

Journal de Nîmes

N° 3
THE ONE YEAR
ANNIVERSARY ISSUE
NOVEMBER 2009

THE PRINTED PAPER FOR
A DENIM INSPIRED BOUTIQUE
WWW.TENUEDENIMES.COM

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Anneke Beerkens (1980) received a degree in Cultural Anthropology (with Honours) from the University of Amsterdam, focusing on Japan, post-modern urban ritual, group formation, style and the body. Anneke works as a junior lecturer at University of Amsterdam. She gives several lectures (amongst others at FOAM during the Amsterdam Fashion Week, at Wereldmuseum Rotterdam and at fashion academies) and had her own photo exhibition last year, based on her Tokyo fieldwork. Currently she is writing a book about her research in Japan and she will apply for a Ph.D. position based on a proposal featuring fashion and its role in expressing the self in post-modern urban societies.

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Hiyoko Imai is a Tokyo-born illustrator and designer, currently living in Amsterdam. Hiyoko loves to create things with her own hands. Her inspiration come from cooking, balcony gardening, walking and dreaming. She favours craftsmanship and minimalistic design.

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www.thomastukker.com

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SPECIAL THANKS TO

KIM SCHAAFSMA

Born in Alkmaar, in 1986, Kim Schaafsma is at present reading Fashion and Branding at the Amsterdam Fashion Institute, and has a very strong passion for anything design- and fashion-related. She started out as a part-time sales assistant with TdN when it was founded, but her numerous skills and activities soon led to her working for TdN full time - at least until she graduates in May 2010. She currently combines writing her thesis with developing a concept for an online TdN experience.

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Tenue
de
Nîmes



— Celebrating one year —

ICHI GO ICHI E

Having a dream is beautiful, but confusing to carry around with you all the time. Discovering that you are able to actually live your dream is probably the most extraordinary thing anyone can experience. As kids René and I used to talk about conquering the world together (like everyone does at the age of fifteen). We lost sight of each other for some time, but one decade on we have managed to make our dream a reality. The first Tenue de Nîmes year was absolutely amazing. It flew by so quickly that it feels more like two weeks. And yet it also feels like Tenue de Nîmes has been in our lives forever. We look back on the past year with great pride and joy. We met a lot of great people, made an unbelievable start with the store, our brands, as well as with this Journal de Nîmes, and enjoyed a lot of enthusiastic feedback.

The new year will be full of new challenges for us. First of all we will work hard to present a first collection of winter tops for our private label in 2010. Secondly the store will introduce some new Japanese labels like Flat Head and Iron Heart and we will sell a highly exclusive Japanese denim range by Edwin for men and women, exclusively sold by Tenue de Nîmes and L'Eclaireur in Paris. In addition to this we will finally be able to introduce Levi's at Tenue de Nîmes in the way we have wanted to from the very beginning. Last year we already sold Levi's Red, we had some amazing classics from the Engineered remakes (hand-numbered, with gold plated buttons and rivets) and we sold a number of cool vintage Big E jackets, thanks to our friend Neil and his San Francisco pipe line. But a week before we celebrate our 1 year anniversary we will receive

two styles from the LVC dry goods. Then in January the rest of the SS10 collection will hit the Elandsgracht. And to be honest with you, it feels like denim is finally coming home. Both men and women can prepare for incredible leather shoes and boots this winter by Camilla Norrback from Sweden, Italian Moma and of course the one and only American boot company Red Wing. All of those new brands will be for sale in the store and hopefully in our coming web shop soon too.

We are happy to announce that we are able to take this romantic Journal to the next level together with some interesting contributors. In the past year we published three Journals of which the first one was only made available online. This N°3 is the third printed copy. Journal de Nîmes is our quarterly denim-inspired paper

connecting products, concepts and ideas that all deserve a place in the spotlight. We love to share the treasures we find in our daily lives and present them in an informal, but profound way.

A couple of months ago we found out that some of those men and women that most definitely deserved a spot in one of our issues were actually willing to collaborate with us. It felt like the world up-side-down to us. We can not begin to tell you how proud we are to present you with the new Journal de Nîmes team in the Colophon. Hopefully they will be able to take part in our future editions.

This N°3 issue is a tribute to Japan. That is why the back of the European side of the Journal is the front of our special Japan section, written in Japanese. Any denim fan will confirm

the magic of the Asian country when it comes to jeans, regardless of the fact it is so far away from here. In this Journal we have the ambition to take the two worlds apart and bring them together in the centre of the magazine. In the middle of the Journal we quote a special Japanese saying, shared by our friend Katsuhito Manabe on the day we met him, coined by the great mister Manabe himself. It says: "Ichi Go, Ichi E" and it describes the way the Japanese look at every moment as being unique and precious. We feel this moment is one of those. It truly feels like a once in a life time experience, in fact.

Memo, René & Joachim

CHARLES BECKMAN

Charles Beckman, a successful Main Street shoe merchant creates the Red Wing Shoe Company with 14 other local business investors. Their goal; build a better work boot.

ORIGINAL WORK BOOT

The original work boot from the first year of Red Wing production combined leather, buckles and laces for a secure fit.

PLANT 1

The original Red Wing Shoe plant located at the corner of Main Street and Potter. Today the location is used by the company for new product development.

CUTTING ROOM

The first generation of shoe making craftsmen cut Red Wing's heavy weight, high quality leather by hand.

RED WING CITY

View of Main Street in 1900 from Barn Bluff.

RED WING CITY

View of Main Street in 1900 from Barn Bluff.

FITTING ROOM

The signature triple-stitch sewing pattern is used to sew the pieces together.

HORSE DRAWN WAGON

Finished shoes, packed in wooden crates, are loaded on wagons headed to the nearby Mississippi riverfront for loading onto trains and riverboats destined for retailers throughout the upper Mississippi valley.

FITTING ROOM

The signature triple-stitch sewing pattern is used to sew the pieces together.

ARMY SHOE

To support the war effort, Red Wing redirects its boot production to support America's doughboys serving their country in World War I.

QUALITY AD

Outstanding quality was the essence of Red Wing products. This 1919 ad highlights the quality of hand-nailed Red Wing boots.

OIL KING BOOTS

With the introduction of boots for oil field workers, Red Wing begins developing specialty work boots to meet specific occupational needs.

BROWN CHIEF

Introduced in 1919 as a farmer's boot. The boot used special leathers, tanned to withstand harsh farming conditions. This boot expands Red Wing's reputation of quality across more of America.

RED WING LOGO

The Red Wing winged logo from 1928 is introduced. The logo is modeled after the feathers used in Chief Red Wing's ceremonial headdress.

J.R. SWEASY

J.R. Sweasy becomes president of Red Wing Shoe Company. He would be the first of three generations of the Sweasy family to lead the company.

BILLY BOOT

Built to meet the demands of America's adventurous youths, the style featured a side snap pocket for a pocket knife. It would be one of the company's top selling styles.

STEEL TOE

Red Wing introduces its first steel toe work boot.

MOBILE SHOE SALES

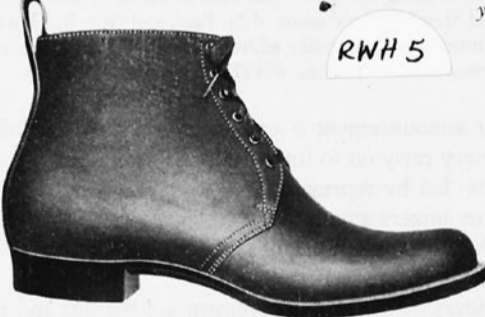
Red Wing introduces its first mobile shoe sales service. Now the shoe store can be brought to the factory location for workers to buy shoes.

2268 ENGINEER


In the 1930's trains were America's transportation backbone. The engineer boot was created to serve the needs of the men who piloted these steam puffing behemoths.




No.	Last	Price	
25 Men's Boarded Kang. Creedmore, Lined, 1/2 Double Sole, brass nailed.....	18EE	\$1.90	



RWH 5



No.	Last	Price
306 Men's Glazed Colt Blucher, Tip, 1/2 Double Sole, McKay and Fairstitch. 28E		



No.	Last	Price
252 Men's Chocolate Chrome Veal 14-inch Blucher, Tip, Bellows Tongue, large nickel eyelets, Straps and Buckle across top, Full Double Sole, Channel Screw.....	27	\$4.40

1907, pp. 3, 6 and 8; no welt-constructed shoes appeared in this catalog. Note: The traditional method of coiling shoelaces (see high-top boot) is a technique commonly used yet today.



1950 /

1960 /

1987 /

2005 /

2009

IRISH SETTER

The model # 877 hunting boot is introduced. The unique red color of the leather mirrors the distinctive coat of a classic upland bird dog; the Irish Setter. This match leads to the boot's unique name and dog logo.

IRISH SETTER 877

Designed as a Red Wing upland game hunting boot, their unique red leather matched the coat of another famous upland game. The match leads to the boot's Irish Setter name and logo.

PLANT 2

A second plant is opened in Red Wing, MN to keep up with the growing worldwide demand. It is located 3 miles down the road from the original Plant 1 facility.

ROCKWELL AD

The renowned illustrator Norman Rockwell, recognized for his unique style of capturing life of main street America is hired to create advertising images for the company.

PECOS BOOTS

In 1953 PECOS boots were the first to combine durability, comfort and western styling. They would soon be worn on oil rigs, farms and job sites around the world.

