

Christopher Nemeth

The House of Beauty and Culture. John Moore. Buffalo. Post Sacks. Japan. Deconstruction. Recycling

Words Andy Thomas Photographs Mattias Pettersson

CHRISTOPHER NEMETH WAS a true English original whose work resonates as loudly today as in the mid-1980s, when his deconstructive aesthetic first made waves. Talking to *i-D* magazine in 2009, a year before his passing, he explained the roots of his craft. “I had this pair of trousers that I’d picked up in a jumble sale, which I really liked the shape of, but after wearing them endlessly they had completely worn out. So I took them to bits, laid them flat, and made my own new version of them. That was how I made my first pair of trousers – as a way of getting back those trousers that I loved but had worn out.”

Graduating from Camberwell College of Arts in 1982, the Birmingham-born designer began experimenting with textiles, creating art from old clothing. His innovative use of salvage materials and artful deconstructions of fabrics would prove

highly influential. Mixing the DIY innovation of punk with classic English tailoring, Nemeth created a body of work that was both raw and beautiful.

It was through the House of Beauty and Culture that Nemeth built his reputation for pioneering design and craftsmanship. Set up by cult shoe designer John Moore in an old building off Kingsland Road in east London, the store was home to a collective of like-minded free thinkers. The collaborative environment and creative freedom resulted in brilliantly crafted and highly original clothes that worked perfectly together – a pair of dropped crotch trousers from Nemeth above Moore’s toe-strap boot; a Nemeth post sack jacket set off by Judy Blame’s salvage jewellery. The collective reached beyond the cultish pages of *i-D* and *Blitz* magazines, with international buyers and designers such as New York’s

Suzanne Bartsch and Martin Margiela scouring the store for inspiration.

In June 1986, Nemeth met his future wife Keiko at a John Galiano show and later that year moved to Tokyo, where they set up their first shop, Sector. With the help of Keiko, Nemeth continued to develop his craft, creating a huge archive of designs and a cult following across Japan. His vision continues to be realised today thanks to the tireless work of Keiko, and a Tokyo store that has become a mecca for Nemeth fans worldwide. We hope we go some way to capturing his influence and inspiration through these recollections from those touched by his humble genius. >

Christopher Nemeth, 4-13-5, Jingumae, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo, 150-0001, Japan
christophernemeth.co



**Harris Elliott**

"When I wear his pieces today, people are always like 'Where is that from?' That's across the board whether it's fashion or non-fashion people, they will always comment on the pieces because the cut is so different. He crafted his own silhouette, whereas a lot of other designs are rehashes of styles from yesteryear."

Jacket, 2007; jeans, 1998.

"My dad hated the image of fashion. He just put his art on wearable things. So fashion was a way for him to present his art."

Lui Nemeth, Christopher's daughter and co-founder of Primitive London
primitivelondon.co.uk

"I learned loads from my dad as an artist, but maybe the most important thing was that he didn't like to have something that he hadn't made. He just wanted to have everything that was his. He made clothes, furniture, even notebooks; that is something I really respect as an artist – to be surrounded by your creative objects. I think that creates your self, your space and world."

Riyo Nemeth, Christopher's daughter and artist
riyonemeth.com

"When he left art school he had no money and he couldn't afford canvas. He was a practical sort of guy, so the old style post sacks, they are basically like a duck canvas. He'd stretch them and paint on them. But he made his own clothes too. He'd get a suit from Oxfam and take it apart and lay it flat to see how it was made. That's how he learned to pattern cut."

Adam Howe, stylist
webberrepresents.com

"He was just a fucking genius. When I saw his clothes I was blown away. I was impressed and gutted that it wasn't me that found him. That was the most exciting thing in those days, you know, finding the latest clothes and the latest designer. And he was the man."

Mitzi Lorenz, member of the Buffalo collective

"I became aware of Chris through Judy Blame, who I had known for years. It must have been about 1985. And I remember Chris had started working with him and was all excited, and he and Mark Lebon were doing stuff together. Judy loaned me a jacket to wear to Japan on a modelling trip I was doing at the end of '85. It was one of his post sack jackets but it had a gold leather collar – it was fabulous."

