

# JOHNSTONS OF ELGIN

## New Bond Street, London

Design: Checkland Kindleysides  
Opening date: December 2015  
Store size: 140 sq m



Johnstons of Elgin is one of the few remaining vertical mills in the UK to produce knitted and woven cashmere and fine woollens, from fibre to the finished product. From its two sites in Elgin and Hawick in Scotland, the 218-year old company designs and manufactures high quality knitwear, accessories and cloth, with a strong focus on Scottish heritage and craftsmanship.

Indeed, it is the craft and spirit of the brand's textiles that inspired the design of its new store in London.

Opened in December, the five-storey building on New Bond Street houses retail spaces on the ground and lower ground levels, with wholesale and showroom areas on the upper levels. The interior has a contemporary design that draws on the

provenance and heritage of Johnstons of Elgin and its positioning as a label which presents customers with traditional timeless pieces with a twist.

The store concept, developed in collaboration with Checkland Kindleysides, takes the essence of a quote from Johnstons of Elgin that reflects the emotional heart of the brand: 'No matter how far we journey, our place will always be in Scotland'. 'These words were considered in every element of the design and choice of materials for the store,' says Joe Evans, creative director at Checkland Kindleysides.

Visitors enter the store via a small vestibule, where a tiled mosaic floor and archive photos on the walls begin to tell the brand's story. Doors from the vestibule lead



trade customers to the showrooms on the upper floors, while to the right, a door opens onto the ground floor of the store, which is dedicated to Johnstons of Elgin's women's accessories and knitwear collections.

A herringbone-patterned runner, especially designed and woven in Elgin for the concept, runs the full 12m length of the store, as if it has come straight off the loom. Providing a central stage for the accessories collections, the runner then flows through to the front of the store, dropping down through an aperture in the floor by the window, allowing a clear view into the basement.

The tables on which the accessories are displayed feature inclusions of recycled glass, a contemporary nod to Highland granite and the home of the brand. Further accessories are placed on pristine white plinths, with cashmere and vicuna scarves raised above the tables to articulate the texture and flow of the softly draped fabric.

Around the perimeter of the store, the exposed whitewashed brickwork and traditional white panelling provide contrasting textures, which are offset by the colour and luxurious quality of the cashmere. Referencing the mill, white 'threads' hang down from the perimeter like the warp threads on the loom to provide merchandising fixtures.

'In conjunction with these threads we utilised a variety of merchandising techniques for the different ranges, each of which is illuminated to emphasise the nap and tactility of the fabric with scarves presented on individual hanging hoops and knitwear hung alongside, allowing each item space to breathe,' explains Evans.



Fitting rooms to the left of the store have been kept purposefully clean white and simple to complement landscape imagery of the Highlands from seasonal photo shoots.

At the back of the store, a beautifully crafted jacquard woven cashmere hanging provides a fitting backdrop to the cashdesk. The hanging features Johnstons of Elgin's monogram, woven in muted grey/blue tones in the softest of cashmeres and is set against walls of the brand's deep navy blue.

A pistachio bonsai tree takes pride of place on the cash desk, referencing a tree at the mill in Elgin which seeded and grew from a pistachio that was smuggled half way across the world in a hessian bag full of cashmere in around 1890.

Throughout the store, found objects, artefacts and images take shoppers on a journey through the manufacturing heritage of Johnstons of Elgin.

Playful 'pins and thread' signage directs customers downstairs to the mens department, where the runner from the ground floor drops through the aperture

and wraps around a contemporary take of a traditional cast iron loom beam. The menswear is displayed in a similar way to the women's collections, with knitwear and accessories presented on a tiered table and on the 'thread' perimeter merchandising, with subtle changes in the materials palette to create a more masculine feel.

At the back of the space, alongside the men's fitting rooms, is a selection of Johnstons of Elgin's home interiors range with cashmere throws, cushions and upholstered furniture and furnishing fabrics hung on cast iron reclaimed antler hooks.

The lower ground floor also provides a showcase for the label's cloth story, with swatch samples lining the walls and a mannequin dressed in a jacket in an estate tweed signposting Johnstons of Elgin as a holder of the Royal Warrant.

'I love how the manufacturing story really does come across in the shop fit,' says George McNeil, managing director of retail at Johnstons of Elgin. 'The story of our weaving looms in Elgin comes across with subtle messages through the store.' **Rf**