SUPER SOLE

Direct attach construction using a urethane sole was introduced. Named Super Sole, the new process delivered on its promise of superior durability and comfort.

S.B. FOOT TANNING

Opened in 1887, the Red Wing, Minnesota based business, S. B. Foot Tanning has been supplying Red Wing with premium leathers since 1905.

CUTTING ROOM

Today the cutting room operates much as it did in 1905. Skilled craftsmen still hand-cut the leather to yield premium parts for Red Wing's high quality footwear.

FITTING ROOM

Skilled sewers piece together the hand-cut leather parts. Original machines from 1905 are still used, along with our signature triple-stitched sewing pattern.

RED WING LOGO UPDATED

True to its original shape and color the Red Wing Shoes mark is updated for the times, but remains true to its heritage.

CORK FILLING

Cork filling is applied to the insole. The durable cork material will mold to the individual's foot shape providing all day comfort and long lasting durability.

BECKMAN 9010

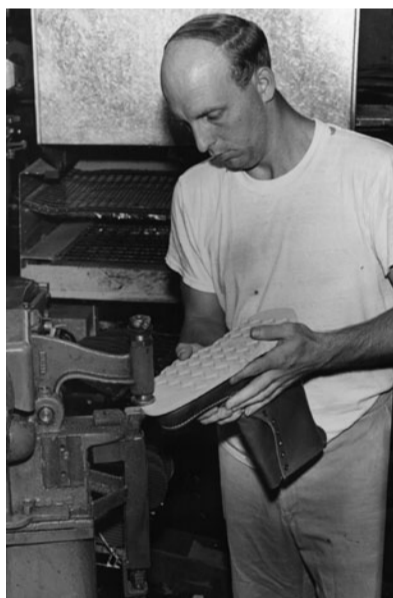
A dress leather boot with work boot styling, the Beckman boot uses premium Featherstone leather to create a dress boot that is still true to its work boot roots.

Work hard, achieve anything

In a defining tale of the American Dream, a main street shoe merchant called Charles Beckman spotted a demand for comfortable, durable work boots yet there was no supply. So in 1905, he set up Red Wing Shoe Company, taking its name and logo, by way of a commemorative gesture, from a Native American called Red Wing, the leader of the original inhabitants of the upper Mississippi River territory.

The lasting success of Red Wing is largely due to never compromising their two main criteria for their products, i.e. comfort and quality. This is amply illustrated by the fact that these days, a third generation of employees, located down the road from the original factory, continues the tradition by using the same premium craftsmanship and attention to detail: triple-stitched seams, sturdy welt construction and rich leathers are signature elements of a Red Wing boot. The original factory, we might add, is to this day being used by Red Wing for new product development.

For over a century, this commitment to excellence has been handed down to these generations of shoemakers, and it is all this that won Red Wing Shoe Corporation a place in our hearts - and hopefully soon a prominent place in our store!



OUR FAVORITE SCENT

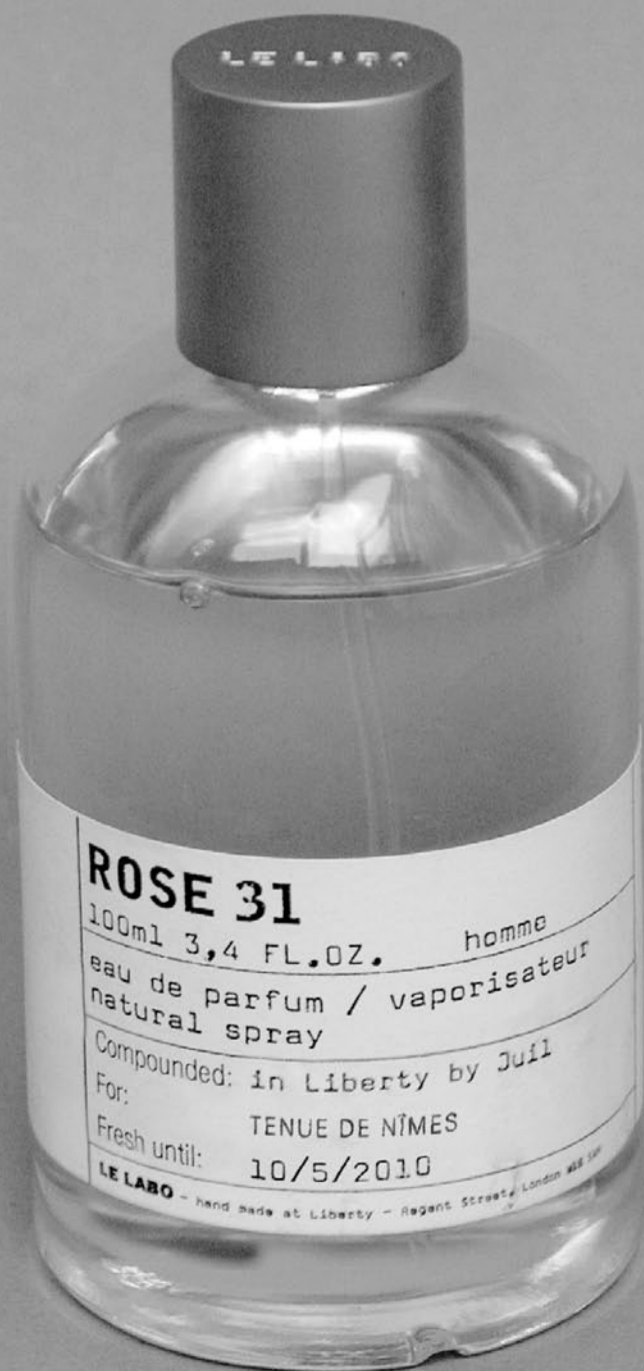
Le Labo

The way we tend to lose ourselves in jeans, watches, pens and boots every once in while is happening to us once again with our latest passion: fragrances. With special thanks to our friend Henny Kruger we have stepped into the mystical world of exclusive perfumes and highly qualified noses. In the early twentieth century every luxury brand would hire a nose (expert on perfume compositions) much like a fine restaurant that hires

a chef (Thomas, 2008). Today, the perfume business is suffering from (over-)commercialization and hardly any brand sells strictly natural scents anymore.

Ever since the opening of the store we have been searching for the ultimate aroma that symbolizes denim. Together with Henny we decided to write to the New York-based company Le Labo, the company that is responsible for creating ten exceptional

perfumes in their New York Lab with the most gifted noses of the world. Le Labo turned its back on luxury perfumes that are mass-produced and sold in places that look like supermarkets. According to them, those fragrances are not unique since they are worn by millions. We asked them to think of an answer to our denim aroma wish. While awaiting their visit to Amsterdam next year, we hereby present you our interim favorite: Rose 31.

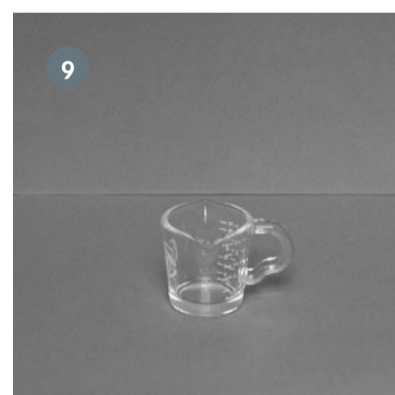
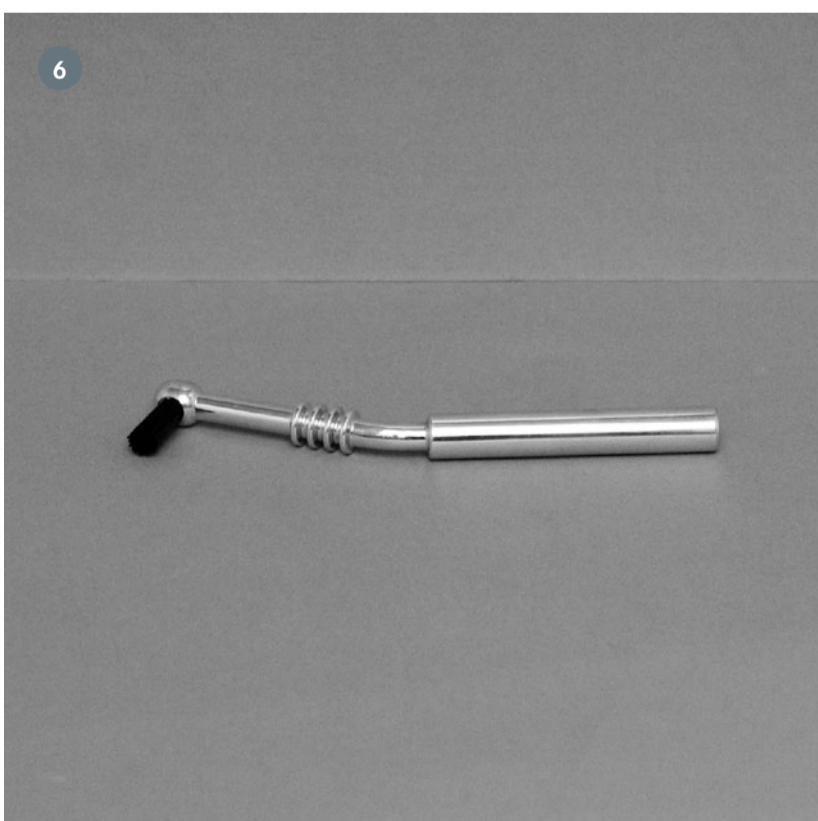


AND
OUR FAVORITE BLEND
FROM THE ROAST MASTERS
OF THE NETHERLANDS

Brandmeesters

Our friends at Brandmeester's have a store that we could dedicate three entire Treasures columns to. We decided it would be nice to select our favorite Brandmeester's accessories with the December days nearly upon us. You will simply be off to a better start of the day with a nice and clean espresso. We hope you will enjoy our special selection and your first BM espresso soon after that.

