

Intoart x John Smedley

Inclusive art studio makes its first foray into fashion



Andre Williams holding his own design in collaboration with Intoart x John Smedley.
Photography by Takahito Sasaki.

For 18 years, South London art collective **Intoart** has worked with people with learning disabilities to achieve equal recognition in the world of contemporary art and design. For over 230 years, Derbyshire-based **John Smedley** has been producing the world's finest knitwear, and is heralded the world over for its dedication to quality, British craftsmanship and luxury fibres. This November, the two will come together to launch **a new capsule collection** of garments designed by **Intoart artists**.

Launching in John Smedley stores on **15 November** in time for their flagship Christmas window displays, this collection represents the first collaboration of its kind for both Intoart and John Smedley, as well as the biggest commercial impact that Intoart has had on the design industry to date.

'Intoart is delighted to collaborate with such a well-regarded British knitwear brand to develop a collection of handcrafted garments, with high production values and integrity, that mirrors the values and ethos of our own studio practice. When the opportunity arose, we were excited to take drawings from the Intoart studio into a knitwear collection to create something truly exciting.'

– **Ella Ritchie**, co-founder, Intoart



Ntiense Eno Amooquaye and Yoshiko Phillips' clothing and graphic backdrops for the Intoart x John Smedley Collection.
Photography by Takahito Sasaki.

The collaboration came about through renowned designer and creative director **Holly Fulton**, who, alongside her partner, illustrator **James Lambert**, have enjoyed a long-standing collaborative relationship with both John Smedley and Intoart.

Three of the **21 artists** currently working in Intoart's Peckham studio have each produced **three designs** for the collection, which includes **unisex jumpers, woollen dresses, a scarf** and a **shawl** – all featuring hand-drawn designs, expertly translated into intricate pieces of knitwear by the John Smedley team.

The three artists each have a **distinctive personal style**, but are united by a **strong visual language** that readily translates to fashion. Having seen the preliminary drawings, the John Smedley team were happy to work alongside Holly Fulton and James Lambert to guide each artist to explore their existing interests and ideas.

'We are extremely proud to be working alongside Intoart and their artists – this collaboration is our first partnership with a charity and it was incredibly important to work with an organisation whose principles are closely linked with our own. The artists and our knitwear designers have done an incredible job. The collaborative garments showcase a fantastic blend of creative design, talent and craftsmanship and all in a wonderful crescendo of colours and the highest-quality materials. We can't wait to see the consumer reaction when they are launched in store!'

– **Jess McGuire-Dudley**, Marketing & Design Director at John Smedley



(From Left) Ntiense Eno Amooquaye with her textile piece, Yoshiko Phillips' wearing her own design, Andre Williams holding his scarf, all from the Intoart x John Smedley Collection. Photography by Takahito Sasaki.

Ntiense Eno Amooquaye joined the Intoart collective in 2007. She works across the visual, written and spoken word through print, text, image and live performance. She has exhibited and performed in galleries and museums around the UK and internationally, and her bespoke placement-print silk dress was exhibited at the Victoria and Albert Museum's fashion galleries as part of London Design Festival 2017.

With accents in Cerise Pink, Amooquaye's three designs explore the iconography of fashion and its embodiment in the image of the fashion model.

Yoshiko Phillips has a bold, graphic illustrative style full of complex motifs, dazzling colours and engaging characters, which she deploys on fashion items, accessories, stationery and prints. Phillips' ink works on paper are inspired by traditional Japanese embroidery, textiles and block-printed Ukiyo-e art.

Since joining the collective in 2015, Phillips often draws on mythical creatures and animal imagery – and for John Smedley, she has created a series of eye-catching patterns in Blaze Orange that evoke the notions of predator and prey.

Andre Williams has been a member of Intoart since 2010. His work is characterised by arresting imagery and dramatic, often humorous typography. Williams applies his graphic drawing style and striking use of colour to screenprint and painted laser-cut wood reliefs of masks, robots and mystical creatures.

His John Smedley knits feature his attention-grabbing typographical style and wry wit, using Azure Blue to add emphasis to his high-impact comical messages.



