



Benu Berlin

GETTING THE BLUES

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WHY THE IMPORTANCE OF DENIM HAS GROWN TO UNPRECEDENTED HEIGHTS

Denim has long been an important fashion category. However, today, with a growing acceptance of denim as a form of formal dress, as well as denim manufacturers' increasing receptiveness to trends and innovations, its role is more prominent than ever. Emerging designers are reinventing the fabric, established brands are reintroducing it into their collections, and high fashion labels are adapting denim to their catwalk shows. It is quite telling that banks such as JP Morgan are opening their workwear policy to include denim: formerly a blue-collar workwear item, jeans are now acceptable in formal situations – and their sales are soaring.

Mariette Hoitink, founder of the **Global Denim Awards**, notes: "Some people still see denim as a heritage fabric; but if you look at what's happening in terms of fabric innovation, transparency of the supply chain, durability and sustainability, you will see that denim is ahead of the fashion game." Emerging designers are offering new takes on the material: **Anbasja Blanken** (winner of last year's Global Denim Awards) has collaborated with denim mill ITV Denim on special glow-in-the-dark denim and light translucent filaments, elevating it to couture level; **Vivi Academy** combines denim with laces, silks and ruffles, feminine unicorn drawings and flower prints.

Established brands are refocusing on denim as their core fabric. **J Brand**, for example, has scaled back its fashion offering to concentrate on its denim line. **DL1961**, too, has presented a strong denim-based collection with skirts, dresses and jackets, adding some leather items to complete the look. Even shoe labels are toying with the fabric: at the last edition of **Micam**, the leading footwear trade show, **WeAr** editors spotted multiple offerings of denim boots. Meanwhile, the plus-size market is embracing the potential of this category, too: a number of companies offer jeans styles starting at size 12, with **Slink Jeans** (founded by a co-founder of **Joe's Jeans**) leading the way. The latest addition to the plus-size denim scene? **Good American**, a brand launched in 2016 by a certain Khloé Kardashian.

In a world where denim can be worn by investment bankers and audience members at the opera, there is an increasing consumer demand for this product category, and a lot of these consumers do not shop on the high street. So the time to invest in premium denim lines is now: retailers, take note.