1. Mad Science coffee 250 grams, specially blended by Angelo van de Weerd for the 2009 Barista championship
2. Manufactura Classica espresso machine
3. Brazilian Moka pot by Gnali Zani
4. Motta Barista Kit, comprised of a stainless steel milk jug, thermometer, cocoa sifter and tamper
5. Arare Japanese cast iron kettle
6. Machine brush by Art
7. Ascaso coffee bean grinder
8. Wooden Fondo class coffee disposal tray
9. Ratleware measuring shot glass with handle and double spout
10. Dolphin chocolate
11. MV Italian craftsmanship, espresso en cappuccino cups and spoons
12. Brandmeester's Gunpowder tea



*"In Sweden
you wear jeans
from cradle
to grave."*



The naked truth of a female mystery

She is probably the most powerful lady in denim. But nobody actually seems to really know much about her. Maria Erixsson, founder and head designer of Swedish denim brand Nudie Jeans, is a living mystery. She is hardly ever seen in public and refuses to play the fancy fashion game. Erixsson prefers to focus on her denim mission and her family. We love her for that, even if it means she is quite hard to get hold of for anything not related to her dream and passion.

However, for the jeans spirit of Tenue de Nîmes she is happy to make an exception. After Journal de Nîmes N°2 in which we wrote an introduction of her label, we hereby present this exclusive interview with Erixsson. In her answers she discusses the consequences of a small company becoming a huge success, her love for jeans and the planet and she describes an 'average' day in the life of the founding mother of one the top jeans brands of the world.

Menno: Sweden seems to be one of the best denim countries in the world. What is the magic between denim and Sweden? Is it a perfect match?

Maria: Yes I believe that is what it is, a perfect match. The history of the Swedish People's home and the dream of America have put their stamp on the Swedish culture. I think that few other countries have been so fascinated by USA and England and their music and working class nostalgia. Jeans is the classic work wear that has transformed into fashion. In Sweden you wear jeans from the cradle to the grave.

Menno: When did you get the urge to start doing denim all by yourself? And what is the secret for making the ultimate jeans?

Maria: A creative process often starts with a big portion of frustration and stubbornness and the wish to fulfil the dream of creating something without the need to compromise your ideas or values. Big companies with huge organisations usually become very bureaucratic and political which restrains the creativity but gives a big incentive and desire to start up your own company.

Menno: You are a bit of a mystery since you hardly present yourself in the media. As a woman what is it like to be the owner one of the world's leading denim brands?

Maria: Nudie Jeans is a result of a dream and a passion. It has a personality of its own that is of course based on my personal preferences but is also the result of working together with fantastic like-minded people. Creating a company is not something that you can do on your own. An idea and a brand need a messenger to become something real.

Menno: In the last Journal de Nîmes we read that music is your most important source of inspiration. Can you describe the match between denim, music and Nudie jeans?

Maria: Music and jeans come from the same backyard. You can find the same every day melancholy in a pair of worn in jeans as in a lyric that describes life. Maybe it sounds pretentious but historically jeans and the attitude that lies in a pair of jeans has always been a perfect match with the rock music scene.

Menno: If jeans were a person who would be that person?

Maria: Jeans represents different feelings and it is hard to put one single person as a symbol for these feelings. I would say that Band of Horses represents a seventies nostalgic jeans era while Glasvegas and Babyshambles represents a Clash jeans attitude.

Menno: You seem to have a lot of interest in social and environmental issues, but you never seem to scream it out loud. Can you explain the importance of your social involvement?

Maria: To me this is like being a religious believer. It is part of the development of the brand to take responsibility for all its actions. The consumer should be able to take this for granted. To profess your faith more often leads to provoking your audience rather than gaining its respect. Our ambition is to make world-class denims in all aspects and to make sure to always be transparent in how that development is progressing. The conditions in business and society in general are constantly changing and we want to meet these challenges in every way we can without blowing our own horn doing this.

Menno: In every article we read about your label, we feel you have a weakness for special fabrics. Can you explain the rush from the ultimate piece of cloth?

Maria: The ultimate jeans are made in a dark, organic, selvage denim from Japan dyed with vegetable indigo. It has a high front rise and a very tight leg opening unwashed, to be worn in by you.

Menno: In a time where everyone seems to be running towards Asia in search of better margins and lower prices you stay in Europe. Is that because of quality and durability?

Maria: We think it is impossible to combine a social responsibility, ecological product development, high quality standards on fabrics and the best laundries in the world with a low price. To compromise the product in any of these aspects is not really our thing.

Menno: Once we read that you aimed for a small, independent label. Especially the first did not really work out, did it?

Maria: No, but in my head and in my world we are still the small upcoming brand.

Menno: How do you manage things in such a big and growing organization?

Maria: This is not my accomplishment but the one of my two partners and me. They are the two stable sides of what we call the golden triangle. The trinity that makes it possible to transform an idea into a working organisation.

Menno: How does an average day look like for you?

Maria: Leaving children at school, snuff, coffee, meetings, creative chaos, picking up children at school, cooking, writing down my thoughts, reading, decorating, wine with friends and talks about life.

Menno: We know that a lot of cool stores around the globe sell Nudie Jeans, but do you have a favorite?

Maria: I don't travel...

Menno: The Naked Truth about denim is something that returns often in your communication. What does that mean to you personally?

Maria: To me it means that you start out with dry denim that you wear and tear, creating your own personal and beautiful pair of jeans, simple, naked and revealing.

We really enjoyed providing you with this glimpse into the life of one of the most legendary - living - people in the business. The image of a Swedish woman with a dose of snuff under her upper lip that designs a better, blue world with a group of her beloved like-minded, is something that will stay with us for some time to come. Maria Erixsson became a great source of inspiration for Tenue de Nîmes over the last couple of years. Because she refuses to do any concessions concerning the quality of her product, her spirit and environmental responsibility, Maria is one of a kind as is her view on the naked truth about denim.

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Available soon
GRENSON X TENUE DE NÎMES



Underwater Indigo

On Friday 20 November (2009) denim inspired Boutique Tenue de Nîmes celebrates its 1-year anniversary. It flew by so quickly that it feels more like two weeks to all of us here, and yet it also feels like Tenue de Nîmes has been in our lives forever. In this very short period of time, Tenue de Nîmes (TdN) has managed to become an authority on jeans. Menno van Meurs, René Strolenberg and Joachim Baan fulfil any denim mission out of their Amsterdam based 'denim living room'.

We look back on the past year with great pride and joy, and we therefore felt it appropriate and fun to mark the occasion with a get-together, and further celebrate by launching an exhibition called 'Under Water Indigo' by Thomas Tukker. We are thrilled to present this exhibition, which refers to the purest element of jeans: the indigo bath.

Thomas Tukker is a Dutch fashion photographer with a predilection for water. Thomas started his career as a professional diver, and his experience as a diver helped him become an internationally respected underwater photographer too. Over the course of more than a decade, Thomas mainly worked abroad, but after fourteen years in places such as Miami, Milan and New York, he at last returned to Amsterdam, his city of birth.

All the images of the exhibition have been shot under water and refer to the authentic indigo bath. By combining the pureness of this classic colouring method with the beauty of the female body in work wear, the photographer refers to the paradoxical identity of the denim cloth. By emphasizing this paradox the exposition embraces the most important starting point of the TdN store: the beauty and diversity of denim.

You are hereby cordially invited to join us for the opening of this special 1 year anniversary exhibition on Friday 20 November 2009. Please mark this special date in your calendars. We will send out official invitations very shortly, and look forward to seeing you there!

Besides jeans, we at TdN sell a mixture of carefully selected items that are meant to embellish life. Everything between the walls of the store is interconnected and has an underlying connection with the heritage of jeans. Speaking of connections, we would like to take this opportunity to introduce those of you not yet familiar with it, to something called: L'Équipe de Nîmes. L'Équipe de Nîmes is an interactive network created by Menno, Rene and Joachim and hopes to be a link between the interesting people that are part of the TdN network. We have the ambition to unite people that are characterized by having a certain passion.

Every 12 weeks a single member of the Équipe will be invited by Tenue de Nîmes to expose a specially made paragraph of their personal life work inspired by the denim universe of the company. L'Équipe de Nîmes should be a place where people discuss the beauties of the world instead of the difficulties. The network unites an open-minded bunch of jeans fetishists that always looks for new approaches as well as other people to combine their disciplines with. Above all L'Équipe de Nîmes is pure effusiveness, no quality mark! We simply embrace who and what we like.

