

Casual Fabrics and Sustainable Technologies

WeAr

DENIM



Artist: Ian Berry

THE WOW EFFECT

New innovations shaping the future of the industry.

MATERIALS & CHEMISTRY

Rethinking fibers, finishing techniques, and the role of chemical innovation.

DENIM TRENDS

Key looks and concepts for upcoming collections.

NEW TOOLS, NEW PROCESSES

From AI to laser, how technology is changing denim development.

Issue 10 – 1/26

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DEAR COMMUNITY,

New developments are constantly emerging in finishing, fibers, dyeing, automation, and technology that move beyond concept and into application. More often than not, a simple sentence is heard: "Wow, that works?" Solutions unthinkable just a few years ago are now entering production.

This issue of **WeAr Denim** is dedicated to the latest innovations and what drives the industry and its players. As usual, there is a focus on denim, but it has become apparent that denim's heritage has created an idea - almost a feeling - that goes beyond its traditional definition as a dyed and woven fabric. Today, it is equally about the broader perception consumers have of it. That is also why **WeAr Denim** has always carried the subtitle 'Casual Fabrics and Sustainable Materials'.

'Denim' as a concept remains an important force in the fashion world. Other fabrics increasingly mimic its appearance and attitude, creating a palpable shift that touches the entire industry. It is no longer merely about finishing, but about examining fabrics from the very beginning - fibers, chemical compounds, recycling opportunities, and material combinations. Developing this broader un-

derstanding is essential as we move forward in a landscape defined by rapidly evolving technologies and the rise of AI.

Our industry will undoubtedly continue to increase its efficiency; in fact, it is already facing a new technological revolution. Yet it will be the human creative touch, the artisanal approach, and the value we add to each garment that prevents fashion from becoming monotonous by the use of technology.

Our community - interacting at trade shows and industry events - will play a key role in this changing landscape. Ideas and innovations are tested, discussed, compared, and challenged in shared spaces. Only through dialogue can we advance and steer the industry.

WeAr Denim represents the voices of this community, and this edition aims to better understand how the industry is evolving and where it is heading. Resilience and collaboration are key to a brighter future.

Enjoy your read.

Ezequiel Cevey & Shamin Vogel
Editors

DENIM AT A CROSSROADS



ADRIANO GOLDSCHMIED

Some of the Godfather of Denim's final thoughts were devoted to the industry. For this issue of WeAr Denim, he shared his ideas on technology, sustainability, and advice for the next generation.

The market is sending mixed signals. Some are reporting a decline in demand, particularly those operating strictly in the basic segment. At the same time, we are seeing encouraging signs from companies introducing new technologies and approaches to sustainability, especially those who view denim as a broad canvas where design has free rein.

I believe that while introducing new technologies is necessary, it is not enough to revive the market on its own. Technology can inspire new approaches and design concepts. However, implementing it successfully and creatively requires a strong understanding of the basics. That means doing your research from fiber to the finished product, studying the history and tradition, and having firsthand experience working with the material. Tradition cannot be replaced by technology. If it is, it will lead nowhere - or at least nowhere interesting.

What is encouraging, however, is the level of activity I see in the area of sustainability. Re-

cently, I have been working on digital printing in denim. While this is not entirely new territory, it has opened up a wealth of possibilities by introducing fresh perspectives.

As you know, I have always been passionate about fibers - that is where everything begins. It is an area that continues to inspire me to explore new developments, introduce new fibers, and create new blends. When we introduced hemp, it allowed us to give traditional denim a fresh new look. The new collection 'The Highlands', which I am developing for **Pioneer**, introduces wool in the warp, creating a completely new hand feel. These are examples of how textile innovation can inspire design, blending technical development with new textures and aesthetics that we may not have had previously considered.

The advice to new designers is simple: Always follow your convictions. Trust your creativity. Look to the future - but never forget the past.

IN MEMORIAM

Adriano Goldschmied was born in Trieste, Italy, in 1944 and passed away early April 2026 in Italy.

He was the creator of the legendary Genius Group, which he founded, along with numerous other brands, such as Diesel, Replay, AG Adriano Goldschmied, just to name a few.

He traveled between the continents and was at the forefront of the L.A. premium denim movement, constantly experimenting with innovative materials, washings and finishings.

Not only was he one of the greatest jeans designers of all time, but he was creative in every detail, personally down to earth, gentle and had a cool personality.

We all will miss him. His legacy is huge and will be remembered for decades and generations to come.

Rest in peace, old friend.

Klaus Vogel
Publisher

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CRAFT

CUTTING EDGE

EXPLORING INFINITE POSSIBILITIES

Bossa

KEY DENIM TRENDS

EZEQUIEL CEVEY

Denim for 27/28 moves across contrasting directions all at once. The material shifts between nostalgia and reinvention, with references to archives and past decades reinterpreted through contemporary construction, volume, and surface treatments. At the same time, there is a clear move toward expressive silhouettes and a renewed focus on attitude, where denim becomes a vehicle for identity rather than simply a functional fabric.

The following categories outline the key directions shaping denim for upcoming collections.

BOLD VARSITY

Denim channels collegiate prep with a sporty edge, fusing university lettering, varsity stripes, and athletic taping into structured jackets, pants, and hybrid bombers. Oversized letterman styles in crisp indigos and cream washes nod to Ivy League archives while amplifying the look with bold contrast stitching and embroidered crests. **Louis Vuitton** layers varsity banding onto cropped denim truckers, while **Maison Margiela** introduces embroidered logos mimicking team patches on straight-leg styles with subtle water sports references. Colors pop in navy primaries, oxblood reds, and heather grays, often paired with lighter washes.



MAISON MARGIELA



MASHA POPOVA

RETRO STAR

Glam-infused 1970s rock 'n' roll reigns, with starburst motifs, metallic sheens, and platform-ready flares that evoke stage-ready excess. Low-rise flares and bootcuts shimmer in silver-foiled washes and glitter-laced blacks, accented by rhinestone studs and slashed detailing for a Bowie-era strut. **Roberto Cavalli** deploys cosmic star prints with heavy whiskering, while **Stella McCartney** explores the 'more is more' aesthetic with fully studded jeans. **Masha Popova** adds retro lapel collars to denim shirts in holographic blues. Finishes such as velvet overlays and dew-kissed metallics push the glamour further, grounding it in wearable glamor rebellion.



GUCCI



DSQUARED2



DIESEL

SLIM SHADY

The slim silhouette returns with a darker, rocker-inflected attitude, tapered legs in deep washes and distressed with asymmetrical rips. These are not '90s skinnies; instead, they appear armored in matte charcoals, faded obsidians, and acid-etched indigos, often worn low-slung with belt-loop chains or embedded studs. Roberto Cavalli shreds slim flares at the calf for a glam-grunge hybrid, while **Gucci** presents ultra-skinny silhouettes in dark washes. The overall vibe is brooding and elongated, ideal for stacking under boots or layering with moody separates.

BARREL RIDERS

Ballooning barrel silhouettes dominate, with rounded, voluminous legs that cinch at the ankle or knee to create sculpted curves that expand from hip to hem. These exaggerated forms experiment with materials beyond stiff selvedge or ultra-soft stretch denim. **Dsquared2** presents bold, modern looks mixed with technical sportswear influences, while Louis Vuitton sculpts high-waisted barrels with asymmetrical seaming. **Harri's** pleated barrel flares feature tonal embroidery. Washes range from raw indigos to faded neutrals, emphasizing volume that moves with the body.

THE ARCHIVES

Brands excavate vintage workwear and house archives, reissuing faded bib overalls, engineer pants, and railworker jackets with meticulous distressing that honors tradition. Mended patches, selvedge tickings, and tobacco-dyed fades evoke 1930s laborwear and 1980s deadstock, layered with modern hardware. **Acne Studios** revives archive straight-leg styles from 1996, while **Diesel** revisits multi-pocket coats. **Fear of God** incorporates full denim workwear looks, and Gucci nods to floral-stitched railman shirts. Techniques such as stone-washing and chain-stitching preserve the relic aesthetic, prioritizing heritage blues.

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WHAT IS DENIM?

DENIM PREMIÈRE VISION

If someone mentions denim, we instinctively think of one fabric: indigo-dyed warp, white weft, 3/1 twill. A definition that is technically correct, yet far from reflecting today's reality. In the industry, denim is no longer just a fabric, but something that mutates and evolves alongside us and with society.

Looking at recent collections and the AW 26/27 runways, only a small portion of what we see is actually indigo. Mills are increasingly diversifying towards casualwear and garment-washed products. We see denim blended with Lyocell that behaves like drapery in modern tailoring, shirts with ruffles and jabot collars, fluid dresses with laser-printed damask effects.

Denim is vast. It changes constantly. Outside technical circles, 'jeans' now retain a denim-like appearance rather than adhering to a strict definition. The sector evolves quickly, and mills are adapting. The market demands both constant innovation and a sense of heritage. At the same time, gabardine ranges are expanding, while washing techniques and chemical processes are becoming increasingly sophisticated.

Companies like **Officina39** and **Montega** are developing leather-like or crocodile-skin effects that open new creative directions. Tanneries experiment with leather finished to resemble denim, while lace makers create indigo-dyed lace and embroidery. Denim inspires beyond its own category. The idea of a 'worn' product has expanded across segments, from luxury garments with highly engineered washed effects to more accessible developments.

Denim has become a reference point, a source of inspiration. Brands like **The North Face** or **Stone Island** have developed entire lines inspired by technical denim.

This season at **Denim Première Vision**, 'A Living Future for Denim' will be explored: a heritage fabric that carries a strong cultural history and is rooted in collective memory. Using denim in unexpected contexts becomes a way to express identity, conviction, and personality.



