

T H E W O O L R E V O L U T I O N

-
Kirsten Anne Blackburn

-
Fashion Communication

-
Heriot Watt University

The Wool Revolution was a concept inspired by my personal sense of belonging and pride for an industry I am unknowingly absorbed by. Having grown up amongst the slumbering hills of the Scottish Borders, I was already aware to some extent the intricacies and complex traditions behind the textile narrative of knitwear. I found myself connecting with the project on a much deeper level than anticipated, after realising an aspect of my own identity and heritage lay within these stitches of finery.

When beginning the project, the Revolutionary aspect seemed a somewhat daunting attribute. The quiet and calm connotations of wool met with a bustle of rejuvenation hardly seemed to fit. However, after extensively researching into the historic significance of the sector, and how that significance flourishes in my hometown, I began to understand that a revolution was needed.

Johnstons of Elgin is one of the few woollen mills remaining in production in the Scottish Borders. Its humble beginnings in 1797 have stood the test of time, the brand now obtaining a flagship store in London as well as being represented on a global scale. I have always been fond of this company, with its impeccable care and respect for the industry producing some of the finest garments in cashmere and wool. Its confidence in knitwear design is why I chose this brand to enrich the modernity of The Wool Revolution.

I felt it was time for change. It was time for empowerment, colour, confidence and style. The wool industry is far too often cast aside as the lingering trade where we can only reminisce of days gone by. I myself pay witness to this attitude on a daily basis, wandering past shells of buildings that were once powered by the churning rhythm of looms and spinners. Now was my opportunity to present a concept beyond tradition and into a world of creativity.

The leading designers and photographers in fashion and knitwear were studied to gather a collection of images to inspire my own aesthetic. The use of statement pieces and dramatic styling became an apparent way to bring a sense of innovation and drama to the final images. Colour would also act as a key feature, rejuvenating the looks along with recognising fundamental aspects of Border scenery and linking its importance into the garments. Specific locations were chosen to emphasise this concept, from agricultural materials to overgrown grasses. The model was chosen specifically for her poreless complexion and rich skin tone, which would mirror the luxurious softness found within cashmere garments. Met with her urbanised look and dramatic features, I hoped these musings would add to the development of The Wool Revolution by exposing the industry to originality and diversity.

The completed publication of the campaign displayed all four of the final images, showcasing them individually but also within the context of their indented placement. Bustling city-centre locations would act as a key platform in distinguishing the brand and its new concept to an alternative audience. A fashion film was made to accompany the campaign, to reinforce the diversity and vibrancy that can exist within the knitwear industry.

I became extremely involved and absorbed by the on-goings of The Wool Revolution, realising the importance for creativity in traditional British textiles. Protection, acknowledgement and change stand at the core of this campaign, where I hope to have added a sense of pride and bravery into the historic sector of knitwear.