FAD magazine

FROM PARIS TO THE PIER ARTS CENTRE ON ORKNEY, JONATHAN ANDERSON SHOWS AN ENDURING SPIRIT.

By Toby Upson • 8 July 2025



Andrew Cranston, Man with otter, 2017. Oil and varnish on hardback book cover. 14 x 22 cm. Private Collection. © Andrew Cranston. Courtesy of the Artist and Ingleby, Edinburgh.

Fashion is an industry based upon newness. The past is “last season”, derogatory. I suppose this is what separates ‘art’ from ‘commerce’. Art, as I come to know it, is nonchalant in the face of novelty for its own sake, seeing the past as an enduring spark, continually resonant and generous. Across his recent couture collection, and co-curated exhibition, Jonathan Anderson pays testament to this spirit.

Over the last month, the media and meme-makers alike have been going mad in their hype for Anderson’s first collection as the creative director of Dior. Scrolling through my Insta feed, in the weeks before his debut (June 27, 2025), I witnessed ‘sneak peaks’ as well as speculation; everyone wanted to know what Anderson’s New Look would be. A lover of fashion, especially the production values associated with fashion week shows, I watched Anderson’s mens summer 2026 catwalk live on my laptop, at home, in bed, comfy, totally removed from the high-glam fashion world. Staged in a space set up to look like a museal painting gallery — specifically the velveteen interior of the Gemäldegalerie (Berlin) — the presentation traded the baseless buzz of contemporary culture for a youthful twist on the timeless: 19th century jackets met baggy ‘90s jeans, the palette was pastel, elegant, with a queer pop of occasional colour, pink, blue and green.



Dior Summer 2026 menswear Courtesy of Dior

As Anderson’s show marched on, my eyes were continually drawn past the garments to the back of the stage space where two small paintings oversaw the action. Created by Jean-Baptiste Siméon Chardin, these dusty still lifes — a mound of gooey strawberries (*Basket of Strawberries*, 1761) and a Delftware vase of flowers (*A Vase of Flowers,* 1750/60) — were more than decoration. Purposefully placed, they propelled the models down the walkway. It seems fitting to note how the live steam made it look like Anderson’s models were walking straight out of these scenes, metaphorically bringing Chardin’s past into our present. Billed as an ‘empathetic collusion of then and now’, the formalities of Anderson’s designs, which echoed staples from Dior’s archive, complemented this anachronic animism: Donegal tweed rhymed with each painting’s surface, gown-like skater pants recalled their filling brushwork. A renowned lover of craft, Anderson knows how to work material details allusively.

Subtle and structurally well-turned out, I want to suggest Dior’s man of summer ‘26 embodies the sensibility of the flâneur — a leisurely observer of modern life, utterly detached from social rhetoric and routine. That’s a well-hashed reference, but it seems to fit the forms as well as the thinking that underlies Anderson’s collection. It’s probably why he was drawn to Chardin, an artist who turned away from trends to vision how the everyday houses the elegance of the past.

Something of Anderson’s thinking for the collection can also be seen in the exhibition he has co-curated at the Pier Arts Centre (Orkney Islands, UK) evidences this. Titled *Dreams of the everyday: paintings by Winifred Nicholson & Andrew Cranston,* in this show, artworks by Nicholson (1893–1981) and Cranston (b. 1969) rest beside one another, setting up a visual conversation between distant generations. As with Chardin’s work, here everyday intimacies become generous points of collision, resonant across the ages.



Winifred Nicholson, Japanese Anemones, c. 1930. Oil on board. 55 x 50 cm. Private Collection. © Trustees of Winifred Nicholson.

Nicholson and Cranston share an affinity for the ordinary. Rendered with an impressionistic low fidelity, their paintings depict ambiguous still lifes and cute familial scenes. Detached from social referents, their compositions are calm, materially inviting, with each artist sparing just enough detail to allow us to walk into their dreamy world. It is if we live concurrent with these scenes. Cranston's *Imagine a room* (2025), for example, images a precarious side table, drawer part opened, enveloped in a bright white room. Looking, we see a scraggly cat in the distance, a bowl of red-orange fruits, a laundry basket and that side table, a book stuffed under one of its legs. The work makes me feel like I am in a tenement flat, at the height of a Glaswegian summer, wondering about writing; a recurrent feeling.



Andrew Cranston, Imagine a room, 2025. Oil on canvas. 80.4 x 65.2 cm.© Andrew Cranston. Courtesy of the Artist and Ingleby, Edinburgh. Photograph: Patrick Jameson.

If Anderson's catwalk gave a material body to Chardin's sensibility, allowing this to live in the world through fashion, his curatorial work functions in a similar way, inviting us to see the generosity in the timeless.