Aalto – Vanessa Agostini

We see **Juun.J** creating silhouettes inspired by historical garments. Denim becomes esoteric or spiritual, as seen in the graduation work of Antwerp student Floran Polano. It appears romantic in **Dior** Pre-Fall 2026, and takes shape as knitwear in the collections of Vanessa Agostini at **Aalto** or **Anthony Calydon**. It becomes expressive in the graffiti work of **Gerrit Jacob**, three-dimensional in the designs of **Goomheo**, transparent in **Ponder.er**, and jewel-like in **Nibgnus**.

Today, its symbolism and heritage keep denim alive, despite its constant mutations.



THE CORE OF PERFORMANCE

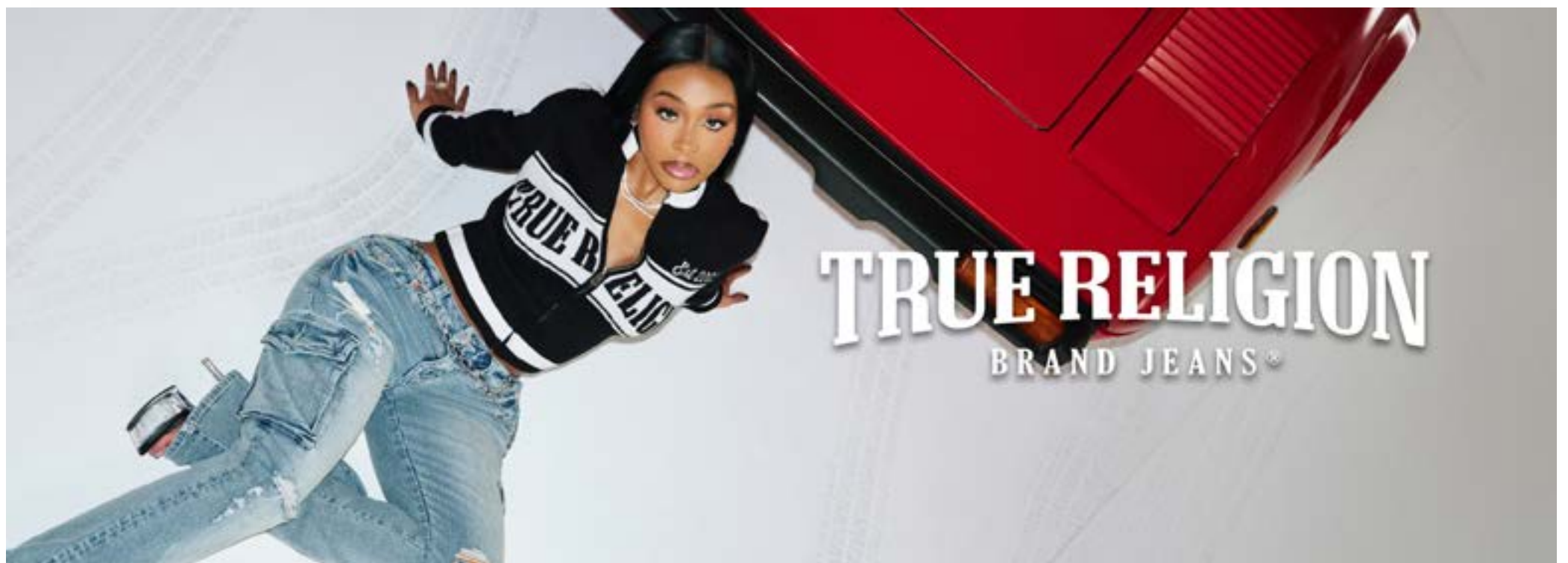
Performance is becoming a key word throughout the industry. **WeAr Denim** asked trade event **Performance Days** for a comment on the latest developments in performance textiles.

Circularity is becoming more visible across material development, and at the March edition of Performance Days, it was presented less as a concept and more as a starting point for future collections. The Trend Forum, focused on Summer 2028, highlighted how textile-to-textile recycling is moving into broader application, with both mechanical and chemical processes expanding beyond polyester into cotton, wool, and new nylon systems. Enzymatic recycling is also entering the conversation, pointing to further development in how materials can be reintroduced into the value chain.

This shift is reflected in how performance textiles are evolving across categories. Baselayers are exploring bio-based fibers, including hemp-derived cellulosic materials. Midlayers focus on lighter constructions and adaptable layering systems, while softshell fabrics are moving toward softer structures that combine stretch, protection, and comfort. Weight reduction and material responsibility are becoming defining factors rather than secondary considerations.

At the same time, performance materials are extending into fashion. At the recent show, The CubeArchive, a vintage archive, and **Diesel** identified four themes bridging material research and design: Check, with contrasting textures reinterpreting classic patterns; Devoré, creating transparency and layers through selective burn-out; Garment Dye, evoking the irregular color and softness of lived-in garments; and Denim, reimagined through printed illusions, jersey optics, and jacquard to create lightweight, functional fabrics. Here, denim was presented not as a traditional fabric category, but as a visual reference adapted to performance requirements.

The overall direction suggests that circularity and design are no longer developing separately. Material innovation, recycling systems, and creative application are increasingly aligned, shaping how future textiles are conceived and used.



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EFFICIENCY AT THE CENTER OF INNOVATION

Cathryn Xu, CEO of **Dinghui**, explains how AI is shaping production and design, outlines the competitive edge of China, and praises the importance of client feedback.

How do you see the landscape with new technology?

We take a long-term approach to technology that enhances knowledge and tools. Over the past year, AI has been the most significant shift in China. Retailers are already applying it – as seen with **Alibaba** – allowing consumers to order through a single app, making shopping faster and more engaging. The same shift is happening in production.

Our headquarters are very close to Alibaba in Hangzhou, a key AI hub, giving us daily exposure to new developments. We are introducing AI step by step across our production, from sampling to the final product. We began with AI-driven fabric inspection to increase efficiency and are now expanding into final inspections, laser scheduling, and production planning. Designers are already using AI for adjustments, styling, fabrics and colors.

How do you see AI impacting workers?

AI will take over repetitive tasks, increasing efficiency and allowing people to focus on creative development and craftsmanship. This already enables us to react faster to trends and client needs. Many machinery companies in China are integrating AI, and we closely track these developments. Staying current with technology keeps us competitive. At the same time, we prioritize our workforce. In most cases, new technology shifts roles rather than replaces them.

What are the advantages of production in China?

China provides immediate access to technological innovation, particularly in hubs like Hangzhou.



Production here is fast, flexible, and on-demand, aligning with Dinghui's model. We consistently invest in advanced machinery: e-flow technology instead of PP; laser technology for precision; and automated button systems for exact logo placement. These investments reduce errors, improve consistency, and create better working conditions. As a result, we have built a highly efficient and genuinely sustainable production facility. Our denim laundry processes are resource-efficient, which positions us well for the future.

How do you approach recycling?

Recycling and water reduction are key priorities for us. We recently partnered with **UseDem** on a used denim initiative at **Kingpins** China-Hangzhou, installing 500 upcycled jeans. Of course, sustainable production is important, but when you start reusing materials, it truly changes the impact. By recycling denim and polyester, we actively reduce environ-

mental pressure. Our target is 20% recycled cotton per garment, which we are close to achieving. This progress is ultimately driven by client demand. Feedback enables us to implement new solutions and move forward together.

How do you take and process feedback from clients?

Feedback is critical to progress, and it is vital to us as a company. It challenges us and often becomes a competitive advantage. For example, a recent client request for precise logo placement led us to install automated button systems to ensure full accuracy and consistency. We value input at every level. Our sustainable factory itself is the result of client requirements. Implementing change – from permits to construction to machinery – takes time, but the long-term value is clear.

Tell us about the strong creative influence from Asia.

China has become a powerful creative hub, producing a new generation of strong designers. In Asia, consumers adopt trends quickly and confidently, while in Europe it has become harder to identify trends on the streets. We actively work with university students to support this new generation. Instead of starting with sketches, we teach them about fabrics and the production process, giving them a full understanding from the outset. This helps them work more effectively once they enter the industry. Students approach design without constraints, often generating ideas we would not anticipate. That exchange drives our own development and ultimately benefits our clients. It is a mutually reinforcing process.



ART DIR: PAUL MARCIANO PH: MORELLI BROTHERS © GUESS, INC. 2026

READY TO SCALE



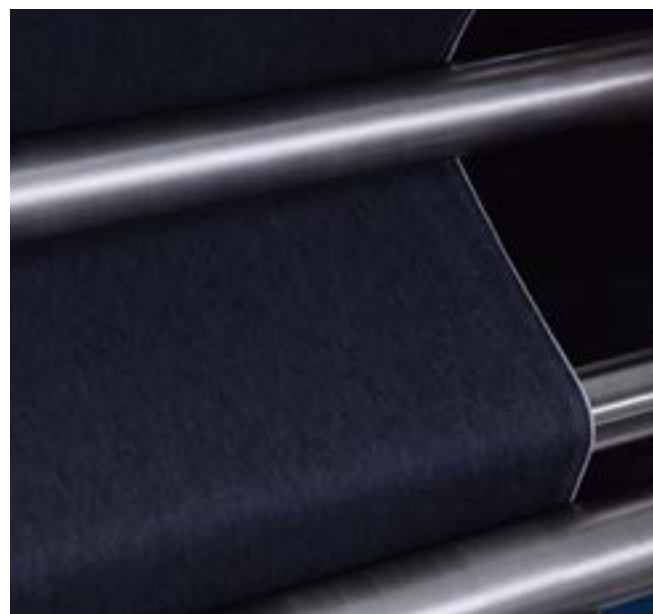
WeAr Denim spoke to Dr. Dilek Erik, Global Marketing Manager at **Sharabati**, about recent developments in dyeing, efficiency, material demand, and recycling - and how these areas are evolving within a fully integrated production model.

