

The National Museum of Scotland – The Pringle of Scotland Story



The National Museum of Scotland is to host an exhibition from next week exploring the history of one of the world's oldest fashion brands. *Fully Fashioned: The Pringle of Scotland Story* marks the company's 2015 bicentenary, tracing its evolution from a small hosiery firm making undergarments to an international fashion knitwear brand, at the cutting edge of style and technology.

Displaying items worn by royalty, celebrities and sportspeople as well as some of the most iconic Pringle of Scotland pieces of the last 200 years, the exhibition will explore the pivotal role the brand has played in shaping the modern wardrobe.

Founded in 1815 by Robert Pringle, the company's origins lie in the development of the Scottish knitwear industry in Hawick, where it started out manufacturing luxurious knitted stockings and undergarments. By the early 20th century, it was applying some of the techniques used to create functional underwear to making fashionable outerwear.

Pringle of Scotland made fully-fashioned garments, tailored by machine to follow the shape of the body. Hosiery encased the figure but allowed freedom of movement, and in the 20th century the comfort which characterised hosiery became a desirable quality demanded of modern clothing and sporting attire.

Georgina Ripley, Curator of Modern and Contemporary Fashion and Textiles at National Museums Scotland said:

"Pringle of Scotland has a long, rich and complex history, and

has evolved to become one of the world's top heritage fashion brands. It is fitting that this touring exhibition will debut in Pringle's bicentenary year at the National Museum of Scotland – home to one of the largest and most comprehensive collections of fashion and textiles in Britain – and it promises to be a must-see for fans of fashion and design.”

Fully Fashioned: The Pringle of Scotland Story features objects drawn from royal wardrobes, Hawick Museum and the Women Golfers' Museum as well as Pringle's own archive. Highlights include a 1960s cashmere cardigan owned by Princess Grace of Monaco, a 1933 golfing outfit worn by legendary golfer Gloria Minoprio, a classic twinset and a blue cashmere cardigan designed by Otto Weisz.

Also on display will be three short films by Michael Clark Company, specially commissioned to explore the role of knitwear in the development of the modern wardrobe.

The films examine the unique properties of knitwear, including its warmth, flexibility and breathability. It was these properties which led to the shift from knitted garments being worn as underwear in the 19th century, to outerwear in the 20th century.

The commission carries on Pringle of Scotland's tradition of collaborating with Scottish creatives, including artists David Shrigley, Douglas Gordon, Robert Montgomery, and Alasdair Gray.

Alistair O'Neill, Curator of *Fully Fashioned: The Pringle of Scotland Story* said:

“Fully Fashioned is a useful opportunity to not only mark Pringle's 200th anniversary, but to demonstrate the centrality of knitwear to the modern wardrobe. The twinset has such an enduring sense of modernity about it, that it is exciting to be able to set this design classic into a broader context,

showing how Scottish knitwear really led the field in modernising the 20th century wardrobe.”

The company's long-standing commitment to exceptional design will also be explored. The arrival of Austrian industrial designer Otto Weisz in 1934 brought a European sensibility to Pringle's aesthetic. In the 1950s and '60s Weisz recruited designers from Glasgow School of Art, and together they created collections which married cultural heritage with technical innovation.

Pringle of Scotland continues to push boundaries today, and on display is a 2014 cable-knit polo-neck sweater which features 3-D printed plastic stitches combined with hand-knitted construction, linking the traditional with the cutting edge.

The Argyle pattern was pioneered by Pringle and a 1960s cashmere cardigan featuring the signature intarsia diamond pattern is an exemplary piece, showcasing the quality of the brand's craftsmanship.

A staple of the modern woman's wardrobe, the twinset – a fitted sweater with a matching cardigan – has been a Pringle of Scotland mainstay since the 1930s. The exhibition showcases examples of the look, including a 2010 twinset designed by Tilda Swinton.

This limited edition piece incorporates a darned elbow, inspired by a love-worn Pringle of Scotland twinset which belonged to the Scottish actress's grandmother.

Pringle has held the Royal Warrant for the manufacture of knitted garments since 1948, and has supplied underwear and outerwear to many members of the Royal Family. On display will be a sweater worn by HM Queen Elizabeth II, alongside a letter from Her Majesty thanking Pringle of Scotland for the gift.

Image has always been important to Pringle, which recognised the value of celebrity endorsement and artistic partnerships

as early as the 1950s. In the post-war era, the company used actresses to promote new designs both on and off the film set. It was the era of the 'sweater girl' and stars including Margaret Lockwood and Moira Shearer were photographed wearing their garments.

The company also established a tradition of selecting house models from its workforce. Staff were sent to London for deportment and modelling classes, and this mix of Hollywood glamour with the 'girl next door' sought to appeal to a wide market.

Fully Fashioned: The Pringle of Scotland Story comes ahead of the 2016 opening of four new galleries of decorative art, design and fashion at the National Museum of Scotland. The four new galleries are part of a £14.1 million project, which will create ten new galleries displaying National Museums Scotland's internationally important collections of science and technology, decorative art, design and fashion.

Photo shows Georgina Ripley, Curator of Modern & Contemporary Fashion & Textiles works on the exhibition. Image courtesy of Pringle of Scotland

Fully Fashioned: The Pringle of Scotland Story

Friday 10 April – Sunday 16 August 2015

National Museum of Scotland, Chambers Street, Edinburgh

ADMISSION FREE