—
PHOTOGRAPHY BY THOMAS TUKKER
LOCATION: BIJLMER SPORTCENTRUM

HAIR AND MAKE-UP: NIKI VOS
MODELS: ASSA ARIYOSHI
(& SUSANNAH KARELSE AT DE BOEKERS)

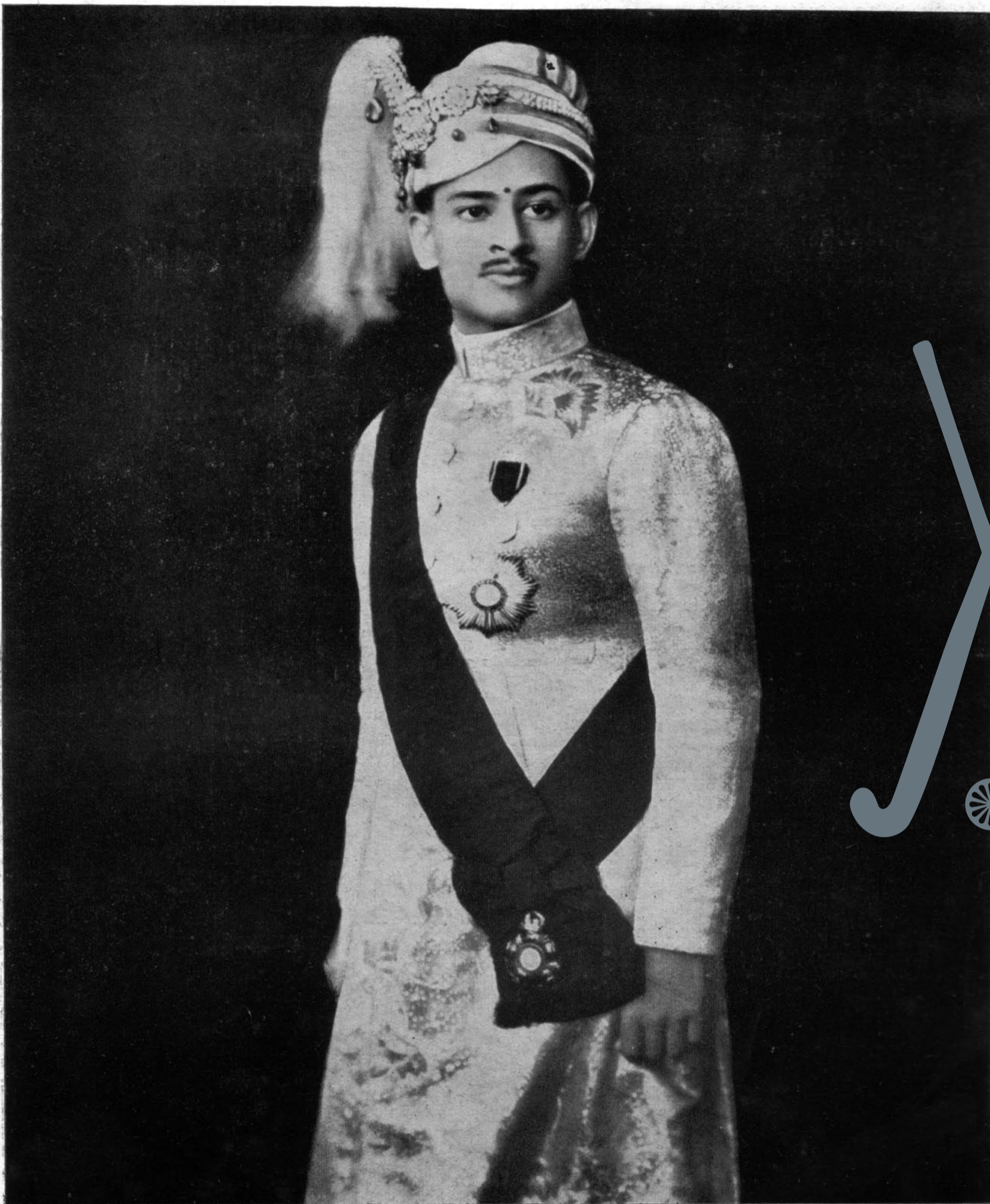












H. H. MAHARAJA OF TRAVANCORE

The Indian Maharadja

Travancore is the historic land in the south of India, and was one of many British Princely States in the first half of the 20th century. The Indian sub-continent was ruled by the Travancore family, of which Chithira Thirunal Balarama Varma (image) was the last Maharaja to rule over the first class princely state until 1949. The Maharaja, known for opening the temples in Kerala for all Hindus enjoyed great respect for his acts, most notably from Mahatma Gandhi.

The brand name Indian Maharadja literally means 'high king' or 'great king' and the sword symbolizes one of the most powerful accessories of the dynasty.

The brand was founded in 1936 and was temporarily discontinued during World War II. The brand restarted in

1947 in Bombay, India. More than half a century later, two Dutch entrepreneurs were mesmerised by the magic of the Maharaja of Travancore and decided to re-build this sports icon.

For Tenue de Nîmes sport is one of the most incredible sources of inspiration. Not only because the diligence involved frees our minds on a daily basis, but also because of the great number of extraordinary sports brands that improve our amateur achievements. The magic of a classic sports brand is hard to define. It gives the people wearing or using it that little bit extra during the game as well as the feeling that they would be fair game for sports icons such as John McEnroe or Pelé.

Last July we met two interesting guys on a mission. Apart from the fact that we connected instantly as

we saw our passion for jeans mirrored in their passion for hockey, we instantly liked the ambitious project they told us about. The brothers managed to revive one of the oldest known sports brands of the world: The Indian Maharadja.

The brand now not only sells sports gear such as hockey sticks but will eventually be expanded to include sports orientated lifestyle products as well. The Indian Maharadja hockey sticks are available in four colors (White, Black, Gold and Silver) of which we present our favourite here. We said it before and we will say it again: great products create demand for bigger things. Thanks to these fabulous 'swords' René and I registered for hockey courses for the first time since we were five. It is the world upside down and we love it.

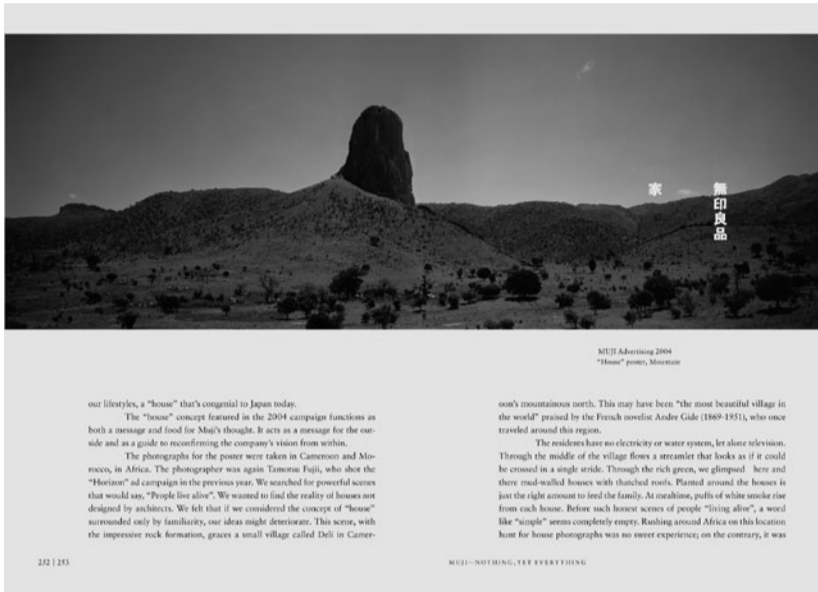
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真鍋寿男
真鍋徳仁

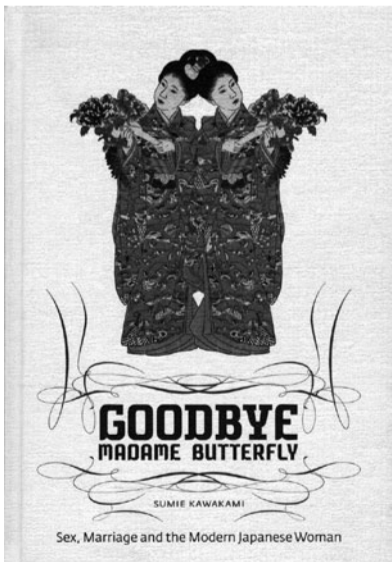
Japanese Treasures



DESIGNING DESIGN - KENYA HARA

This is probably our new bible. Kenya Hara, communication advisor at Muji and designer of the opening and closing ceremonies of the Nagano Winter Olympic games in 1998 (amongst others), shared his vision and inspiration in the book Designing Design. The most inspiring and fascinating is his theory on "emptiness" in both the visual and philosophical traditions of Japan, and its application to design, demonstrated by numerous examples of his own work. "Creativity is to discover a question that has never been asked. If one brings up an idiosyncratic question, the answer he gives will necessarily be unique as well." – Kenya Hara

www.lars-mueller-publishers.com



GOODBYE MADAME BUTTERFLY

Sex, Marriage and the Modern Japanese Woman. What are the first things that come to mind when we mention Japanese women? Chances are the words pliant, coy, reserved – or some variation thereof- will figure into it

prominently. The groundbreaking work of non-fiction, "Goodbye Madame Butterfly" will shatter any such association. Instead, Sumie Kawakami presents a fiercely independent woman, complex in character, erotic, sexually charged even, who struggles to find her place in a male-dominated society.

www.goodbyemadamebutterfly.com



GUU WATANABE

Watanabe Shoichi started Guu Watanabe in 1986 in the east of Tokyo, crafting custom made cycling bags out of water-repellent 22.3oz cotton duck with cowhide. The bags are custom-made and numbered anywhere between 0 and 999. Above: Shoichi is cutting the leather.

www.guu-watanabe.com



NAM

Nam, set up by graphic designer Takayuki Nakazawa and photographer Hiroshi Manaka, is a Tokyo based graphic collective. In a group of eleven creatives who work in the fields of photography, graphic design, fashion, music and styling they are exploring the visual possibilities in a playful and unique way, all guided by the basic theme "A fantasy in life".