From recent brand collaborations, what are partners asking for most?

Sustainability remains the main driver behind material preferences. Partners are asking for greater transparency, lower environmental impact, and more responsible fiber choices. We are seeing growing interest in natural and innovative fibers such as **TENCEL™**, hemp, and recycled yarns, while regenerative cotton has become especially important. Brands are moving beyond broad sustainability claims and now want materials that contribute to soil health and biodiversity. Compared with one or two years ago, demand is more informed and more specific. Brands are looking for credible materials that align with their long-term environmental commitments, not just general sustainability positioning.

What new finishing or dyeing process has your team recently developed?

One of our most advanced developments focuses on color expression through layered dyeing and finishing combinations. We created a fabric group inspired by the idea that nothing is quite as it seems, with constructions that deliver multidimensional color effects. ‘Skyfall’ is a denim with a sulfur top layer that reveals a grayish cast after finishing, creating an aged look. ‘Umber’ has a permanent brown base, while ‘Jade’ uses a no-fade greenish base. Both are designed to reveal the inner structure of the fabric after finishing, resulting in worn-in, heritage-inspired surfaces. We have also expanded our Reactive Dye range with brown, khaki, and burgundy, alongside our existing blue and black options. Another concept, Rainbow Indigo, blends two indigo shades within the same warp, as seen in fabrics like Twingo and Teal, which are meant to evoke the character of vintage denim found in the attic.



Which development in recycling or resource recovery will create the biggest change at scale?

We expect this to be our 4Grwth project. It redefines cotton sourcing through a fully integrated, transparent, and technology-driven system. The project is built on certified regenerative agriculture, the European cultivation of Greek cotton under EU standards, and our partnership with **Markou Group**, which combines traditional expertise in ginning and seed processing with scientific innovation. Its scalability comes from the way technology and people work together. Through a digital mapping platform, we track real-time data across more than 4,300 fields, while farmers are supported through mobile and financial tools, training, incentives, and continuous engagement. Our in-house recycling facility, Tadweer, strengthens this model by improving control over recycled inputs and resource efficiency.

It seems like Tadweer has stood out within your vertical chain?

It certainly has. What began 20 years ago as a way to manage our own production waste has developed into a large-scale recycled yarn operation. Today, Tadweer processes around 20 tons of our own waste and 20 tons of externally sourced textile waste daily, producing about 60 tons of recycled yarn. Its performance has exceeded expectations in terms of efficiency, quality, and scalability, demonstrating that circular solutions can operate at industrial scale. It also aligns with European legislation and standards around recycled content and traceability, making it both a production asset and a response to changing sustainability requirements.





MATERIAL CHOICES MAKE CLASSICS

Liz Hershfield, Executive Director of **COTTON USA**, explains how fibers shape fashion's future.

Trends may set the mood of the season, but for leading fashion brands, longevity is built collection by collection, garment by garment - even fiber by fiber. As designers and consumers reassess what 'quality' really means, natural materials like cotton, wool, silk, and linen are re-centering the conversation around comfort, durability, and reliability.

The fiber behind a fabric is the silent architect of a garment's performance and longevity. It defines how a fabric drapes, how it breathes, how it feels against the skin, how it maintains its form, and how it endures through repeated wear. Increasingly, these inherent qualities are being considered through a broader sustainability lens: what a piece is made of, how it is cared for, and whether it is designed to be worn again and again.

While each natural fiber contributes unique strengths, cotton distinguishes itself through unparalleled versatility. It can be crisp or soft, structured or fluid, lightweight or substantial, thus supporting everything from denim and jersey to poplin and terry. Cotton is also known for its high whiteness and brightness, qualities that are es-

sential for brands looking to craft premium fabrics with vibrant colors. This adaptability empowers designers to build cohesive, seasonless wardrobes, reinforcing cotton's pivotal role in the industry's accelerating shift toward more conscious, design-driven longevity.

This renewed focus on material integrity is increasingly consumer-led. Shoppers are actively scrutinizing labels and prioritizing pieces that feel better, last longer, and fit into a more considered wardrobe. Across the market - among global apparel leaders and boutique premium designers alike - higher natural-fiber content is becoming a marker of purposeful design rather than a niche preference.

Choosing the right fiber is both a creative decision and a commitment to quality. When designers start with strong natural materials - especially adaptable, high-performing, consistent cotton - they are not just selecting a fabric; they are making a foundational decision that determines how a garment will perform, age, uphold brand reputation, and ultimately earn its place as a timeless classic.

THE TRANSPARENCY MOMENT



NICOLAS PROPTE*

The denim industry has a data problem - not data scarcity, but data integrity. The issue stems from an excess of unstructured, unverifiable, and inaccessible information. The Digital Product Passport (DPP) is the EU's answer to that. And frankly, it is overdue.

Under the Ecodesign for Sustainable Products Regulation (ESPR), DPPs will become mandatory for textiles by 2027. This is not a 'maybe'. It is a countdown. Brands can either lead this transition or be caught scrambling to find data that should have been at their fingertips years ago. But what is 'under the hood'? A DPP is not a digital marketing brochure; it is a technical ledger. For a pair of jeans to pass muster, it must carry verified, machine-readable data, such as Material DNA: precise fiber composition and audited post-consumer recycled (PCR) content. Geographic traceability: country-of-origin information for every tier, from cotton field to laundry. Impact metrics: rigorous water and carbon footprint data per unit (not industry averages). Circular blueprint: validated end-of-life instructions to ensure that 'durable' does not simply mean 'sits in a landfill forever'.

At the **Denim Deal Foundation**, we are not waiting for 2027. Our members are already reporting on PCR cotton, moving beyond greenwashing toward audited reality. Our February

2026 partnership with **Green Story** formalizes this approach, providing the Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) infrastructure needed to turn 'sustainability claims' into standardized facts. DPPs are now legally inevitable, but their real value depends on whether brands treat them as a regulatory floor or a commercial ceiling. Companies that use DPPs solely to tick a regulatory box will miss the commercial opportunity: consumer trust, eco-modulation benefits within EPR frameworks, and preferential access to green finance.

There is still confusion around the role of Digital Product Passports, especially within the design community. They are not simply a tool for traceability, but a system for communicating verified product information, including impact and material content. At the same time, the industry continues to demand greater transparency across the supply chain. The idea that keeping suppliers undisclosed provides a competitive advantage is becoming less relevant in a market where many brands work with the same Tier 1 and Tier 2 partners.

In this context, competitiveness is increasingly defined by creative direction, brand positioning, and the ability to communicate value. The role of the supply chain is to support this with reliable, transparent, and consistent information.

The denim sector built its reputation on durability and authenticity. It is time our data matched that identity.

***Nicolas Prophte is the Founder and Executive Director of the Denim Deal Foundation.**

SHIFTING DENIM DESIGN

ZENNURE DANISMAN*

For years, the 'wow' effect in denim was mainly visual. A strong wash, a new shade, or a vintage look defined what stood out. That is starting to shift. Today, the focus is moving away from surface alone and toward the systems behind the product: fibers, dye behavior, digital tools, and how these elements interact during production. This changes the approach to denim design.

At the fiber level, **Lenzing** has become the majority owner of **TreeToTextile**, signaling that wood-based cellulosic fibers are moving closer to industrial scale. These developments suggest that material selection may play a more central role in defining denim - not only in terms of sustainability, but also in how fabrics behave in later stages of processing.

In dyeing, control is becoming as important as formulation. Technologies such as **CleanKore** focus on how dye penetrates the yarn, or more precisely, how that penetration is limited. By preserving the yarn core and avoiding full saturation, it becomes possible to achieve contrast and depth while reducing water and chemical use. This approach also avoids reliance on substances such as potassium permanganate. The result is both a visual effect and a process improvement.

Digital printing is also expanding the design space. **Woptag** and **Inks & Dots** are working with systems that translate denim characteristics into digital files. This is not limited to visual



replication; it also affects how collections are developed and communicated. Instead of relying solely on physical samples, designers can work with controlled digital versions that reflect real fabric behavior, reducing the need for repeated sampling.

Detail remains critical. **Coats** addresses one of the limitations of printed denim: the mismatch between fabric and stitching. Standard threads often appear too clean compared to the fabric surface. By developing threads with a more worn appearance, the company is working to align seams with the rest of the garment. This may seem like a small adjustment, but it affects how the product is perceived as a whole.

These developments point to a broader change. Denim design is no longer defined only by finishing effects. It is increasingly shaped by how fibers, dyes, digital tools, and components are combined. The next stage will depend less on isolated techniques and more on how these elements work together within the same process. It is time to bridge the gap between design and production.

***Zennure Danisman is the Founder of Denim Theater, a consulting company specializing in denim washing and marketing, and an Executive MBA, she merges technical expertise with strategic insight to drive innovation and sustainability. She also contributes part-time to Marketing & Communications at the Denim Deal.**

60th
anniversary

JEANS TO THE WORLD FROM JAPAN

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HOWA

THE 'WOW' EFFECT



JULIEN SCHMOLL

DIRECTOR, MARKETING & COMMUNICATION DEPARTMENT, MESSE FRANKFURT FRANCE

Artificial Intelligence is already the next major revolution in our industry. For fashion brands, AI will go far beyond data analysis. It will decode complex consumer behaviors and identify emerging trends, enabling more accurate forecasting. It will also refine the manufacturing cycle by assisting creation and production. AI will help reduce overstocks through smarter inventory management and more efficient markdown strategies. On the customer side, agentic commerce will fundamentally redefine the shopping journey. Intelligent systems will be able to search, compare, negotiate, and purchase products online with minimal user input. In parallel, they will also serve as hyper-personalized shopping assistants within the traditional brick-and-mortar network through innovative solutions such as virtual try-on. Ultimately, AI will profoundly transform every layer of the fashion ecosystem - from creation and logistics to sales - while reshaping the way consumers discover and engage with brands.