Scarlett Cannon, healer, model and writer
heavenlyhealer.blogspot.co.uk

"I first met Chris around 1985-86 when I was staying in Camden, through people I was hanging out with like Judy Blame and Neneh Cherry. His clothing was just absolutely unique and I felt it was like he had designed it just for me."

Howie B, musician and producer
howieb.com

"He had this collection made from discarded post sacks. It was fantastic, just genius. Mark Lebon did a shoot for *i-D* magazine using Buffalo models and Judy Blame styled it. Then Chris, Judy and Mark became good mates and got involved in the House of Beauty and Culture. And I just remember the arrival of this genius new designer. I guess it was around the time when we were beginning to become aware of recycling and the importance of waste. So I particularly loved the fact that he was making pieces out of postbags and that they really looked great too. His designs were just amazing."

Mitzi Lorenz

'HE WAS THE SWEETEST GUY YOU'D EVER WANT TO MEET'

"He was stretching any kind of fabric you could paint on, the thicker the better, like a canvas. And when his clothing took off he started cutting his paintings up. At his graduation show he'd actually cut his paintings up to make clothes. It was amazing. He'd gone from cutting clothes up to make canvases to cutting canvas up to make clothing. I was just mesmerised."

Adam Howe

"I first met Chris in the mid-1980s and he was just this incredibly humble, sweet, quiet, funny man. He was an absolute gentleman; the sweetest guy you'd ever want to meet. And he just had his own complete style. It was, like, 'Wow, look at him.'"

Barry Kamen, member of the Buffalo collective, artist and stylist
barrykamen.com

"I used to do some work for John Moore at the House of Beauty and Culture. That was my connection to Nemeth. There were a lot of waves that came out of that place. What Nemeth did was to extend the DIY ethic that had come from punk into a whole new area of fashion."

John Marchant, director of Isis Gallery
isisgallery.org

"I was the Saturday girl at House of Beauty and Culture when it first started. The shop wasn't open every day. Back then Dalston was like a no man's land but the one day the shop was open was Saturday. It was totally a cult shop. You'd have people who were on the edge who had made this brave trip to come and visit the shop."

Scarlett Cannon

"What was going on with Chris and the House of Beauty and Culture was just different. It was very edgy – we used to call it recycling, so he was very much into this reclaiming kind of thing."

Jazzie B, DJ, producer and founder of Soul II Soul
soul2soul.co.uk

"I was buying Chris's stuff along with shoes from John Moore. Both of them had a really good hand and the stuff worked really well together. Handmade shoes and handmade clothing that were totally unique; it was not gimmicky but just full of style. They had the same attitude, taking something that was essentially British: really good craftsmanship."

Howie B

"I had started doing stuff at *Blitz* magazine around 1982-83, and basically I started to use my friends in the magazine. About 60 per cent of the stuff in the magazine came from charity shops and then people like John Moore, Judy Blame or Chris were making things especially for a shoot."

Iain R Webb, fashion journalist and fashion director of *Blitz* magazine
hopeandglitter.wordpress.com

"At the time, we were all just doing what we wanted to do. His work was very much in that feeling and spirit."

Scarlett Cannon >



Adam Howe
Jacket, 1986;
belt, 2000;
handkerchief,
2003; badges.

“All of us were creating an alternative to the mainstream. I didn’t want to be a stylist on a big magazine, we wanted to create our own thing. And I think that was really strong through their work and through Chris’s work especially.”

Iain R Webb

“All the people at the House of Beauty and Culture, they were just really skilled artisans. That is something I felt had been missed a bit since the days of Arts and Crafts. John Moore was like an old school cobbler. He’d make handmade shoes, and Chris was an incredible tailor. All the stuff was made to a really high standard. So it wasn’t just a punk aesthetic, where it was safety-pinned together, it was really well made.”