Ntiense Eno Amooquaye and Andre Williams in the Intoart studio at Peckham Levels, working on their designs for the Intoart x John Smedley collection.

Photography by Richard Bevan.

In **early 2018**, the Intoart artists visited the **John Smedley mill in Matlock**, Derbyshire, to learn about the journey from design to finished garment and gain an understanding of the creative limitations and possibilities of knitwear production. With the guidance of Holly and James and the technical expertise of the John Smedley design team, the Intoart artists worked on their designs to realise their unique vision. This process ensured that the final designs produced are true to the original lines drawn by each artist, and that their **distinctive styles are preserved** throughout the transition from **paper to wool**.

'We have greatly enjoyed working with Intoart on several briefs over the last few years and when the opportunity arose to create a project focusing on the artists' first foray into garment design, it seemed an ideal opportunity to connect them with one of our key collaborators, John Smedley.'

Working with the artists from initial research drawings to fashion sketches and the lookbook shoot has been a joyous process. We can all learn things from each other and the process of guiding such strong creative styles and visions into the design realm has been a very exciting and stimulating one, culminating in the celebratory nature of the photoshoot which reflected the energy and playfulness of the artists' approach.'

– **Holly Fulton**, Creative Lead of the Intoart x John Smedley collection

With the **nine designs now finalised** and the garments **approaching launch**, the Intoart team is celebrating the success of its highest-profile collaboration thus far – and the realisation of its mission to **nurture new opportunities**, **challenge preconceptions**, and **champion the extraordinary talents** working in the **Intoart studio**. John Smedley may be the first major design brand to realise the potential of Intoart's artists and designers, but it certainly won't be the last.

The collection will be available to buy from johnsmedley.co.uk and John Smedley shops on Brook Street, Jermyn Street and New Cavendish Street, London, from 15 November 2018.

Notes to Editors

About Intoart

Founded in 2001 by Ella Ritchie and Sam Jones, Intoart began as an eight-week project to respond to a lack of high-quality arts education and limited opportunities for artists with learning disabilities. Determined to challenge preconceptions and overturn prejudices, Intoart aims to provide a platform for people with learning disabilities to become both visible and equal in the art world – not merely applauded for participating, but recognised and respected as creatives in their own right. Since its establishment, Intoart has become a permanent, full-time programme and studio space, supporting the work of 21 artists and designers, working in illustration, fashion, ceramics, product and graphic design. It is supported by Arts Council England and the Paul Hamlyn Foundation.

intoart.org.uk

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About John Smedley

Royal warrant holder John Smedley is renowned throughout the world as a leader in the production of fine gauge knitwear products. Founded in 1784 at Lea Mills, Matlock, Derbyshire – now the oldest manufacturing factory in the world – the company crafts beautiful, high-quality garments that are designed to last, made in Britain and distributed across the globe.

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About Holly Fulton

The Holly Fulton Studio offers a unique and ambitious approach to design. With roots firmly placed in fashion and textiles, and witty hand-drawn print at the heart of its output, the award-winning label has grown over the past 10 years to encompass multidisciplinary collaborations ranging from bespoke interiors, prestige packaging and capsule collections to consultancy and creative direction. A distinctive sense of graphic luxury, an understanding of innovative craftsmanship and a love of fitting pattern to projects inform the studio's ethos, as well as a passion for the creative process from in-depth research to the finessing of ideas.

hollyfulton.com

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About James Lambert

The award-winning East London-based illustrator has worked extensively across a broad range of graphic and illustrative projects, with clients ranging from Liberty and Selfridges to the Serpentine Gallery and Tate. Known for his individual approach to line and surrealist references, he has been creative directing the label Holly Fulton alongside the designer since 2012.

jameslambert.co.uk/

Instagram [@jameslambertstudio](https://www.instagram.com/jameslambertstudio)

For more information about Intoart, the artists it works with and the John Smedley collaboration, please contact **Dorothy Bourne** at dorothy@zetteler.co.uk or on 07939 200519.



Yoshiko Phillips in the Intoart studio at Peckham Levels, working on her designs for the Intoart x John Smedley collection.
Photography by Richard Bevan.