SOFIA VALE

I&D MANAGER
SOMELOS

In textile dyeing and finishing, the future is already here, driven by smarter, more efficient, and sustainable processes. Technologies such as waterless dyeing, supercritical CO² dyeing, and atmospheric plasma are drastically reducing water and chemical consumption. At the same time, process digitalization - supported by sensors and real-time data analysis - enables recipe optimization, waste reduction and improved color reproducibility. From an energy perspective, heat recovery systems, new machines and processes, and the integration of renewable energy are transforming the efficiency of production units. In parallel, advanced water management and reuse solutions allow companies to close water loops and reduce environmental impact, particularly in dyehouses and laundries. The result is a more agile, automated, and circular dyeing industry, where technology and sustainability move hand in hand to redefine the sector's competitiveness standards.

There is no denying that these are dynamic times, marked by new developments and technological breakthroughs.

At the same time, we are also seeing a renewed appreciation for the authentic 'way of denim'. This duality led us to ask several influential industry voices what they believe is the single most impactful development capable of revolutionizing the denim industry.



ROBERT DEAKIN

SALES DIRECTOR
DEYAO TEXTILE

Innovation will lead to reinforcement, not revolution. The basics of manufacturing and selling denim fabric are difficult to revolutionize. The industry has not digitized easily, and those making fabric purchasing decisions are not suddenly going to change their buying habits. I am sure efficiencies will be found through machinery, automation, learning systems, and AI deployment. These innovations will only serve to highlight the importance of physical denim fabric being presented and exhibited face-to-face. Do androids dream about electric denim? Or perhaps they will simply schedule meetings where humans can dream about it together, in person. Even as technology improves, it will likely reinforce the value of the most fundamental, human elements of the denim industry.



VIVIAN WANG

CEO
KINGPINS SHOW

Last year's tariff fluctuations cast a long shadow of uncertainty, and the first quarter of 2026 has brought fresh challenges, with new tariff shifts compounded by geopolitical instability. It is no surprise that retailers and brands are entering this season cautiously. Yet innovation does not stand still. There will always be forward-thinkers pushing the industry ahead, regardless of the headwinds - developing breakthrough dye and printing technologies, pioneering predictive trend modeling, and reimagining supply chains to eliminate waste. At **Kingpins**, we aim to give these ideas a place to be explored and shared. That spirit sits at the heart of Jeanius Hub - a space where new technologies and approaches can be discovered and discussed openly.



MAXIMILIANO JEANNOT

CEO
PROCESADORA CENTRO

At **Procesadora Centro**, we envision the laundries of the future as highly efficient spaces where water consumption will be almost negligible, and technology will transform processes entirely. Artificial intelligence will make it possible to optimize every stage of production, improving quality, reducing lead times, and eliminating inefficiencies. That future has already begun. Today, we are actively working to reduce water usage through technologies such as ozone and through the development of innovative washing techniques, achieving more sustainable and consistent processes.



SINA STEIDINGER

DENIM DESIGNER AND
SUSTAINABILITY CONSULTANT

Two years ago, I would have said the biggest revolution in our industry would be legislation. One year ago, my answer would have been education. Today, I believe the real revolution needs to be communication. Every role in the value chain is becoming more complex and specialized. The only way to truly understand the challenges at every stage is to sit together - once a season - and talk, but more importantly, listen. Hearing another professional's perspective can be eye-opening and helps us adapt our decisions to reduce impact across the supply chain.



ANTONELLA NICOLICCHIA

TREND FORECASTER
& FASHION PRODUCER

What comes to mind is the ability to look toward the future. Each season carries within its creations hidden signals and subtle energies. They are not obvious, but they are there: small cracks, shifts, tensions, and new desires. Detecting them, breaking them apart, and understanding them allows us to anticipate what is coming, prepare for it, and even avoid certain mistakes. Those who learn to interpret these signals will not only foresee new artistic currents, but also social changes. Perhaps what will truly revolutionize the industry is not something external to human beings, but the ability to read the present deeply enough to anticipate the future.



ALEJANDRO VENTURA PÉREZ

SALES DIRECTOR
TEJIDOS ROYO

We have no doubt that recycled denim will revolutionize our industry. We know we are ahead of the curve, as we already offer 100% recycled denim fabrics. But sustainability is not only about fibers and composition - processes matter too. For us, DRY Indigo® technology is a defining part of our identity. This process allows us to dye fabrics without using water, eliminating wastewater discharge, and significantly reducing the use of chemicals and energy. We are proud to say that our entire denim collection is dyed using this technology, helping to save thousands of litres of water. Sustainability is easy to talk about; proving it takes action. We have already done our part, now it is up to the market.



FLORIAN GONSER

CEO, GONSER GROUP

Technology drove the last revolution. The next one is human: putting people, ethics, and shared values at the core of the denim supply chain, where clients and suppliers grow responsibly together.



DINGHUI

AT DINGHUI, INNOVATION AND SUSTAINABILITY COME TOGETHER TO BRING YOUR BOLD VISIONS TO LIFE THROUGH ECO-CONSCIOUS GARMENT MANUFACTURING IN CHINA.

OUR INFRASTRUCTURE, YOUR COLLECTION

ROUNDTABLE



ANGELA FUSCO
DESIGN CONSULTANT
DENIM & WOVENS

Artificial intelligence will undoubtedly become one of the most transformative forces shaping the denim industry. From trend forecasting and wash simulation to fit development and product engineering, AI has the potential to compress processes that once relied on multiple physical prototypes and lengthy development cycles. Yet denim has always been defined by something far less precise. The beauty of the category lies in irregularity: the subtle variations of a wash, the tension of the fabric, and the traces of time and hand that give each garment its character. Used without care, AI risks smoothing those nuances into something technically efficient but emotionally flat. Paradoxically, this may create a corrective effect. As digital tools become more prevalent, the value of true craftsmanship and human intuition will only increase. The future of denim will likely sit between the two: intelligent technology supporting the process, while the final expression remains rooted in the hand, the material, and the maker.



JULIO PERALES
TECHNICAL & PRODUCT
SEGMENT MANAGER DENIM,
ARCHROMA

The one thing that will revolutionize the textile industry is true circularity by design. By eliminating toxic chemicals from the textile supply chain, we make garments far easier to safely recycle or compost. A strong example is FiberColors®, our high-performance bio-based sulfur dyes made from wool waste. Originally developed to upcycle textile waste, the innovation has evolved to address another major global waste stream: unwanted wool fleeces that sheep farmers often pay to be disposed of. By transforming this wool waste into high-quality colorants, we support farmers, reduce bio-waste, and help fashion and home textile brands advance supply chain sustainability. The future lies in scaling innovations like this, with materials and chemistry designed for circular systems from the outset. When performance, sustainability, and circularity align, transformation becomes systemic, reshaping how our industry designs, produces, and regenerates.



PAOLA MAESTRO
CHIEF PRODUCT OFFICER
PEPE JEANS LONDON

The one thing that will truly revolutionize the fashion industry - especially denim - is the integration of advanced sustainability technologies and AI across the entire production chain. Denim has traditionally been a very resource-intensive category. What is changing now is the combination of innovation and responsibility: waterless dyeing, laser finishing, fiber recycling, and AI-driven tools that can optimize design, predict demand, and reduce overproduction. What excites me most is that sustainability is no longer just a marketing story - it is becoming a core operational strategy. Brands are rethinking how denim is designed and produced, and even how it lives after the consumer uses it. The companies that will succeed are those that combine creativity, technology, and transparent circular systems. That shift - from a linear model to a tech-enabled, circular approach - is already the biggest revolution in our industry.



HENRY WONG
VP, PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT
& MARKETING
AGI DENIM

The real revolution in denim will come when we can produce garments on demand, almost as if we are printing a pair of jeans only when it is needed. The path is coming into focus: high-definition surface printing and application technologies that can re-create the visual richness, depth, and character of denim that would otherwise require many more steps, such as yarn dyeing for colorization and intensive garment processes to discharge the color we apply. Combined with 3D weaving or knitting whole - or nearly whole - garments and other manufacturing methods, we may one day create denim garments in far fewer steps. This opportunity would open the door to deeper personalization, better fit, and products tailored to individual needs. We would shift from making products in anticipation of demand to making them when and where the demand exists, keeping more value in raw materials and components until they are needed.



**ANA PAULA ALVES
DE OLIVEIRA**
STRATEGY DIRECTOR
BE DISOBEDIENT

Without taking away from the incredible work happening across the industry, I believe the real 'wow' effect today lies in the courage to transform innovation into convention. As long as innovation remains rare, it remains expensive and limited. Denim already holds one of the most complex ecosystems in fashion: fibers, dyes, fabrics, washing, chemistry, automation, brands, and culture. Our strength lies not in a single breakthrough, but in how we connect this entire equation with coherence and scale. When innovation becomes credible, scalable, and shared, it ceases to be a novelty and begins to become part of the culture. That is the real transformation.



DENIS DRUON
CEO, **THE FLAX COMPANY//
MARMARA HEMP**

The textile revolution will be driven by more sustainable, lower-impact materials. Linen and hemp stand out as high-performing natural fibers with strong visual appeal, reliable functionality, and a relatively low environmental footprint. Their inherent properties, including moisture management, durability, and comfort, allow for versatile applications. When combined with other fibers, they offer new possibilities for developing garments that balance performance, aesthetics, and responsible production.