Adam Howe

‘HE WAS AN AMAZING PATTERN CUTTER; HE HAD A VERY LOGICAL MIND’

“I had an amazing collaboration piece – a Nemeth and Judy Blame coat. It was almost 1920s, hitched up at the back, made out of old velvet curtains and hessian, and hundreds of buttons, tassels and rope. I wore it so much it was like a comfort blanket. The feeling of that – to put that on was just so special. You could just pop it on with something casual or with something dressy and it just felt and looked amazing.”

Scarlett Cannon

“I’ve got two beautiful jackets that are the post sack ones. I think they are some of the first things he ever made. The thing I have that is really spectacular is Scarlett Cannon’s old coat. It’s really amazing because it almost feels like a Paul Poiret, that’s how beautiful it is. It’s so heavy. I have it in a box because I don’t want it to get ruined. It’s just an object that I absolutely love.”

Kim Jones

“It sounds more professional than it was, the idea of them forming a collective. Because at that time, most of the stuff that went on was quite organic in the way that things just happened. It was like-minded souls coming together. It was a response to what was around us, but that raw aesthetic also reflected the environment and life we were leading.”

Iain R Webb

“My older sister had some Nemeth stuff and she lived near the House of Beauty and Culture. It was something I was aware of from old copies of *The Face* and *i-D* magazines. I would also see people like Nellee Hooper wearing it. And I just loved that Hard Times look but also the way it was timeless.”

Kim Jones, artistic director, Louis Vuitton menswear louisvuitton.co.uk

“That whole world wasn’t really meant for mass consumption. It was meant for people who got it. And that was quite a small amount of people. If you saw Chris’s clothes around in clubs and so on then you knew you were amongst your own crowd. The same with Bodymap clothes, for example. If you saw a print in the far end of the street then you knew there was somebody else that was into the same thing as you.”

John Marchant

“Stevie Stewart and I, as designers, wanted to make a difference; we tried to create and invent in a modern way, taking inspiration from the world around us. It was a time of change; designers, musicians, filmmakers and choreographers were inspiring each other in a modern revolution. Christopher Nemeth and Bodymap were a leading force in this creative revolution.”

David Holah, designer and co-founder of Bodymap davidholah.com

“As with Westwood’s stuff, people would do anything to acquire Nemeth clothes. A pair of Nemeth jeans was the ultimate thing you could possibly have. So people would starve to get them, because they were never cheap.”

John Marchant

“I met Chris through Nellee Hooper and a lot of his style and everything just really connected with me.”

Jazzie B

“He has his own theory. He always said to us, ‘Original, original, original.’”

Lui Nemeth

“I really remember my dad’s studio next door to the shop and the house where we grew up. It was a big studio with a really high ceiling. I always remember the smell of the studio, the cigarettes, dust, fabric and paper. I also just remember it being really messy and it had two tiny birds flying around everywhere. He always used to come home with bird shit on him and all over the patterns.”

Riyo Nemeth

“I used to hang out with him in the studio all the time. He was obsessive, he would literally sleep there. Keiko would complain because he wouldn’t come home. He would get under the table and sleep there and then wake up and start again. He would do this week in, week out.”

Howie B

“Craftsmanship is a good point. He was a really good maker. If he needed clothes, he’d make them. If he needed a table he’d make it. He’d always figure out a way. He was totally practical. He was self-taught to the extent that when he had his first big store in Tokyo, Keiko got these quite expensive shop fitters in to kit it out. And Chris was like, ‘That’s all wrong’, he didn’t like it so he ripped it all out and remade it.”

Adam Howe

“It was craftsmanship and design. And of course recycling, which we loved. I’d always loved Judy Blame’s work and it was like a clothing extension of that but it had its own thing going on. Nothing like that had been seen before. Designer clothes were very fitted and couture. I always think the same about Bodymap as well, the way they were making things out of Lycra. People weren’t making things out of old post sacks. So it was the use of materials, the way it was put together, the shaping, the tailoring and really the whole work was just fabulous.”