Displayed above is "Queen of Sleep Room" under the art direction of Takayuki Nakazawa, photographed by Hiroshi Manaka, styling by Atsushi Kimura, hair by Go Utsugi, make-up by Akii and photo retouching by Yoshiaki Sakurai.

www.n-a-m.org



PILOT CAPLESS

In the early 60s Pilot revealed one of the most innovative fountain pens ever made. The Pilot Capless (needles to say, it doesn't carry a cap) also named Namiki Vanishing Points, works exactly like a ball point pen. By clicking, the beautiful fragile golden nib emerges from a tiny trap door in the top of the pen and you can start writing. Displayed here is the beautiful vintage Capless which was introduced in 1964.

http://www.penpedia.com/wiki/Vanishing_Point



POSTALCO

Originally from Brooklyn, NYC, the Tokyo based boutique Postalco started with the philosophy of 'creating stationary that would function and age well'. Pictured here is the No 20124 notebook with a pressed cotton fabric cover, which comes in the beautiful colours light blue, dark blue, school bus yellow, signal red, dark green and brown. In Europe these little treasures are only available in London and in Paris, and of course soon at Tenue de Nîmes.

www.postalco.net

TOKYO BY TOKYO

Compiled with extensive input by 70 of Tokyo's finest creative minds, the Claska hotel published the Tokyo guidebook Tokyo by Tokyo. With more than 200 spots excluding the usual tourist spots this guide will let you experience the real Tokyo. Linked with Google Maps to easily navigate your journey to Tokyo this is a must have and will be available in Europe and probably in Tenue de Nîmes some time very soon.

www.claska.com



QUOTATION

Quotations is a Japanese magazine documenting the creative activities from around the world.

www.quotation.jp



TST

TST Footwear is designed by the esteemed footwear designer Seishi Tanaka. The shoes are made from the highest quality materials and incorporate the pure essence of both manufacturing and design techniques. Seishi Tanaka always hand-draws his shoes directly onto paper and these line drawings then become the shape and design of the shoe, giving them an organic shape and feel.

Tanaka's inspiration comes from his life experiences combined with his technical knowledge of shoemaking. As a teenager he studied at North Carolina University in the USA, on a golf scholarship. He then returned to Japan at the age of twenty-four to work in his family business as a shoemaker. This gave him a natural passion for, and knowledge of, traditional shoemaking and design, which complimented his knowledge of modern sports technology acquired during his studies.

Since branching out on his own Tanaka has worked with leading basketball companies designing technical footwear, and recently collaborated with some ambitious fashion brands at the highest level, such as Comme des Garçons and Helmut Lang.

TST is his personal project however. The collection is pure, but still diverse, inspired by both tradition and technology.

www.tenuedenimes.com

THINGS YOU WANT TO KNOW

Tokyo can intimidate the first-time visitors. You would think their complicated language could be a barrier. Nothing could be further from the truth. With some directions and a bit of common sense, you will find the way easily and be just fine.



When I first arrived in Tokyo, a friend who was leaving gave me some valuable transport information so I would not get lost. Here are my tips to make your Tokyo visit hassle-free.

Friendly Airport Limousine



Arriving by plane at Narita (or Haneda), you can choose several ways to get into the city. Since Narita is quite far away from the city center of Tokyo, you might like to choose affordable, comfortable and fast transport. My advice is to take the *Friendly Airport Limousine*. They are squeaky clean and efficient busses which can bring you to the major hotels.

The subway & train system is mostly displayed in English as well and easier than it looks. Again, do not be afraid: all lines have colors and initials.



Every station has a number. Remember your color, initial and number then you will be fine.



Get a *Suica* or *Pasmo* card. They are very useful. Not only will they save your time, but also can be used at vending machines and some shops.



Getting money from an ATM can be hard since most machines don't accept foreign cards. I recommend trying the Citibank machines and the ATMs located at any 7 ELEVEN convenience store.

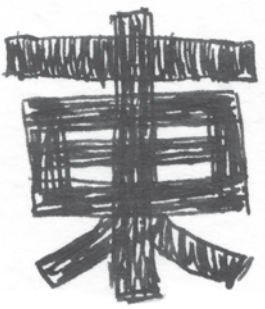


Last small advice: wear shoes that are easy to remove. In Japan, you will be asked to take off your shoes quite often (at dressing room in shops or in some local restaurants).



THE 1ST OF MARCH, 2009 I FLEW TO TOKYO.

GOING TO JAPAN WAS ONE OF MY PERSONAL DREAMS. AFTER HAVING WORKED AS A DESIGNER FOR MORE THAN 12 YEARS, I CONCLUDED I NEEDED A BREAK. UPON ARRIVAL I BOUGHT A BIKE; ALMOST THREE MONTHS I PLEASANTLY WANDERED AROUND, MAKING DRAWINGS AND ENJOYING SOLITUDE. ON THE WAY I FOUND MANY PEOPLE AND PLACES THAT ENCHANTED AND WON ME OVER FOREVER. THIS IS A VERY PERSONAL SELECTION OF PLACES I FOUND AND MIGHT HELP YOU AS A STARTING POINT. SINCE JAPAN IS THE COUNTRY OF MYSTERY AND THEY LOVE TO HIDE THINGS, THE BEST WAY TO ENJOY THE CITY IS TO WALK AROUND AND PUT YOUR NOSE IN EVERY ALLEY AND DARK CORNER. RELAX, TOKYO IS AN INCREDIBLY SAFE PLACE AND YOU WILL BE FINE NO MATTER WHAT NEIGHBORHOOD OR THE HOUR OF THE NIGHT. THIS MAKES THE CITY THE PERFECT EXPLORING GROUND. ENJOY!



TO

A VERY P CITY R

PLACES YOU SHOULDN'T MISS

RAINY DAY BOOKSTORE & CAFE IN NISHI-AZABU

Switch and Coyote are probably my favorite Japanese trend & travel magazines respectively. This cafe is located at the basement of their offices.

WWW.SWITCH-PUB.CO.JP/ TOPICS/RAINY_DAY_070507.HTML



COW BOOKS & NAKA-MEGURO

If I lived in Tokyo, Naka Meguro would be my daily stroll or running course. There is this river surrounded on both sides by little shops & restaurants. Great in sakura (cherry blossom) time and fall. One of those shops is Cow Books. They sell mainly out-of-print books from the 1960-70s social movements, progressive politics, and first editions of forgotten modern authors.

WWW.COWBOOKS.JP



NAKANO

Get yourself lost in this off-center working class neighborhood. There are several streets in Tokyo with standing bars where only 5 or 6 people will fit, but Nakano has them surrounded by alleys full of obscure shops and markets.



KAGURAZAKA

This was my *barrio*. There used to be many (some remain) geisha houses. Though it is located very close to Shinjuku, it has a very quiet atmosphere. There are loads of hide and seek alleys and is mainly low rise, so if you stay in my building you will enjoy a great view.

WWW.SPACED.CO.JP/EN/KAGURAZAKA



IKEBUKURO

Here is one of the biggest Muji of all, where they have all Muji items. After having enjoyed the Muji experience, you shouldn't miss the gallery and tea at the trendy and relaxed Pause Café.

WWW.MUJI.COM & WWW.JEANSNOW.NET/CAFEPAUSE



TOKYU HANDS @ SHIBUYA

Shibuya is a trendy neighborhood but the coolest place for me was Tokyu Hands, a chain that sells creative materials. Whether you are looking for a special ink, that pretty notebook, an inflatable bed or a Gocco Print machine, this is your place. 5 floors of glory. And they sell Porter bags (see right) too.

WWW.TOKYU-HANDS.CO.JP



ROPPONGI

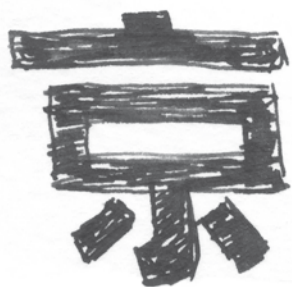
Watch it: this is the Tokyo you want to visit if you are homesick. My highlights are the hidden backstreets, the Roppongi Hills' Mori Art Museum at the top (53rd floor) of the Mori Tower and of course Super Deluxe, the place where Pecha-Kucha was born.

WWW.MORI.ART.MUSEUM
WWW.SUPER-DELUXE.COM



Although Akihabara is a crazy town full of tourists, this neon paradise might as well be an anthropological study if you visit the cosplay bars.