PV DENIM

Creative Direction: All'Fines and Victor Olmos / Production: Martha Flores
Photography: Ana Paul Rossales / Model: Rodrigo Zuniga

MILAN

Superstudio Più

20 / 21 MAY

ROUNDTABLE



CARME SANTACRUZ
CREATIVE DIRECTOR AND
SENIOR DENIM DESIGNER
JEANOLOGIA

My field of expertise is design and innovation, where AI has entered with great force. It is already undeniable that it is having a huge impact on our work and our lives. For the creative industries, AI has democratized skills, helping designers in many ways. However, this revolution has also homogenized certain levels of expertise, leading to the risk of mediocrity. That is why I believe we will see a return to crafts, to the artisanal, and to imperfection - while using AI as an extraordinary collaborator in the creative process. AI will revolutionize the industry and, in my opinion, will go even further with the leadership of human imagination. Creativity, vision, and intention will become the most valuable assets for an authentic creative revolution and real competitive advantage.



OYLUM ONUR KARATAŞ
DESIGN & DEVELOPMENT TEAM
LEADER, **YKK TURKEY**

Technology is becoming an indispensable partner at the design table. As someone actively involved in this shift, I see the impact and potential of these tools more clearly every day. Naturally, this evolution raises an important question: could digitalization harm the soul of fashion? I initially wondered whether increasingly digital processes might distance designers from the physical and emotional essence of their work. However, experience has shown that true transformation occurs not when technology replaces creative expertise but when it enhances it. Digital tools enable faster experimentation, support more agile and responsible production models, and reduce repetitive tasks, allowing designers to focus more deeply on craftsmanship and creativity. The future of fashion will not be about choosing between technology and creativity, but about mastering the balance between the two.



ROY CHANG
DENIM SENIOR MANAGER
HYOSUNG TNC

We believe the next real shift in the denim industry will come from the evolution of sustainability itself. While we have long worked with sustainable raw materials, we are now moving further by transitioning to even more advanced bio-based alternatives that significantly reduce environmental impact in denim applications. This evolution, however, must be supported by a fully vertically integrated value chain and advanced manufacturing technologies. Only when material innovation is aligned with process control can the industry deliver consistent quality, scalability, and transparency. Ultimately, the true 'wow' effect will come from making high-performance, sustainable products not only possible but accessible to all. This means delivering premium, supported by reliable lead times. In our view, this integrated approach will redefine how innovation is experienced across the denim value chain.



ANDY SHAW
DIRECTOR OF BUSINESS
DEVELOPMENT, USA
NISHAT DENIM MILLS

The key force shaping the denim industry is the shift from storytelling to verifiable data, with increasing demand for transparency across the supply chain. Brands are beginning to respond with traceable information, from fiber origin to finished garment, but adoption remains uneven and limited. Tools such as traceability systems, environmental impact measurement, and digital product passports are being introduced and are gradually becoming standard. Their widespread use would place measurable accountability at the center of production and redefine how mills and brands operate. In this context, success will depend not only on producing quality denim but on clearly demonstrating how it is made.



ROWAN HUNT
HEAD OF BRAND INNOVATION
& PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT
DENIM RESEARCH

I believe the greatest changes in the denim industry can come if we really look to the beginning of the denim-making process. I place importance on the initial decisions such as fiber selection, dyeing processes, and carefully considered design details, to enhance durability, longevity, and suitability for recycling later. There are many options to reduce the impact on our planet. But I think the most important thing to consider is how we are coloring our jeans. Printing denim is having a moment and it is looking great, spurred on by many brands. It focuses on new and creative ways to produce replica denim washes in a fun and exciting way. But for me, as a purist, denim is truly denim when it is dyed and woven into a 3-by-1 twill. How can this be improved? There are new 'chip-off' shades and 'quick-fade' yarn solutions that create great washed looks much faster than traditionally dyed denim. This means fewer resources are needed to achieve a desirable wash level. With these latest yarns, laser technology - which is the real future of processing - can do its job much more effectively. The dye burns off more easily, and less power is required. A win-win.



JUAN MANUEL GÓMEZ
CREATIVE LEADER
OFFICINA+39

The true revolution in our industry will stem from the synergy between a new generation of creative designers and textile chemists working in close collaboration with emerging technologies and innovative materials. Crucially, these advances must serve not only the mass market but also circular production models. A key differentiator will be textile companies that genuinely support the growth of local brand entrepreneurs, treating them with the same level of commitment, resources, and long-term vision as established global brands. Both can (and should) coexist within the same framework of sustainability and circularity. This inclusive approach also enables a vital transfer of knowledge from the golden generations of denim experts to today's emerging DIY creators, ensuring that heritage, craftsmanship, and innovation evolve together rather than in isolation.

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#creative
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SUSTAINABILITY IN PRACTICE

Besim Özek, Strategy and Business Development Director at **Bossa**, shares insights on material selection, the integration of recycled garments, and how the company approaches sustainability and product development.

What are the most advanced fiber or material integrations you are focusing on for denim fabrics?

Cotton always remains at the center of our approach, but the focus is shifting away from conventional cotton toward more responsible alternatives such as organic, regenerative, and recycled cotton. We are also exploring complementary fibers that can enhance performance and sustainability. Lyocell, particularly recycled versions such as SaXcell, as well as hemp, offer interesting possibilities in terms of resource efficiency and fabric performance.

How would you educate customers about post-consumer recycled denim (PCR-D)?

The main challenge is setting the right expectations from the beginning. It is important to clearly explain that fabrics containing post-consumer recycled denim do not behave in exactly the same way as those made from virgin cotton. We approach this in stages. First, we introduce the fibers and explain their characteristics. Then we present sample fabrics developed at Bossa with different levels of PCR-D content, such as 5%, 10%, and 20%, alongside 100% cotton references. We show these across different laundry treatments so customers can understand how appearance changes depending on both recycled content and finishing intensity. Differences become more visible with heavier wash-



es. The final step is transparency in pricing, helping customers understand the cost implications of integrating recycled content.

What role does nature play in your R&D activities?

On the material side, there is a clear focus on using natural or bio-based inputs, such as replacing petroleum-based chemicals with bio-based alternatives in dyeing and finishing, or working with fibers like hemp and linen. Natural systems also inspire functional developments, with concepts such as heat regulation or water repellency. These can be developed by observing how similar mechanisms work in nature and translating those ideas into textile applications.

Should Digital Product Passport (DPP) implementation be mandatory?

Yes, it should be mandatory, and implementation should move forward without delay. Digital Product Passports have the potential to address many of the current requirements in the market. They can support transparency, provide verified information on environmental impact, and help track social and chemical compliance. They also open the door to more durable product models, normalizing repair and extended use. In denim, where garments often have a long lifespan, the ability to support repair and continued use is particularly relevant.

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BEYOND THE EXPECTED: WHEN LASER BECOMES LANGUAGE

MIRCO BIANCHIN*



*Mirco Bianchin is Digital and Transformation Processes Manager, and Hub Director at **Jeanologia**. He has collaborated with brands including **Guess Jeans, Balmain, Off-White, Pinko, Replay, Diesel, Levi's, Evisu, and Tommy Hilfiger**.

The idea of a 'wow' effect in denim has long been associated with visual impact. Today, the focus is moving away from surface alone and toward the processes and tools that enable new forms of design. Laser technology was initially introduced to replace techniques such as hand scraping and potassium permanganate spraying. Its early adoption was driven by efficiency, consistency, and reduced environmental impact.

What is emerging now is a broader use of the technology. Designers increasingly treat laser as a design system in itself, starting from its precision, depth, and control rather than simply replicating known effects.

Laser operates through controlled energy applied to the fabric surface. This enables a level of accuracy that is difficult to achieve through traditional meth-

ods, but it requires an understanding of fabric density, fiber composition, indigo behavior, and production constraints. These factors are not limitations to avoid, but variables that shape the outcome.

Working within these parameters has led to the development of effects that extend beyond conventional finishing. These include highly detailed surface patterns with a jacquard-like appearance, sharp contrasts between treated and untreated areas, and textures that reference mineral or metallic surfaces. In some cases, the result is not only visual but also tactile, with raised structures and surfaces that respond to light in different ways.

Laser thus becomes part of the construction process, linking design and production. The fabric is treated as a surface that can be engraved, layered, and structured, shifting denim closer to a material that can be shaped rather than simply finished.

This approach also reflects a change in how design is developed. Digital tools allow ideas to be defined before production, and laser technology enables those ideas to be executed with a high level of consistency. The gap between concept and result is reduced, allowing for more controlled experimentation.

At the same time, the process still requires a shift in mindset. Denim is a category with strong historical references, and much of its identity is tied to established aesthetics. Moving beyond these references involves testing, adjusting, and questioning existing methods.

My goal is to pass this mindset on to the next generation of designers: to see the laser not simply as an industrial tool used to replicate vintage garments, but as an instrument for exploring new creative pathways. Every time we push a limit, denim does not just evolve - it gains new expressive possibilities.

MASTER TEXTILE

INTRODUCING EvoLoop

Redefining premium denim through post-industrial denim waste.

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Waste → **Shredding** → **Fabric** → **Garment**

EvoLoop Impact

SAVES WATER/Lower footprint
SAVES ENERGY/Efficient manufacturing
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MINIMIZES New Cotton Use

Premium denim engineered from recycled post-industrial denim waste.
Transforming production remnants into refined circular textiles

Global Recycled Standard

DENIM'S SHIFT INTO 3D PRINTING

ANATT FINKLER

Beneath denim's important legacy lies a pressing issue: a large portion of produced jeans are worn briefly before being discarded, with massive amounts ending up in landfills or being burned.

Today, waste is being reconsidered. Existing methods of denim recycling have taken many forms. Dissolved fiber processes, such as Circulose, transform denim into cellulose pulp that can be spun into new textile fibers. Pigment innovations like **Officina39's** Recycrom turn shredded textile fibers into dyes, repurposing waste as a resource for coloring other materials.