Scarlett Cannon

“It was incredibly raw with that patchwork of fabrics, the undyed hessian and the sacking and stuff. He was using really raw materials, but then those things juxtaposed with traditional men’s suiting and wools. A lot of those jackets were like deconstruction with the insides out. It was as if the innards of the garment were almost spewing out. It had that raw energy.”

Iain R Webb

“He was the person at the forefront of deconstruction as a movement in the 1980s and that obviously is a significant thing. But that is only one very small part of what he did. He was a master cutter, self-taught; he was just an amazing pattern cutter, which started from this very logical mind and great intelligence he had.”

Claire Pringle, co-founder of Pokit pokit.co.uk >



Claire Pringle
Jacket, 2003; trousers, 2006.
Septimus
T-shirt, 2005.
Bayode Oduwale
Jeans, 2003.

“The stuff was just so shapely and the materials were always so beautifully layered. There was just something very eccentric, very British about it. There was also a punk thing. You could wear it anywhere – to pick up the rubbish or to a ball.”

Jazzie B

“I guess that was the thing – he was punk. All of his ethics were punk. That’s why we all loved it. It was timeless. It’s like that post sack jacket – I would wear it today as much as I would when he first came on the scene.”

Mitzi Lorenz

“He literally went around London at a certain time of the day and took the post sacks off the street and turned them into his material. I had a jacket and a pair of trousers and they had the original hooks on, he’d left all the bits on it so there was no disguise at all. That was what was so special about Chris. That was punk.”

Howie B

“Punk had set the whole tone, everyone was ripping stuff up and turning it upside down and inside out. But then it was the way Chris pieced it together, the quality of the workmanship. And of course he started off as an artist rather than a clothes maker, so he would make these amazing jackets and then frame them and put them on the wall. It wasn’t just about wearing it, so it becomes something else. Every bit of detail on Chris’s clothes was considered like a painting.”

Barry Kamen

“Punk was very much about creating things from things around you and usually stuff that people had thrown away. I think that aesthetic then fed through to the Blitz club and that culture that started with the New Romantics. The House of Beauty and Culture – even though it was quite desolate, very urban and gritty and reflected the decay of what was around us – was still quite a romantic ideal.”

Iain R Webb

“I guess from a romantic point of view, it always had that sort of Fagin vibe. I just really liked that kind of Dickensian thing.”

Jazzie B

“You can see the lineage and the progression. It’s one view but through a kaleidoscope of different techniques. It’s almost Dickensian but also very modern. It’s a work with soul so deep. So time doesn’t really matter.”

Bayode Oduwale, co-founder of Pokit pokit.co.uk

“In Buffalo we used him a lot. He fitted perfectly in that. What Chris did was very English as well because he was taking bespoke and tailoring and Englishness and flipping it on its head.”

Barry Kamen

“It’s really amazing that here his work is treated as art work rather than clothes, with galleries such as the V&A and the ICA.”

Lui Nemeth

“I always saw Chris as an artist who was very much into the purity of fashion design – the craft aspect and tailoring and how to reshape the body. All the discussions we’ve had over the years were much more about the idea of craft and how to somehow also make that central to your creative being. He was only interested in the practice itself.”

Norbert Schoerner, photographer and filmmaker clmus.com

“I came to London initially to study fashion. But the idea of fashion that I had in mind, looking at my dad and how he does it, felt a completely different thing when I went to the foundation course at Saint Martins. So I thought, ‘I want to do art first.’”

Lui Nemeth

“It’s scientific and rational but at the same time artistic. There is nothing like it. There are very few genuine original concepts. Chris had the talent do that. For me, Chris represents the essence of what English fashion and London style is about. There are so many lenses you can look at it through, from the gentleman to the ragamuffin.”

Bayode Oduwale

“My dad was wrapping his body with duct tape and making it flat. He always worked with a flat surface; he never used draping. I think that is because he has a love of painting and a love of canvas.”

Lui Nemeth



Barry Kamen Jacket, 1980s; jeans, shoes and socks, 2003; T-shirt, year unknown. **Scarlett Cannon** Jacket and trousers, 2013. **Judy Blame, jewellery designer** Waistcoat and shirt, year unknown; trousers, 1980s; shoes and socks, 2003. **Mitzi Lorenz** Shirt and apron, 2003; shoes, year unknown.

