



SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE DENIM TRENDS: CURRENT OUTLOOK

Sustainability in denim is a term that evokes all the right feelings related to ethics, savings and social responsibility. However, the word itself speaks more to an end result when in fact, the industry as a whole is moving towards sustainability while embracing social responsibility. WGSN looks into the top socially responsible denim trends.

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As denim is a bit more complicated and requires a great deal of care and love during the production process, more than other garments, denim receives a very negative wrap when the strain on water, chemicals and energy is considered. That being said, we've recently seen major developments in almost all areas of production as innovations meet the demands of brands, demanding a more aggressive position on a sustainable future.

There is a major shift in socially responsible trends successfully translated into designs that mass market retailers and their consumers are embracing. The key has certainly been to offer products that are not only created in a socially responsible manner, but are also on trend and aesthetically sit next to other trendy garments created in a less than ethical manner, thereby offering the consumer a truly socially responsible alternative.

THE OVERVIEW

There are new fabric innovations effecting denim fabric mill production like, new production machinery developed to aide reduction of water,

chemical and energy dependency, and quite excitingly, there are brands that have redesigned products that focus on reducing, reusing and recycling denim to create new looks. As brands target millennials quite familiar and passionate about social responsibility, the industry (fabric mills, cut sew facilities and denim wash houses) responds with these new innovations in order to further promote a move towards a sustainable future.

FABRIC INNOVATIONS

Very exciting developments have come out of the Levi's camp in the recent months. Levi's has created the world's first pair of jeans made from regenerated post-consumer waste cotton in collaboration with textile technology startup EVRNU. Using five discarded cotton t-shirts and 98 percent less water, Levi's has made amazing strides by creating a circular economy that enhances the life of cotton and reduces waste by pumping new life into used clothing. Levi's has also partnered with ECONYL® to create a new men's collection made from regenerated nylon from waste materials such as fishing nets and spent carpets. ECONYL® collection with Levi's is another evidence of the brand's commitment to a sustainable supply chain.



RESPONSIBLE MANUFACTURING

New developments in denim production help to conserve natural resources and reduce chemical dependency. In some cases, new developments are mere improvements or updates to existing innovative technology in terms of production machinery. Levi's continues to lead denim innovations with their latest Tonello collaboration. The product is Nostone, a product created to eliminate the use of pumice stones

used to create stonewash jeans. The savings are immense. The need for stones is eliminated, which also reduces critical steps in the washing recipe which relates to adding and removing the stones, a rinse step to clean the jeans and an additional rinse step to wash away chemicals. The look is amazing. The usage of ice-blasting is certainly not new to denim. However, strides have been made to enhance machinery in an effort to add greater detail to dry processing.

The same is true for new innovations in laser technology. Many factories are moving towards 100 percent reusable water through advancements in water treatment. These advancements are clear evidence of a shift in the industry, based on consumer demands and brand's positive response to social responsibility. I believe its worth mentioning that these developments also extend to factory workers, reducing exposure to harsh chemicals while reducing demanding manual processes.

In the last year, brands have started to offer refurbished and reshaped Levi's 501s, providing new takes on original fits. The indigo colour-block trend diversifies, tapping a range of inspirations to update this perennial trend. Retro themes drive 1970s-style patchwork in fitted trucker blocks. Driven by the strong remade trend, brands explore reworked cut-and-sew updates, inspired, of course, by Levi's but also by at the moment brands Vetements, Redone, Off White, Frame Denim and high street brand H&M. These designs focus on reducing, reusing and recycling. The designs are certainly socially responsible as they promote the use of existing denim garments to create new and fashionable looks. High street brands offer such looks, in mass production, by combining and washing varying shades of fabric and strategically patching them together to help create a more cost effective option, without the use of actual vintage garments. These efforts help achieve the remade look, but do very little to advance reducing reusing and recycling. However, it is very promising that high street brands promote this aesthetic.

As there are no current guidelines for brands and the industry professionals to follow, sustainability remains a very hot topic. I believe its very important for the industry to build a governing body, charged with building a foundation that assist brands and sourcing partners with a clear understanding of how to create socially responsible garments.

For a full seasonal overview of the trends for Denim, please visit WGSN: www.wgsn.com