Mechanical recycling initiatives such as **Blue Jeans Go Green** break down denim into fibers mainly used for insulation. Papermaking company **James Cropper** developed Rydal Apparel, a recycled paper containing approximately 20% used denim fibers, transforming jeans into a resource for packaging and print.

Other innovations explore the use of bio-based binders. For example, **STELAPOP by SAITEX** produces panels made from recycled textiles for a range of applications. Alongside these processes, upcycled fashion brands continue to play a key role by repurposing old jeans directly into new garments or accessories without breaking them down into raw materials. Examples include **ELV Denim**, **Re/Done**, **Wrangler Reborn**, and **Blue of a Kind**.

Today, a new and highly experimental direction is emerging: denim 3D printing. While still niche, it is becoming an increasingly compelling area of progress. Designers, researchers, and companies are exploring how denim waste can be adapted for ad-



Pulvera

divitive manufacturing, including **SAMSax**, **Pulvera** by **Casati Flock & Fibers**, **Albini Next**, and **Danit Peleg**.

The SAMSax project is a German research initiative focused on sustainable 3D printing using waste materials, including denim. One outcome is a camping table produced from denim dust using a binder jetting process.

Pulvera, built on the industrial expertise of Casati Flock & Fibers, transforms textile waste into fine powders through mechanical pulverization. These powders are then reintroduced into industrial production. In the context of denim, one application involved pulverized production waste used as a fill-

er in plastic granules for 3D printing, resulting in a chair as part of the Denim Euphoria Project.

Albini Next, the innovation hub of the **Albini Group**, focuses on accelerating new ideas and technologies within the textile industry. Through its 'Weav3D' project, it explores biopolymer composite materials made by combining textile fibers with bio-based or recyclable polymers for 3D printing applications.

Israeli designer Danit Peleg has also explored this space through an experimental process that converts denim waste into a fully recyclable, 3D-printable textile. In this project, denim scraps sourced from Italian manufacturer **PureDenim** were shredded into fiber dust, blended with 100% recycled TPU, and extruded into pellets. Using a Ginger Additive printer, her team produced a 70 by 70 cm soft, wearable textile sample in under 30 minutes.

Denim 3D printing sits at the intersection of excitement and debate. While it presents an innovative way to rethink textile waste, some experts question whether combining denim with plastics - even recycled ones - is the right long-term direction. The possibilities, however, feel almost limitless, particularly in the range of materials that can be explored. Introducing denim waste into this space has the potential to divert significant amounts of it from landfills and reframe it as a resource. Its applications could extend beyond fashion into furniture, construction, and everyday objects. These explorations reflect a willingness to challenge existing systems and represent additional steps toward new possibilities in material innovation.

Seeing the new in the old

Next season will be a dialogue between past and future. Rooted in heritage, we reimagine denim – from new selvedge fabric to authentic white denim, from innovative bio-based blue to Renaissance™ Series.

Join us at the follow denim trade shows for the debut of our new collection.

April 2026 Kingpins Show, Amsterdam	May 2026 Kingpins Show, China
May 2026 PV Denim, Milan	Jul 2026 Kingpins, New York

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THE JAPANESE WAY

WeAr Denim talked to Kyohei Okamoto, Director and Manufacturing Manager of **HOWA Japan**, about merging artisanal tradition with new technology.

How do you go from pioneering stone-wash processing to the latest technologies?

We built HOWA on the foundation of early innovations, like the world's first stone-wash technique back in the late 1970s. That experience taught us how to create authentic wear and fading effects, lessons we still draw from today. Rather than abandoning what worked, we evolve it. We take the core principles of natural-looking distress and pair them with modern tools like laser, ozone, and robotics to achieve the same - or better - results with far less environmental impact. At the same time, we keep pushing to develop processing methods that are genuinely new, first-of-their-kind approaches that no one else has done yet. The goal is always to stay relevant by respecting the past while inventing the future of denim finishing.

What lower-toxicity alternatives and sustainable practices have you incorporated?

We started focusing on safer chemistry early. Instead of relying on harsh chlorine-based bleaches, we developed our patented Eco Bleach, which uses sugar's reducing power and is much gentler on both people and the environment. We also introduced Air Wash, our ozone-based system, which significantly cuts chemical and water use. Beyond chemistry, we have integrated machinery that reduces overall water and energy consumption where possible, using optimized drum cycles, precise laser distressing, and closed-loop water systems. The aim is not just to meet regulations or marketing claims, but to make the entire process cleaner and



more responsible without sacrificing the quality or character of the final garment.

Do unique artisanal techniques remain vital for denim?

Absolutely. Machines can be precise and efficient, but they cannot fully replicate the nuance that comes from a skilled artisan's hand. The subtle variations in pressure, timing, and feel of manually rubbing a bleach-soaked pad for whiskers, filing a crease, or guiding a rip are what create imperfections that look truly lived-in. That level of craftsmanship is HOWA's real strength. It sets our work apart and gives denim its soul. Technology supports us and scales certain steps, but the pursuit of true artisanal quality is what raises the value and makes a pair of jeans something special rather than just another product.

How do you see the global denim landscape evolving?

I think we are moving back toward appreciating real vintage value. Consumers will increasingly look for pieces that last ten years or more, aging and fading naturally, developing personal character, and becoming part of someone's story. The fast, disposable, trend-chasing cycle feels like it is peaking, and people are starting to want the opposite: garments that reward long-term wear rather than constant replacement. In that future, the focus will be on durability, authentic aging, and responsible production that respects both the wearer and the planet. HOWA has always believed in that kind of longevity, so I see it as an opportunity for methods that combine craftsmanship, sustainability, and timeless appeal.

N3ELA
BY SAPPHIRE FIBRES

THE LOGICAL FUTURE OF DENIM

B-LOGIC 2.0

 **B-LOGIC**

PROCESS, SCALE, AND INTEGRATION

WeAr Denim spoke to Christian Reca, Worldwide Marketing & Merchandising Manager at **Pioneer Denim**, about their approach to rethinking vertical integration.

What does it require for a denim manufacturer to achieve and sustain 100 percent vertical integration?

Vertical integration is built on scale and coordination. Pioneer Denim operates a 150-acre, 6-million-square-foot facility in Bangladesh, where spinning, weaving, and garment production are managed on a single site. Annual yarn capacity reaches 180,000 tons. Fabric production is being expanded from 78 million to 120 million yards by the first quarter of 2026, while garment output is expected to reach 90,000 pieces per day. Sustaining this model requires continuous investment and operational control. By limiting external logistics and inter-facility transport, the company aims to stabilize quality and reduce supply chain risk.

For process innovations, do you prefer resource-efficient technology or speed to market?

The company does not separate these two factors. Resource efficiency is treated as part of achieving speed to market. A vertically integrated system reduces delays that are common in fragmented supply chains. Technologies such as Eco Advanced Indigo Dyeing, which reduces incoming water by up to 80%, and salt-free dyeing processes are used to stabilize production flow. Laser and ozone finishing are also part of this approach, allowing shorter processing times with reduced water use. Since 2019, the company has reported a 49% reduction in water consumption and a 45% percent decrease in energy intensity.



How do you react to and apply client feedback?

Client feedback is integrated into development through an internal R&D space where technical teams work directly with designers. Requests related to fabric performance, finishing, or sustainability can be translated into prototypes within the same production system. With all stages on site, the company can test fiber blends and washing techniques without delay. This includes the use of recycled inputs through a shredding facility with a capacity of 20 tons per day, as well as exploration of alternative fibers such as pineapple leaf, silk, and jute. A collaboration with Adriano Goldschmied serves to align technical development with market direction.

What does evolution mean for Pioneer Denim, and what upcoming developments will support that vision?

The company describes its next stage as a shift toward a broader vertical partner model. Its 'Vision 2030' includes targets of 15 million yards of fabric and 8 million garments per month, alongside a roadmap toward net-zero emissions by 2040. Current developments include expanding garment capacity and building an in-house accessories division covering trims, labels, and printing. The direction reflects an approach where vertical integration is used to maintain control over process, timing, and material selection within a single system.

Every thread has a story...



Upcoming Show dates:
Amsterdam April 15/16 - Hangzhou May 21/22 - New York July 22/23



SCAN FOR DETAILS

THINKING AHEAD

WeAr Denim talked to Arman Malik, Chief Innovation Officer at **Master Textile**, about innovation and the sometimes uncertain future of the industry.

Tell us about your biggest innovations in the past, and which ones you are planning on implementing in the future.

Master Textile has always pushed innovation, from banana and coffee denims to aloe vera and bamboo fiber blends. As Chief Innovation Officer, I have leveraged our fully vertical setup - with spinning, weaving, dyeing, and stitching onsite - to develop in-house PIW cotton recycling. We shred garment cut waste back to fiber and spin it into yarn on advanced open-end machines, closing the loop and eliminating production waste. Next, we are adding reverse osmosis to our effluent treatment plant to reclaim indigo wastewater for reuse in denim washing. This drastically reduces freshwater demand and moves Master Textile toward a truly circular, scalable supply chain that preserves quality and traceability.

What kind of programs in terms of digitalization and sustainability have you incorporated over the years?

Digitalization and sustainability are central to our premium denim production. Through granular monitoring of water, steam, and electricity, we collect detailed data that helps reduce downtime, lower energy consumption, and improve overall efficiency. We have implemented a paperless quality control workflow using tablets, cloud systems, and RFID-linked production displays to provide real-time insights into quality and productivity. SCADA and IoT systems support this by enabling continuous monitoring and predictive maintenance.



An integrated ERP system brings planning, traceability, and reporting together in a single platform, improving coordination, and speeding up decision-making. Together, these Industry 4.0 technologies help us increase consistency, shorten lead times, and reduce resource use and waste, positioning our factory as a transparent and scalable partner for global brands.

Looking at the next few years, how do you see the denim industry evolving?