“There was a certain cut of his three-quarter-length jeans with that overlocked stitching, so it was a look that was easily identifiable as Chris. He has a silhouette that is very unique and identifiable as him. There are very few stylists that have something you can say is clearly them.”

Harris Elliott, stylist, art director and founder of H by Harris harriselliott.com

“He was mashing up and twisting jeans 25 years ago. And now the cut of Chris’s jeans has really inspired loads of people without them even realising. I think he had a big impact on denim.”

Barry Kamen

“While he was very matter of fact about things, he was also a very, very bright man. And he applied that intelligence to his work and that is what is so interesting. Whilst he maybe made things look easy, his cutting was so advanced and has been copied by so many different designers.”

Claire Pringle

“He had such a big impact on designers like Comme des Garçons and Martin Margiela and they were really taking his stuff and remaking it. And then obviously other designers would look at them and take from them and then the high street would finally take from these other designers. So nobody quite realises the source of so much of the way things have been broken down and turned inside out comes from Chris.”

Barry Kamen

“There was no compromise. I’ve been with him when he’s been walking around looking for material whether it’s here in London or Tokyo. He spent an awful lot of time researching, even looking into history books and finding out materials. There was a lot of effort and research even before he started making the things. His attention to detail was just outrageous.”

Howie B

“I even wear his badges on non-Chris pieces and friends can tell right away and say, ‘Oh, you’re wearing a bit of Chris.’ So because of his mark-making on his badges, even if they are really simple, they are identifiable as Chris statement pieces.”

Harris Elliott >

Norbert Schoerner Socks and rug, year unknown.



Norbert Schoerner Socks; rug.

**Kim Jones**

“What he really brings to my work is that mix and match feel. And I love that *Hard Times* look and things that are very normal then becoming very luxurious. The beauty was in the imperfection almost.”

Jacket, 1984.

“I’ve got a few pieces of his. It was actually a bit of a joke between us because his designs are very much for skinny people and I have quite a solid build. So he always sort of joked of making a special square edition for me. He actually made a jacket for me that I still wear.”

Norbert Schoerner

“It went hand in hand with what we were doing at the time. The shapes were just phenomenal. And obviously with dreadlocks and the tone of our skin it just kind of worked. So we were always wearing something Nemeth in our videos. In 1990 we literally wore all his stuff on tour.”

Jazzie B

“I’m not that well versed on the history of clothing being used as art objects. But there are a number of people who have done that sort of thing, going back to Sonia Delaunay. And then there were others who have deconstructed clothing and turned it around, such as the Left Bank Letterist movement. Nemeth’s clothes would absolutely be a connection to that.”

John Marchant

“We helped put his window display up in menswear boutique Bazaar. We were carrying one of his spaghetti paintings. It was made out of a deconstructed jacket that he’d stretched out like a canvas and then thrown glue, paint and spaghetti on it. We had no money, so we’d taken it all the way on a bus to put in a Mayfair window. It was like, ‘Is this how its meant to be?’ It was all a very DIY aesthetic so to infiltrate Mayfair – it felt like subterfuge.”

Adam Howe

“What came about seven years later of course in the early 1990s? Deconstruction. But Chris was doing that in the middle of the 1980s. That all owes a great deal to what he was doing for no other reason than he wanted to do it. Back in those days you made things out of rubbish because you didn’t have any money.”

Scarlett Cannon

“He influenced everyone from Levi’s to Comme des Garçons to the Antwerp Six. Recently, I saw a student I teach and she said everything I taught her class about Nemeth and the House of Beauty and Culture all made total sense now. So even 20-year-old fashion students are getting it.”

Adam Howe

“There was also the Hungarian furniture and books that were an inspiration. Our granddad is Hungarian. Dad had this book of furniture and used the patterns to make wallpaper for the shop.”