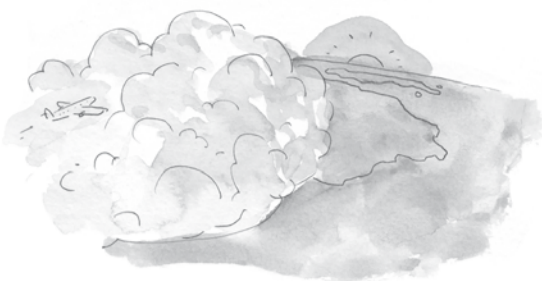




KYO

PERSONAL REPORT

MY ADVICE IS TO FLY DIRECTLY WITH JAPAN AIRLINES. THE SERVICE IS TERRIFIC AND YOU CAN USE THE 13 HOUR FLIGHT AS A TRANSITION TIME AND FAST INTRODUCTION TO JAPANESE HOSPITALITY, CLEANLINESS AND GOOD MANNERS. I USED THE TIME TO START MY DIARY AND TIME FLEW QUICKLY. BEFORE I KNEW IT, WE WERE ABOUT TO LAND.



THINGS YOU WILL BE HAPPY YOU BROUGHT FROM HOME



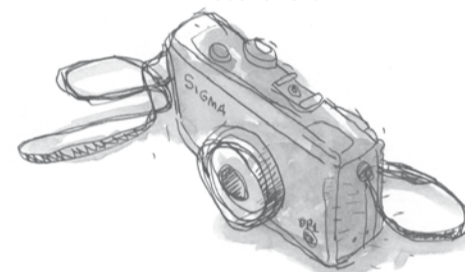
TOKYO IS A GREAT SHOPPING CITY
I wonder if there is anything you can not find in Tokyo. With a great service, shopping here is indeed a satisfying experience. That is why I would recommend only bringing your essentials and get stuff in Tokyo. Japanese fashion brands offer a lot of choice at a good price.

The price difference with for instance Amsterdam is not so big, but the quality and life standards are remarkably higher. All the department stores have several restaurants where you can eat very well for very little.

THINGS YOU WANT TO GET FIRST



YOUR OWN CHOPSTICKS
Asia's appetite for chopsticks has resulted in the loss of 25 million trees a year in China. Buy your own and save some trees every time you have lunch.



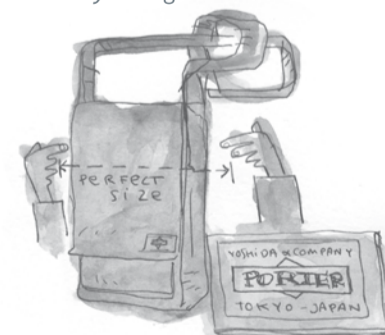
(DIGITAL) CAMERA
As most cameras are made in Japan, this is definitely the best place to get yours. You will save some bucks (not many) and places like Yodobashi Camera are great to find the latest models. Tokyo is a hell of a photogenic place to photograph.



TOKYO CITY ATLAS & A COMPASS
These two saved my life. If you like to understand the way streets are organised, you will need both.



TOKYO BY TOKYO, THE CLASKA BOOK
Claska, being one of the coolest hotels in the city, made a great book with city recommendations from locals you might like to check.



A PORTER BAG
Porter is the quintessential Japanese bag brand. Great quality for a good price.

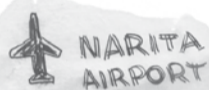


A BIKE
Bike riding is encouraged. No need to use the lock more than once.



PARK HYATT HOTEL IN SHINJUKU

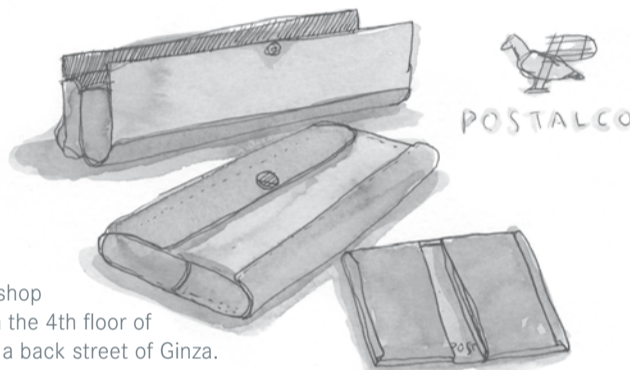
If you've seen *Lost in Translation* and laughed at the scene where Bill Murray is in the lift with men shorter than him, you probably missed the beautiful sculptures attached to the mirrors. Next to that you can have a good (but not cheap) coffee in the bar with breathtaking views over Shinjuku Park. Go early in the morning or at dusk for greater effect.



POSTALCO SHOP IN GINZA

By far my favorite shop in Tokyo, hidden in the 4th floor of an ugly building in a back street of Ginza. An American bag designer and his Japanese wife sell their products: stationery, books, bags and pouches, together with things they love from other brands.

WWW.POSTALCO.NET



PELLE'S ESPRESSO IN JIMBOCHO

Definitely the best espresso I had while in Tokyo. Believe it or not, it is not easy to find a good coffee in Tokyo. This is a great exception. Stroll through bookshop town Jimbocho and take a break at Pelle's. The barista Edo and the charming waitresses speak good English.



MARUNOUCHI DISTRICT

This chic and exclusive business district has several hidden treasures: The Tokyo Station (inspired by Amsterdam's Centraal Station), The Shin Marunouchi building, with one of the best stationery shops I've ever seen and a cafe overseeing the Tokyo Station busy tracks.



MAISEN TONKATSU



SHOSAIKAN

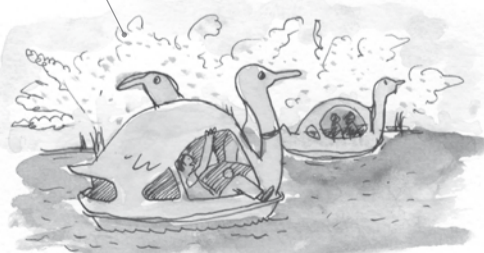


TINUN RAMEN

OMOTESANDO CROSSING

Around the Omotesando Crossing, there are several interesting places I kept visiting. *Maisen* for the best tonkatsu (breaded, deep-fried pork cutlet) in town. Go to *Tinun Ramen* when you are tired of eating sushi and curry. This is a great Thai restaurant in this area where you have to go downstairs to find it. And if you are a writing or drawing freak like me, you will love *Shosaikan Pen Boutique*, a fountain pen paradise with all kinds of pens and inks you could imagine. They even have a coffee corner where you can read or write at leisure.

MAI-SEN.COM WWW.TINUN.JP WWW.SHOSAIKAN.CO.JP

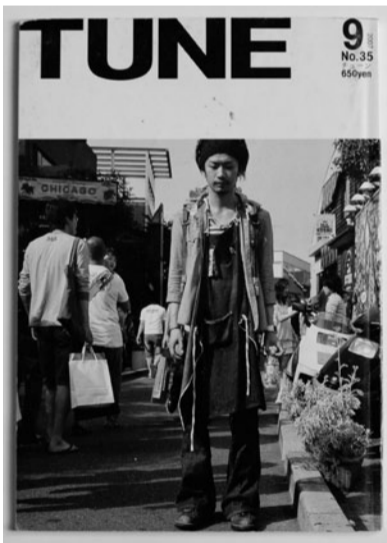


UENO PARK

Ueno park has a lot to offer; *Shinobazu pond* with the funny swan boats, the *Ueno zoo*, national museums and art academy. Great place to visit during hanami season (spring).

Shimokita's Charisma

LIVING WITH A
TOKYO FASHION ICON
AND HIS TRIBE



Anneke Beerkens is a cultural anthropologist, specializing in Japan, fashion and youth, working at the University of Amsterdam. For her four-month Master's research, she went to Tokyo to study youth culture and group dynamics in the underground fashion scene. Inspired by a Japanese magazine called TUNE, only consisting of street snapshots of mainly Tokyo boys, she asked herself: who are those boys in TUNE magazine, what does their life look like, do they know each other, do they belong to certain fashion groups, and if so, is it one group, or are more subcultures represented in this magazine? Who is in, who is out; what is in, what is out? And of course: how to relate all of this to Japanese culture? In brief: she wanted to trace the roots of TUNE magazine. Anneke's Tokyo research was her first encounter with Japanese society. She soon became lost in translation, not knowing where she was, and therefore, extra sensitive to all the new impressions she would get. Indeed, that is what she purposely wanted to experience! Like an anthropologist from the old days, surviving among distant tribes, but now in a more urban setting, Anneke exchanged the clay hut for the skyscraper!



AN INTRODUCTION: AKIRA – TOKYO, 2007

After a ten minute bike tour from my place to Shimokitazawa I parked my bike having absolutely no idea where I was or where this first day of research would lead to. With a single copy of TUNE magazine in my one hand, my camera in the other, I started walking the streets of Shimokitazawa, because that is what a Japanese-American friend of mine told me to do. Although she had her doubts – and she was not the only one – I would ever find these TUNE boys I was looking for, she thought this neighbourhood would be a good starting point: full of bars, restaurants, shops and more importantly full of youth. The little main street I started my journey on did not seem promising though. Cheap outlets, convenience stores, fast food restaurants, even a donut shop. Like in every city, it seems, the most exciting things were going on literally outside of the 'mainstream', in little side streets, a few blocks away from the centre and from the masses. I walked on leaving Shimokitazawa's main street and found myself meandering in narrow alleys, surprised by the new views that peeped up after every curve. This is the place! One vintage clothing store after the other, young designers, select shops with unique brands, hairdressers' saloons – innumerable hairdressers' saloons! I walked and walked, nosing around, looking, observing, sniffing, asking, seeking: I took more than a hundred pictures that day, which I analyzed at the end of the day back in my tiny Japanese room.

