

THE ARTS

## PHOTOGRAPHIC TREATMENT: CONNOLLY HOSTS CHRIS KILLIP

*Connolly England only recently cropped up on *The Rake's* radar, but it's continuing to make a firm impression...*

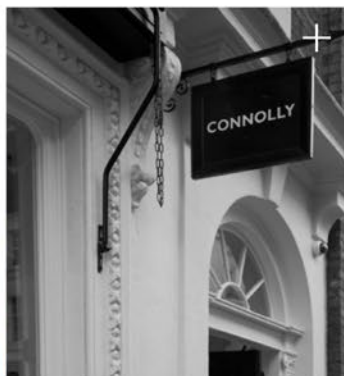
WORDS ALEKS CVETKOVIC



It has long been *The Rake's* belief that the truest expressions of luxury, particularly in the menswear world, are intrinsically linked with an appreciation of art. Good design, after all, is an art form. Those brands that we find the most compelling often approach design from this perspective, and appreciate that the act of creating good menswear must be informed by more than the technical requirements or limitations of clothing design. Connolly England is one such brand; a recently revitalized British brand no less. The launch of Connolly's new hybrid men's and women's collection a few months ago, designed by Marc Audibert, caused quite a stir in the luxury sphere (you can find our thoughts on the collection [here](#)), but the clothes themselves only reveal half of this new story.

Equally telling is the new Connolly boutique on Clifford St, an elegant three-storey Georgian townhouse that somehow channels the brand's identity through every brick and cornice. The store itself is exquisite, with its artfully curated collections of antiques, curiosities and discreet touches that subtly reference Connolly's motoring heritage. It is structured around different spaces dedicated to accessories and leather goods, the house's motoring collection, and to tailored pieces in different parts of the lower ground and ground floors. The first floor adds an entirely different component to the Connolly experience, functioning as a private art gallery and discreet spot in which to relax and take stock. Furthermore, the gallery is currently hosting an exhibition of the work of renowned British photographer, Chris Killip.

The townhouse itself hosted a private art gallery on its second floor prior to Connolly moving in and when the brand's owner Isabel Ettedgui made the decision to make Clifford Street the brand's new home, it felt natural to retain it. "Connolly has always hosted photographic exhibitions, it's a part of the Connolly culture," she says. That the brand should have a "culture" in its owner's eyes at all reveals Ettedgui's motivation to ensure that Connolly should not be seen as a soulless establishment. "Connecting with the arts and culture is a very personal statement of intent for Connolly," she explains. "Neither the arts or culture should serve as a dressing for the experience. The gallery space works because one informs the other and adds a depth of interest to Connolly."



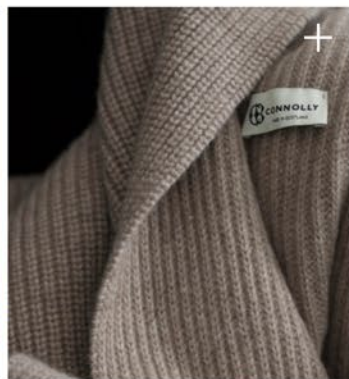


It does indeed, not least because in championing Killip's photography, Connolly creates an implicit link between its clothing and Britain's economic past, but also because Killip's work on display; stark studies of beleaguered industrial and working-class English figures captured during the changing landscape of the 1970s and 80s, feels at first like an odd choice to pair with the contemporary sophistication of the Connolly boutique. There is an intriguing connection between the two though, for it was Chris who photographed Connolly's old Wimbledon factory and its workforce for Isabel in the early 80s, given his fascination for "situations and people that interest me out of a curiosity about other people's lives."

To have his work on display in Connolly is serendipitous then, a reminder that Connolly is a quintessentially British brand that has weathered the years (much like the subjects of Killip's photographs), but also that it is, in its own way, a part of Britain's industrial past – a brand with real integrity. Many pieces of Audibel's collection refine traditional British workwear in some form, whether a contemporised take on the aran-knitted fisherman's sweater or refined executions of the traditional workman's peacoat, the references are all there. The colour palette throughout is monochromatic, with charcoals and navies offset by subtle shades of cream and tan with an understated quality that is reflected in Killip's work too.

As Killip puts it, "it is so important for luxury brands to engage with the arts and culture. It must be a little surprising for visitors to come across my work at Connolly, and find themselves in an unexpected encounter with other people's lives." Perhaps, but it is this unexpected, yet nonetheless fitting pairing that strengthens Connolly's identity. In the same way that the house was originally a manufacturer of practical motoring clothing but has never been constrained by the requirement for practical motoring clothes, No.4 Clifford Street is much more than a space to shop. Rather, it is a discreet cultural haven, a chic expression of Connolly's values and a truly refined spot in which to escape from the outside world.

[www.connollyengland.com](http://www.connollyengland.com)





CHRIS KILLIP, CLIFFORD STREET, CONNOLLY, CULTURE, GALLERY, MENS STYLE, MENSWEAR, PHOTOGRAPHY, RAKISH, THE ARTS

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