I see denim reconnecting with its workwear roots while accelerating innovation. I also expect clearer distinctions between commercial, heritage, and high-fashion denim, even as designers borrow from traditional utility. Geopolitical uncertainty and shipping constraints will push many suppliers toward nearshoring and diversified sourcing to protect supply chains. Regulatory pressure and consumer demand mean preparing for mandatory traceability, recycled content targets, and circular business models following the EU's lead, with the U.S. likely to follow. Many brands are committing to 2030 recycled and organic material goals and net-zero pathways by 2050. Advances in recycling, low-water dyeing, automation, and digital traceability will help deliver premium denim with a much lower environmental impact.



IAN BERRY

Renowned contemporary artist Ian Berry's work will be presented at London's Saatchi Gallery from 10th April to 10th May. For the first time, the world-famous gallery is hosting a group textile art exhibition exploring the innovation and creativity of contemporary fine art and textiles. It brings together work by 15 artists from around the globe and celebrates the vibrancy of textile art. Visitors will be able to see how century-old techniques, including embroidery, quilting, weaving, knitting, and crochet, are used in contemporary practice. Ian Berry will present his Secret Garden, a captivating installation crafted entirely from recycled denim.

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stretch revealing a true vintage soul.



SHARABATI

INSIDE DENIM SUPPLY TODAY



Jon-Ivar Unsgaard, Business Development Manager at **Copen Europe**, talks about material development, brand expectations, and how traceability and product consistency are shaping the current denim landscape.

Which new materials are you introducing, and which growth segment can you identify?

We recently implemented a collection of 100 % cotton regenerative fabrics to replace more conventional cotton options. This aligns with brand objectives to introduce more responsibly sourced materials into their products. This development sits alongside other fibers such as recycled polyester, organic cotton, and BCI cotton, allowing the company to offer blended materials that meet sustainability targets while remaining within required price points. The company has also introduced a new lining for denim jackets, referred to as the 'horse blan-



ket' lining, based on the traditional lining used in the 'Lee Storm Rider' jacket. This addition expands the collection rather than replacing an existing product. At the same time, the functional garment segment is growing. Performance fabrics are being promoted in response to increasing demand, as non-denim streetwear continues to move toward more functional products.

What are brands focusing on currently?

Brands are prioritizing durability and traceability, including pocket linings and internal materials. There is also a growing demand for transparency,

supported by relevant certifications and audited production steps. Suppliers are increasingly expected to provide clear and verifiable sourcing information. Beyond product characteristics, brands are looking for consistency in quality and service on a global scale. With operations across major production regions and warehouse locations, the company is positioned to offer short lead times within each market. In denim, many brands are focused on creating products that can age over time. This requires attention to detail, ensuring that both the garment and its components maintain durability and develop character with use.

What is your perspective on the denim landscape and broader fashion industry?

Given the emphasis on understanding every component in a garment, traceability is becoming a standard requirement, covering both materials and production steps. This level of transparency is driven by customer expectations and upcoming legislation, requiring companies to be more informed and proactive in their design and manufacturing processes. At the same time, brand identity continues to depend on design. Developing a garment requires attention to all elements, including construction and fit. There is also a renewed focus on workmanship and service, as consumers expect well-designed and well-constructed products regardless of price point. Creativity remains a key factor in driving progress and introducing new ideas to the market.



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TEXHIBITION ISTANBUL HIGHLIGHTS GLOBAL REACH AND DENIM INNOVATION

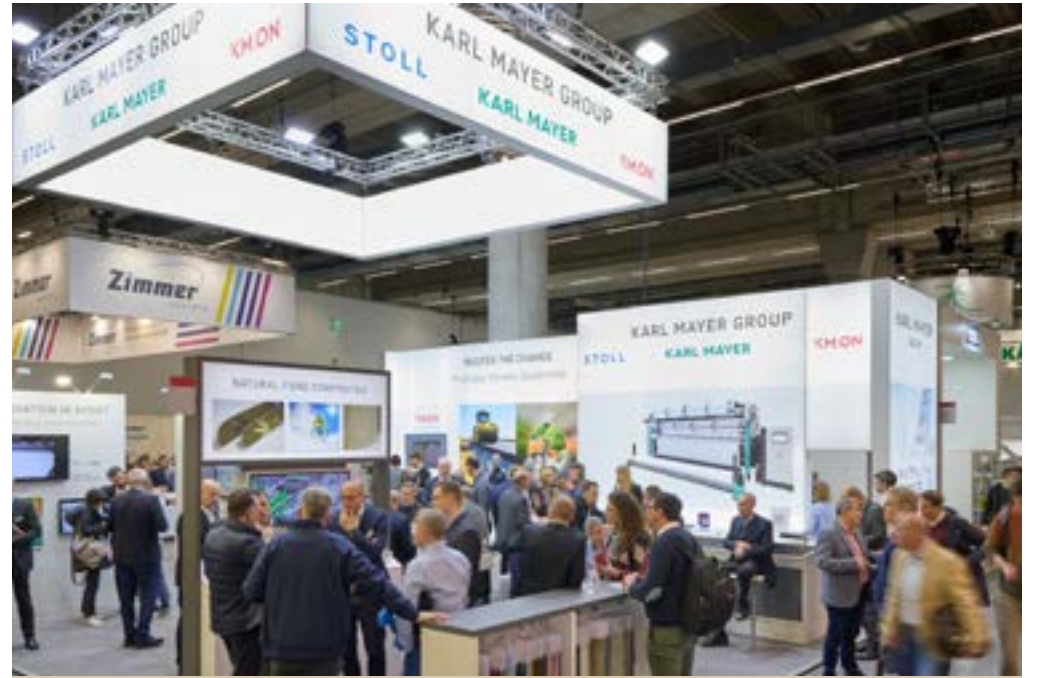
Texhibition Istanbul took place from 4th to 6th March 2026 at the Istanbul Expo Center, bringing together more than 500 exhibitors across five halls and 42,850 square meters. Organized by **İTKİB Fuarçılık A.Ş.** in cooperation with the **Istanbul Textile Exporters Association**, the event attracted almost 20,000 visitors. International attendance accounted for more than a quarter of visitors, with representation from Europe, Asia, the Middle East, North Africa, and North America, reflecting the show's continued global reach despite ongoing economic and geopolitical challenges. A key highlight was Blue Black Denim, a dedicated platform showcasing the capabilities of the Turkish denim sector. The space combined product presentations with installations, workshops, and talks, focusing on developments in sustainable washing, material innovation, surface design, and dyeing techniques. Companies including **Atlas Denim**, **Bossa**, **ISKO**, **ISKUR**, and **Kipaş** presented their latest collections and developments. The next edition of Texhibition Istanbul is scheduled for 9th to 11th September 2026. texhibitionist.com

YKK INTRODUCES LIGHTWEIGHT ALUMINUM ZIPPER FOR COTTON GARMENTS

YKK Corporation has launched YZiP® Light, an aluminum alloy zipper developed for cotton pants, with sales beginning in late March. The new product extends the company's YZiP® range as an alternative to its copper alloy version, offering approximately 50% weight reduction, around 15% lower sliding resistance, and about 26% higher lateral pull strength compared with conventional aluminum alloy zippers. Designed for lightweight garments with fabrics up to 0.6 mm thick and no washing processes, YZiP® Light features a pressed aluminum slider enabled by YKK's proprietary molding technology. This allows aluminum to be shaped with functionality and appearance similar to existing semi-automatic sliders. New finishing options include gold and antique gold, in addition to standard silver tones. The zipper also incorporates NATULON® technology, with roughly 25% recycled content in the tape, reinforcing YKK's focus on material efficiency and application-specific fastening solutions. ykk.com

MUNICH FABRIC START AND BLUEZONE FORECASTS

The Munich-based **BLUEZONE** puts its focus on the imperfect. Denim expert Tilmann Wröbel from Lifestyle Studio Monsieur-T mentioned in his talk at the January show that there will not be a trend toward perfection through AI, but rather a lean toward something not too polished or perfect, as denim is about imperfection. In terms of fashion, the overarching **Munich Fabric Start** made it apparent that more courage in color will prevail, together with new fluid, transparent, flowing fabrics. Materials with tactile structures will persevere. For the German market, the main focus is on margins amid increased consumer price sensitivity. munichfabricstart.com



TECHTEXTIL AND TEXPROCESS OFFER A LOOKING GLASS INTO THE FUTURE

Techtextil and **Texprocess**, taking place from 21st to 24th April 2026 at **Messe Frankfurt**, underline how innovation is reshaping textile production and product development. They serve as a source of inspiration for anyone interested in the next generation of textiles. At Techtextil, the Performance Apparel Textiles area highlights functional materials that combine protection, thermoregulation, and circularity. Innovations include bio-based and recycled fibers, such as **BASF** and **Fulgar's** Loopamid®, made from textile waste, as well as PFAS-free coatings and recyclable high-performance fabrics. **Karl Mayer** will present a warp-knitted UV-protection jacket that achieves SPF 50+ without chemical finishing. Developments in smart textiles - from integrated sensors to light-emitting knits - demonstrate growing relevance for apparel applications, including workwear and outdoor garments. Texprocess complements this with a focus on scalable production. AI-supported defect detection, automated sewing, and fully digital product development chains improve efficiency and reduce waste. Together, both shows demonstrate how sustainability, performance, and digitalization are converging into practical, industry-ready solutions.