Entering all the stores I tried to sense opportunities for my research. I approached the shops' staff but their very poor mastering of English was disappointing. Most of them seemed to think: 'big red lady, what are you doing here, what do you want from me?'. While the only thing I asked – in Japanese – was if they possibly spoke English. By displaying a sense of shame combined with a little panic and by making a cross with their arms, their message could not be clearer as they sent me about my business.

Continuing my first day activity I ran into a very interesting house. Outside, in the doorway, there was a dummy with an old Egyptian dress. I saw old toys, baskets, furniture, and vintage hand bags in the window. I was not sure if this was a shop or just a house. Behind the open door wooden stairs ascended.



Dresses, necklaces, and bags led me upstairs. I found myself in a traditional Japanese wooden house with five little rooms, each no larger than three by three metres, or perhaps more precise, as large as five *tatami* mats. Every little room was a single store announced by flyers and curiosities in one of downstairs' windows.

One store, still indefinable, drew my attention specifically. Around the doorpost I saw puppets, puppet arms, legs and heads, old newspapers, stuffed animals and antique lamps. The entrance was partly closed by a thick black curtain making its way into a knot from the upper left corner downwards to the right corner. I entered the shop. I put my head through the curtain – stooping – and saw a space so small, stuffed with clothes, accessories, and curiosities. The scent of wood that, through time, incorporated rain and sun in its grains combined with the odour of old clothes, of mothballs and dust, created unity with the earthy colours and forms in the store. Besides clothing in jeans colours, woodsman's shirts, American construction workers' aprons, leather shoes and bags, my eyes caught necklaces made of chicken bones and linen shirts with the rising sun printed on it. A little shrine made of clothing and accessories, a stuffed penguin (a real one) adorned with hat and tie, old used cans, plastic bottles and other garbage objects shaped the scenery of the shop.

In the back of the shop, in a dark corner, behind the counter was a boy, wearing dark clothing. He was as hidden as the shop itself. Looking up from under his hood he greeted me by winking both his eyes. 'There is something with this boy, something about this boy, something around this boy', I wrote down in my field diary later on. He had a mysterious gaze. No crossed arms were coming up. For the first time that day I experienced contact with someone: the boy and I, we had something in common.

The boy focused on that one customer who just bought a piece of clothing. Before I could figure out what it was it disappeared in a black polythene bag with yellow-black tape, like a garbage bag. I walked around – rotating around my axis – absorbing everything around me. I soon got the feeling I had to leave: the shop was small, I had made my round, touched all the clothing and besides, the shop was clearly for men. What else, being a

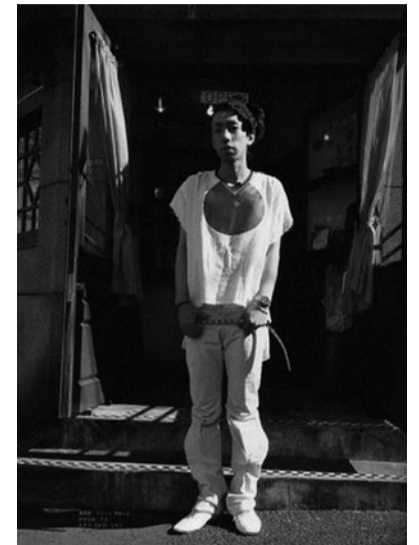
woman, could I do but leave such a shop? But I did not want to leave.

A second round gave me the chance to prolong my stay, but even after this extension of time the customer was still there, chatting with the boy. Their conversation seemed to take ages. The boy with the hood was looking at me, obviously wondering why I was still in his store. '*Eigo ga wakarimaska?*' I asked him. No, he did not speak English. With hope I turned to his client, but by stepping back and making the same cross with his arms as so many did that day, his whole body showed me that he also did not speak English. Putting my one thumb up, while pointing to the clothing and space with my other hand, I gestured that I liked the shop. A smile came from under the hood, 'me shop owner' was the only thing he said. From that moment on I knew I found my man! After some seconds of uncomfortable laughing, I left the shop.

Feelings of both excitement and concern took possession of me. I was convinced that - if somewhere - this was the right spot to find TUNE boys. But nobody spoke English, how was I to do my research there? I continued strolling around Shimokitazawa, visiting shop after shop, but nothing compared to the little dark cave up there, nobody came even close to the boy with the hood. I knew I had to go back and in that moment I decided that the next day I would go back, I would go back to that shop and that boy.

When I walked into the little street the next day I already saw him standing outside with some other fashionable guys. The sight of this social gathering convinced me even more that this was an interesting spot for research. The boy wore the same jeans jacket as the day before, the hood now draped around his shoulders. A big woollen bandage hid his face. He saw me coming, greeted me, not knowing it actually was him I was walking up to again. When I entered the wooden room with stairs he stopped me - 'closed', he said, a bit strictly. I tried to figure out what time the shop opened, and at the same time I felt all eyes on me. Nobody spoke English, nobody understood what I wanted, nobody knew who I was. After another confusing and embarrassing five minutes I walked away, back home, to change plans.

'I've got to go back' I told an English speaking Japanese friend of mine. She made me an introduction note and the third day I went back to the shop,



convinced this new method would eventually work. The jeans jacket was enough for me to recognize ‘my boy’, standing in the middle of a group of boys, hidden from the outside world by his hood. I gave him the note with my name, intentions and interests on it. Although I was a firm believer this would definitely break the ice he looked at me incomprehensively. ‘Huh’ he said, giving me an insecure laugh. The letter circulated, again all eyes on me. They could not ask a thing, I could hardly say a thing. Resolutely I dug in my feet, observing what was going to happen.

Then the boy grabbed his mobile phone and a moment later he gave it to me: his girlfriend was on the phone speaking English very well. Finally I could explain myself! The girl thought my plan for researching her boy’s shop was ‘cool’, and we decided to meet the three of us. Two days later we had dinner together and there I was, sitting in front of Akira and his girlfriend Ayaka. Finally we could communicate with words. We talked about my research, fashion and Tokyo, and out of the blue, they asked me a significant question: ‘do you know the magazine TUNE?’. A feeling of pride and happiness washed over me, this was the Japanese men’s fashion magazine my mission was based on! Still not knowing why Akira asked it, I kept my cool, conscious of the fact that I did not want to influence his opinion on the magazine. With pride he told me his pictures were used quite often for this magazine, and even his store *Mikiri Hashin* was one of forty-seven shops in the ‘TUNE Tokyo Shop Guide’. There I was, chatting with a real TUNE boy! From that moment on Akira played the leading part in my research. I could get started at last. The first period after I got access to Akira’s shop I mainly hung around there meeting customers, trying to understand their styling codes, trying to sell some of the fashion by smiling and gesturing my approval concerning their choices. I was drinking coffee outside while the boys were smoking, chatting with them (with the help of an interpreter I found who was with me very often) and, of course, always observing.

Akira was never alone in his shop. There were always people stopping by, not necessarily for buying new clothes. One thing struck me the most. Whether I went to parties with Akira – he was a DJ as well –, visited his shop or looked at

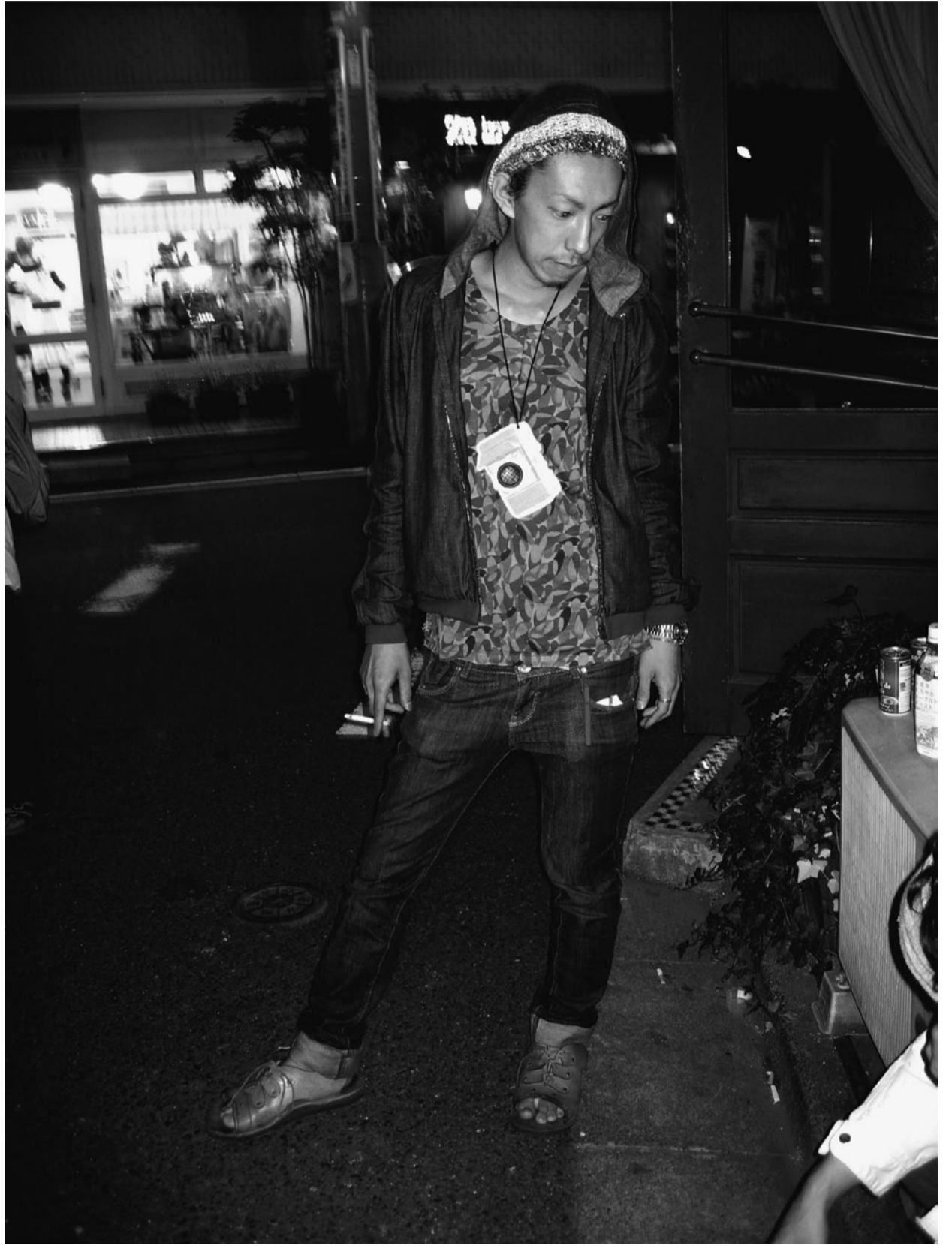
his own community on Mixi, the Japanese facebook-like network site, I always encountered the adoration of other boys for Akira. The way the boys were looking at Akira while they were standing in a circle around him, mimicking his every move touched me. I saw some of them visiting, clearly for the first time, with TUNE magazine and a printed map of the neighbourhood in their hand, searching for Akira’s shop, hoping to meet him there. Things as ‘he is Shimokita’s charisma’ and ‘he is like god to me’, were written about him on Mixi. Some boys even looked up to *me* as I told them I knew Akira.

