUMERISM AND THE SEDUCTION OF THE NEW, TRUE CRAFT IS MORE IMPORTANT NOW THAN EVER; A HISTORY TO INSPIRE THE FUTURE, AND REMIND US OF WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE CAN ACHIEVE.

THIS IS THE MISSION OF DONEGAL WEAVERS MOLLOY AND SONS. A SMALL COMPANY WITH HUGE AMBITION ROOTED IN THE DRAMATIC BEAUTY OF THE SOUTH–WEST COAST OF DONEGAL.

Molloy and Sons are one of the few weavers that can proudly claim to produce authentic Donegal tweed. As with all great craftspeople their dedication to their craft goes beyond mere production. To Shaun and Kieran weaving is in the fabric of who we are as a people as an island, it tells our story, and reflects the beauty of the region in the intricate inflections of colors that are so fleeting and unique to the dramatic Atlantic coast of Donegal.

Father and son complete all the processes from designing, warping, weaving, inspection and mending through to dispatch. Using yarn from a local spinner who produces a Donegal character yarn and with finishing also carried out by a local company, it means that all processes are carried out within 20 miles of where they live and work. Weaving is an important part of the culture and heritage of this area although today it is a skill that isn't commonly held. It just about survived the tsunami of globalised cheap labor that almost demolished indigenous production and enabled a slough of imposters to misappropriate the title of Donegal tweed.

The Molloy's feel personally responsible in ensuring the survival of our ancient craft so that it can be protected and promoted, and continue to inspire designers as an authentic representation of one of the most beautiful places in the world. Their knowledge has been passed down from father to son, for five generations, with patience, care and love. Each piece of fabric contains the Molloy story and by embracing modern techniques they are protecting this legacy, so that the majesty of Donegal tweed can continue inspire. It is their mission.

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WORDS BY JOANNE MCLAUGHLIN

*Image Molloy & Sons Weaving Archives*

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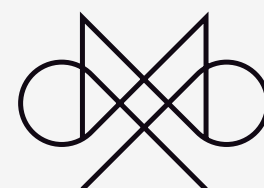
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