texprocess.messefrankfurt.com | techtextil.messefrankfurt.com



ORTA AND ARCHROMA LAUNCH DENIM COLLECTION DYED WITH WOOL WASTE

Archroma and **Orta Anadolu** have collaborated on circular dye chemistry, presenting a denim collection at **Kingpins Amsterdam** developed using Archroma's FiberColors® biosynthetic dyes. These dyes are produced with a minimum of 50% wool waste, specifically pre-consumer fleece that would otherwise be discarded. The process replaces petroleum-based inputs while maintaining dyeing performance and fastness comparable to conventional sulfur dyes. Orta selected three shades from the FiberColors® palette: Diresul® Fiber-Teak, Fiber-Slate, and Fiber-Graphite. The collection follows a successful trial phase in 2025 and reflects Orta's focus on combining aesthetics with production efficiency and material innovation. archroma.com | ortaandalou.com

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KINGPINS RETURNS TO LA

Kingpins Show will return to Los Angeles in January 2027, re-establishing its presence on the U.S. West Coast after more than a decade. The announcement was shared by CEO Vivian Wang as part of the organization's broader forward-looking plans. The event will replace the January Kingpins New York edition. The return reflects Kingpins' strategy to strengthen connections across key denim regions and respond to shifts in sourcing, manufacturing, and product development. Los Angeles is highlighted as an important hub within the U.S. denim ecosystem, as the birthplace of premium denim, with relevance for local production, design, and proximity to nearshoring partners. The 2027 edition will join Kingpins' global calendar, alongside events in Amsterdam, New York in July, and Hangzhou. kingpins.com



HUGO BOSS FOUNDATION PARTNERS WITH GLOBAL MANGROVE ALLIANCE

The **Hugo Boss Foundation** has announced a strategic partnership with the Global Mangrove Alliance to support mangrove conservation and restoration projects. Under its 'Bold for the Planet' framework, the foundation will contribute one million Euro over four years to initiatives in West Africa. The funding will support restoration, monitoring, skills development, and coordination efforts aimed at strengthening mangrove ecosystems and their resilience to climate change. The Global Mangrove Alliance operates across community, national, and regional levels, combining scientific research with local knowledge to advance conservation and stakeholder engagement. Mangroves are critical to coastal ecosystems, supporting biodiversity, protecting shorelines, and sustaining local communities. Africa accounts for around 20 percent of global mangrove coverage, with West Africa facing significant degradation pressures. hugoboss.com | www.mangrovealliance.org



CHT ADVANCES PERMANGANATE-FREE BLEACHING WITH ORGANIQ SEEK

CHT Group have announced new application results for their organIQ seek product, supporting the shift toward potassium permanganate (PP)-free bleaching in denim finishing. Alternatives to PP are increasingly necessary due to regulatory pressure to replace the harmful substance. Following extended industrial testing by its LABI02 team, the company reports that organIQ seek can replace PP in spray bleaching applications, delivering consistent color removal, stable processing, and reliable fading effects. The product is odor-free for workers, requires no harsh neutralization chemistry, and does not affect fabric strength or elastane. The process also reduces CO₂ emissions in this treatment step by at least 20 percent. Positioned close to - and in some cases below - PP's traditionally low price level, it provides a commercially viable alternative. CHT notes that organIQ seek is also compatible with water-based, foam, and nebulization processes, enabling a range of finishing effects. The development builds on earlier systems such as organIQ BLEACH T and will be presented at **Kingpins Amsterdam**. cht.com



DYNAMIC DENIM ADVANCES BIO-BASED DYE DEVELOPMENT

Dynamic Denim is expanding its work in bio-based coloration, collaborating with biotechnology partners, including **Chloris Geospatial**, to develop alternatives to synthetic indigo. According to Dynamic Denim, bio-based dyes have moved beyond early-stage research and can now be applied in bulk production. The focus is shifting toward scaling these technologies while maintaining consistency, performance, and industrial feasibility. Through ongoing development, Dynamic Denim aims to balance environmental considerations with the operational needs of the denim industry. The company's efforts reflect a broader shift toward alternative dye systems, as the industry continues to evaluate options that reduce reliance on conventional synthetic inputs. dynamic-denim.com

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CHEMISTRY AT THE CENTER OF DENIM'S SHIFT

Four experts specialized in denim chemistry discuss the developments in finishing, the role of chemistry alongside laser and AI, and how companies are responding to changing industry demands. Read about process innovation, the replacement of legacy chemicals, and how chemistry continues to evolve within a more complex and technology-driven landscape.



Luca Braschi
Marketing and
Technology Manager
Soko Chimica

“The most relevant innovation lies in simplification. For us, Hydrogel is a clear example, as it allows a garment to go from raw denim to a bleached look in a single bath using one product. This reduces time, water, and energy consumption, while also helping to protect the fiber from strength loss and improving consistency. Chemistry should not compete with technologies like laser, but work in synergy with them. At **Soko**, we developed Lumia, a patented ozone-based product designed to eliminate pumice stones while achieving authentic vintage effects. Our role is evolving beyond supplying products. We are increasingly expected to provide technical expertise and collaborate closely with brands and manufacturers.”

Julio Perales
Technical and Product
Segment Manager Denim
Archroma

“I see the main shift in denim production as the move toward an integrated chemistry approach. Dyes, auxiliaries, and finishing systems need to work together with digital and mechanical technologies to deliver cleaner processes while maintaining the expected denim aesthetic. Technologies such as laser depend on how the dye is applied and how it interacts with the fiber surface. If this is not optimized, it is difficult to achieve strong contrasts and consistent results. This is where chemistry plays a key enabling role. The main focus should be on reducing resource use while maintaining durability and design flexibility. To achieve this, collaboration across the value chain is becoming increasingly important.”



“The key development is the substitution of potassium permanganate in denim finishing. It is harmful to the environment and classified at the highest hazard level, so it is time to move away from it. The challenge has always been finding alternatives that deliver comparable results while remaining cost-effective. In the past, many solutions did not meet these expectations. With our latest development, we are now much closer to the price level of potassium permanganate, while offering additional advantages such as no unpleasant odor, fast bleaching reaction, visible spray application, no loss of strength in cotton, no impact on elastane, and no risk of indigo yellowing.”



Thomas Aplas
Global Head of
Application Management
Garment
CHT Group

Andrea Venier
Managing Director
Officina+39

“The most impactful innovation is not just a new chemical, but a different way of thinking about the entire finishing process. We are focusing on solutions that reduce water, energy, processing time, and operational complexity while remaining viable at an industrial level. Examples include AQUALESS Mission, AQUALESS ALL IN ONE, and ZERO PP | ALL.IN, which are designed to lower resource consumption and replace potassium permanganate through simplified workflows. Even with the development of technologies like laser and AI, chemistry remains essential. It defines how fibers react, how color develops, and how the final garment performs. The future of denim finishing will come from integrating chemistry with these technologies in a way that balances sustainability, creativity, and efficiency.”



These statements underline that today's denim industry is less interested in isolated breakthroughs than in practical combinations. Chemistry is now expected to replace older substances, reduce resource use, support digital tools, and still preserve the look and performance that denim customers expect. It is a demanding brief, but chemistry is not stepping aside. It is becoming more visible, more integrated, and more closely tied to how the industry will move forward.

OPINION

FUTURE OF DENIM



DARREN SHOOTER
THE VP GLOBAL DESIGN, **TOMMY JEANS**
ON WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR WHEN SHAPING
DENIM'S NEXT CHAPTERS.

The future of denim lies in championing the next generation of designers, giving emerging talent the space to experiment, mix influences and challenge conventions as they redefine the category. They're the ones pushing denim into new territories - bringing fresh ideas and shaping what comes next. At the same time, it's essential to continue strengthening a commitment to diversity and inclusion across every level of the industry, not just in campaigns but behind

the scenes. This means building teams and leadership that reflect the world we live in and the communities we serve, so a broader range of perspectives can help shape the creative vision. Denim has always stood for self-expression and cultural evolution. Taking it further means opening up the industry - making space for more voices, more stories, and new ways of thinking about what denim can be.



Blue Black

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This list honors the 100 most influential people in the denim industry. Together with an advisory panel, the editorial team of **WeAr** has researched and selected denim movers, shakers and influencers. It is a combination of outstanding denim brands, washing experts, fabric and yarn producers, as well as the best retailers, shows and showrooms. They were chosen based on their achievements and each one of them has made a significant contribution to improving the industry. There are undoubtedly many others we could name, and we applaud all those striving to enhance and improve the business. This list will be continued and changed according to the times. We invite our readers to contribute with suggestions – please email denim@wear-magazine.com.

Daniel Grieder CEO HUGO BOSS	BRAND
Reinhard Haase CEO Unifa Group GmbH	SHOWROOM
Shinichi Haraki CEO Iron Heart	BRAND
Roger Hatt Owner VMC Original Store	RETAIL
Tommy Hilfiger Founder Tommy Hilfiger	BRAND
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Mamoru Kaihara Owner Kaihara Denim	INDUSTRY
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Florian Klinder Managing Director Munich Fabric Start	TRADE SHOW
Hideki Kobori Chairman & Director Asahi Kasei	INDUSTRY
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Walden Lam & Kevin Martin Founders Unspun	BRAND
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Nicolai Marciano Creative Director GUESS Jeans	BRAND
Paul & Maurice Marciano Co-Founder GUESS	BRAND
Glenn Martens Creative Director Maison Margiela, Diesel	BRAND
Cindy McNaull Business Development Director INVISTA (Cordura)	INDUSTRY

Hiroyuki Murai CEO Moussy	BRAND
Dr. Frank Naumann CEO CHT Group	INDUSTRY
Dennis H. Nelson CEO The Buckle	RETAIL
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Hiroaki Otani President YKK Corporation	INDUSTRY
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Enrique Silla Founder Jeanologia	INDUSTRY

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Nichole Strydom Premium Buying Director Zalando	RETAIL
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Tracey Tan Co-Owner Queen's Couture The Denim Store	RETAIL
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Amy Wang General Manager Advance Denim	INDUSTRY
Vivian Wang CEO Kingpins	TRADE SHOW
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