Riyo Nemeth

“It was totally intuitive, auto-didactic, and completely devoid of all the pomp you get in fashion. To be that fulfilled and to be that genuinely independent; that to us [Pokit] is what fashion is about. It’s about doing things your own way without the trend forecast. That’s what Chris represents to us.”

‘HIS WORK INFLUENCED EVERYONE FROM LEVI’S TO COMME DES GARÇONS’

Bayode Oduwole

“When we first saw his designs we were like, ‘Wow, there’s someone else on the same wavelength as us.’ And then we got to know him and discovered he’d been doing it for over 20 years already. When it came to clothing he used to say, ‘Well, the body isn’t made up of tubes is it? So why would you cut like that?’”

Claire Pringle

“In the beginning, he made a proper collection with Mark and Judy, but he stopped doing that. He just made what he wanted to wear. He only wore his clothes. I remember he hated his socks so he made some; or shoes or a portfolio case.”

Lui Nemeth

“He made everything. We went surfing once. A crazy idea; Chris Nemeth surfing. But he embraced everything. We drove down from London to Cornwall and the day before he was like, ‘I haven’t got any swimming trunks.’ The only fabric he had were post sacks. So he made a pair of post sack swimming trunks. No elastic and a big leather belt.”

Adam Howe

“He seemed quite shy and quiet but the clothes said it all. They were just like nothing you had seen and what everyone wanted.”

Mitzi Lorenz

“He had an aesthetic but he didn’t try and define that and box it, and to put it into something he could cleverly market. He was always incredibly modest, he never wanted to be the personality designer.”

Claire Pringle

“My best memory of him was during an *i-D* event in Florence. He helped hang the exhibition I organised during a very noisy one-night party in the Palazzo Corsini. He could hold his drink and more.”

Terry Jones, founder of *i-D* magazine i-donline.com

“When we said we wanted to move to east London from Tokyo, he moved with us. He was scared and wanted to protect us. When we mentioned Kingsland Road he was like, ‘No, no.’ It took us three years to convince him. We had to take him to Broadway Market. And then he lived with us for three months. But he liked London after that.”

Riyo Nemeth

“It’s so important to tell the proper Nemeth story beyond what happened in the 1980s. Unfortunately, people only get a very narrow slice of it because much of it is only available in Japan. But to be cool in Japan for 25 years, that is the pinnacle of success. They are very discerning. Whenever I am in Tokyo in Nemeth, everyone goes to pay homage. It is amazing that all these really big designers are genuinely humbled by this man’s talent.”

Bayode Oduwole

“Every time my mum comes to London people always know the history. The recent exhibitions at the V&A and ICA prove that and she was really happy about that. She says people respect history more here than in Japan, where they are more interested in having the newest clothes. But I think there is something in both.”

Riyo Nemeth

“The Japanese just embraced him with a fanatical zeal. They totally went head-to-toe in Nemeth. The only person I knew who dressed like that was Chris, and that was because he didn’t buy any other clothes.”

Adam Howe >

“I worked with Judy Blame on a project back in 2000 and it was him who told me about Chris. And then I went to Tokyo and met Chris around 2005, having become a bit of a fan of his. I went to the store, got on well with him – really lovely guy. And now whenever I go to Tokyo I always pop to the store and see his wife and buy a pair of jeans or shoes. It’s almost become something of a mecca when I go to Tokyo. There is kind of like a cult for Chris over there.”

Harris Elliott

“Japan is maybe more about buying the style, but I don’t think they go as deep as here. I feel people here look at the history more and put it into the context of that time.”

Lui Nemeth

“He had a big following in Japan. Also the craftsmanship, with people helping him make stuff – there was an attention to detail where he got his clothes made that he would never have had here. That whole cottage industry stuff that was going on in Japan in the 1980s and ’90s was really taking off and he was part of that.”

Howie B

“Our parent’s shop is really unique. I think it’s because everyone goes there to hang out. My mum brings out wine for friends and customers. They always kept things small and beautiful.”

Lui Nemeth

“It’s not about being nostalgic because his work was so progressive. When we discovered him around 1997, all that deconstruction and recycled stuff was still there. You could still see that lineage but it was much leaner, much sharper. People tend to focus on his older work, which is utter genius; you look at the cuts and shapes today because Keiko [his wife] still uses all the patterns. It’s still fresh, but you also need to look at his contemporary stuff.”

Bayode Oduwale

“The point about his contemporary stuff is that he used to rework ideas obsessively. If he had an idea he wanted to get to, he would rework and rework to hone down that idea to a point he was happy with. And I’m not sure how many designers actually put that much time into it.”

Claire Pringle

“There are maybe 200 patterns in his archive. And they keep reproducing, using different fabric. My mum buys off-cut fabrics from a tailor’s in Regent Street.”

Lui Nemeth

“In Japan, we’d always spend time at his studio and hang out with him. He’d always just get on with stuff, drawing something or cutting and sewing in mid-conversation. He very much had his own rhythm.”

Norbert Schoerner

“I still think he is really relevant today, in the same way as that era of Buffalo is. That whole aesthetic in the way people wear clothes and the way stylists and style magazines create stuff today; Chris was definitely part of the movement that influenced that. So I think there are a lot of people who will be replicating his style and won’t even know that’s where their reference points are coming from.”

Harris Elliott

‘HE’D WORK WHILST CHATTING; HE HAD HIS OWN RHYTHM’

“You look at it now and it still stands up. I think his legacy of course is just coming into the fore now with all this 1980s stuff that is prevalent. So I think that is what will inspire and influence the young ones – I hope. He was quite an unsung person here and I think it’s really important he’s now being recognised.”

Scarlett Cannon

“He was one of my all time favourite designers and we had talked about doing something together. And then sadly he died shortly after. He has that cult following in Japan and people like Rei Kawakubo [Comme des Garçons] still support his legacy. He’s an influence on so many people.”

Kim Jones

“It’s such a shame that Chris has died. Now the ICA show has put a lot of those things in their historical framework.”

John Marchant

“For me it’s his staying power in terms of his hallmark. What he did was so unique. Fashion kind of teaches you that you always need to do something new to be relevant, but if you have something that strong, it’s about style and not fashion. And I think that is where Chris’s influence lies. I would always want more people to be aware of him.”

Harris Elliott

“His legacy is very important. I collect it and would like to give it to a museum or something in the end so there is a proper archive. They did a really amazing archive in one of the Comme des Garçons stores in Japan with all these pieces that were just so incredible. The fabrications and the way he mixed and matched. And you would imagine it came from chaos, but when you went to his studio it was so immaculate and organised. Every pattern was in a box around the room and everything was so perfect and orderly. There was a real method to it that I thought was just so incredible.”

Kim Jones

“He used to just cut the patterns and throw them on the floor. There were piles of pattern scraps and fabrics all over the floor. But when he moved, he suddenly got clean and tidy. It was strange but he started making his portfolio with files and started organising all his drawings and pictures. Not by dates but very ordered. I was talking to my grandma, my dad’s mum, last week and she was saying, ‘Don’t you think when he got tidy it felt like he was archiving and getting ready to pass it down.’”

Lui Nemeth

“Keiko [his wife] was 50 per cent of the brand; she just hasn’t put her face forward. They were always a team. While Chris was about the designs, she was about the fabrics and the one who actually put them into a collection. Keiko was a buyer when she first met Chris. She bought the first Galliano collection and took it to Tokyo. She’s got an amazing eye and she has always put the Nemeth collection together. Chris died tragically young but his brand is still as important and directional as it’s always been. As long as she is there to curate the work, it will be true to what it was.”

Claire Pringle

“He kept loads of drawings, books that he made and paintings just for himself; not intended to be seen. And I think that’s really beautiful. It’s easy to misunderstand the point of making something. When he died, Riyo and I went into his studio and we saw thousands of works we’d never seen.”

Lui Nemeth ■



Jazzie B

“When I am in Japan, I always go to the shop. Sometimes I say you don’t know the prophet until he’s gone.”

Shirt, trousers, shoes and socks, 1988-2012.