That ‘something’ that I had experienced myself in a split second when I met Akira was confirmed time and again while observing encounters between Akira and others. This adoration became the main focus of my research. I wanted to figure out how this aura of uniqueness that seemed to hover around Akira and his shop came into being, and at the same time, shaped Akira’s life and the life of certain people around him. I wanted to unravel the fashion icon that is Akira.

End of part one

Part two will be published in Journal de Nîmes N° 4

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Otherworldly Sounds

Whether it is the ethereal, melancholic sound of an Icelandic rock group or the uplifting and passionate rhythms and vocals of an ensemble from the Balkans, I do not mind listening to music in a language I do not understand. There is so much information in a voice, understanding the words is not always necessary. When a singer's voice is combined with the rest of the musical layers in the sonic spectrum, it is just another instrument. The vowels and consonants of the words are a singer's strings and bow, her drum skin and sticks.

One might appreciate a specific song and be moved by the lyrics for empathic reasons, while another identifies with the feeling a song represents without even listening to the words. In dance music this feeling is much more important than the lyrics. In fact, in many cases, the vocals are left out all together. On the dance floor we do not really want to listen, we want to feel and be moved by the groove.

Living in a western society, we are used to listening to music in a language we all understand. If we look at the national hit-list there is no song there in a language more foreign than English. In Japan, most children learn how to read and write basic English at school. However, they do not learn how to speak and listen to English. Yet a lot of the popular music in Japan is in English, and many Japanese artists use English for song titles or combine English with Japanese words in their lyrics.

Popular Japanese music is highly influenced by western music genres, and many European and American bands make their way to Japan, reaching an enthusiastic group of fans. Some artists are much more popular there than they are in their own country - we all know the phrase: Big in Japan. These artists influence the local bands, who mix these influences with their own ideas. Bands play guitars and drums, while traditional Japanese instruments like the shakuhachi flute or the three-stringed shamisen are nowhere to be found, most of the time.

Like in many subcultures, music is an important inspiration for fashion in Japan. Kids who listen to a certain style of music wear a certain style of clothes, just like in any other place. They do take it further though. The most visually striking are the 'visual-kei' bands with their flamboyant costumes and lots of make-up, inspired by glam rock and hard rock artists like David Bowie and Kiss. Whereas some hip hop fans would be happy to wear their jeans very low-slung, some specific music fans might go as far as wearing an SS uniform, complete with the red Nazi armband to support their idols. For all we know these could be designed by any top-designer, and there is no accounting for taste, but it would be an understatement to say that for most people with a sense of history, such outfits would be dubious at best.

The same extremity can be found in Japanese music. And here we can appreciate this boldness. If we take a closer look at contemporary music from Japan we find extremely loud noise artists like Merzbow, childish bedtime songs by Lullatone and the combination of abstract sonic textures and visuals by sound artist Ryoji Ikeda. We find a whole group of very interesting Japanese artists who do not follow the common rules, who dare to create something new in their own, unique style. Let us forget about the hit charts and listen to some of those genuine artists.



YMCK FAMILY GENESIS

Anyone who has ever played the first Mario computer games will immediately recognize the sound of these games. Due to technical limitations of the hardware the sound was of low quality, generated by 8-bit computer chips. Sound designers and composers had to come up with great solutions in order to create cool sound tracks and sound effects.

Aficionados of the Swedish Dogme 95 movies know that limitations and creativity are not mutually exclusive. Most creative people need to set up limitations for themselves in order to come up with great ideas. If there is no problem there is no need for wonderful solutions.

Listening to YMCK's Family Genesis we get transported to that same old happy-go-lucky video game world, in which you could still count the very pixels that a character's face was made up of. Only this time there is no need to jump on evil turtles or swallow funny colored mushrooms (if you do not want to). But what happens next? The music is accompanied by a cute female voice, and the two go surprisingly well together! The harshness of the 8-bit sounds gets diluted by the soothing tone of the child-like vocals.

Tracks 1, 5 and 9 on the album are short instrumental pieces, each of these lasting less than a minute. The rest of the tracks consists of carefully crafted up-tempo pop songs with lively bass lines and dizzyingly fast melodies. Surprisingly enough we hear quite some jazz influences. Carving the Rock for instance is clearly inspired by Dave Brubeck's Take Five. Only this time the solos are played by a computer chip in stead of a saxophone.

The most interesting track, musically speaking, would be Welcome to the 8-bit World, the last track on the album, in which we hear a reprise of some elements from previous songs. Ironically though, I listened to the album several times without reaching this final track, as after several songs the 8-bit sound started itching my eardrums and I started longing for something a bit more gentle. An issue even the cute voice of YMCK's singer Midori Kurihara cannot solve. Family Genesis is like candy for your ears. Enjoy it in moderate doses, to avoid a sugar rush.

SUSUMU YOKOTA MOTHER

Starting as a techno DJ and producer, Susumu Yokota began his international musical career in the early nineties. Over the years he released more than thirty albums, and his music evolved from four-by-four beats for the dance floor into somewhat more intelligent, pleasant listening music.

On his latest release, 'Mother', we find collaborations with various vocalists. These different voices all blend in very well with the music and while each voice adds its own color to it, the album has a consistent overall sound. We are not surprised by a sudden change of tone, and Yokota's techno roots only vaguely come to the surface in the almost heartbeat-like rhythm of Breeze.

Mother starts off with Love Tendrilises, a beautiful musical dialogue between Casper Clausen and Anna Brønsted of Efterklang. Smooth drum beats come from left and right and envelop the voices, resulting in a comforting, reassuring feeling. This wonderful pair of voices return later on the haunting sounds of Suture, a triphop-style track which brings back memories of Massive Attacks' Mezzanine, only in a more dreamy form.

Between those two highlights we are entertained by lesser masterpieces, some of which are charming songs like the aforementioned Breeze with Nancy Elizabeth, while others could as well be skipped altogether, like Warmth, the only instrumental track on the album with its dull piano, drowning in reverb. Yokota did not save the best for last. While reaching the end of the album I draw the conclusion that to enjoy Mother at its best, we should listen to it backwards.

Mother is one of those albums that I like listening to without being able to point out what it is that strikes me about it. While listening I encounter quite some cheesiness to cut through and some of the vocal works do not really seem to go anywhere. Yet there is enough beauty to be found on this record to justify these less pleasing elements. And if everything else fails we can always put Love Tendrilises on repeat and keep listening to the voices of Casper Clausen and Anna Brønsted magically melting together on the opening track.





Yukkuri yaroh

The faster, the better. At least that is what the world would have you believe if you look at how we live our lives these days. We walk faster, we eat faster and we communicate faster, but nothing seems to be fast enough. People get depressed because they do not achieve their goals. They think of tomorrow and forget about the here and now. Therefore the dream of our friend and founder of iKi, Arjen Hemelaar was to slow people down, to decelerate us, even if it was only or a little bit. 'Yukkuri yaroh!', Slow down!

The Dutch iKi founder lived in Japan

for three years. Two years were spent living in a monastery. Amongst the Japanese monks he learned to focus on the 'now'. It did not come as a surprise that this philosophy has become a topic of research for a lot of European scientists lately. According to Hemelaar one will become more creative and more productive when body and mind are aligned in the same direction.

In a world where demand for organic food is ever-increasing because people are becoming more interested in organic food, a nice, sensible beer was missing. Arjen

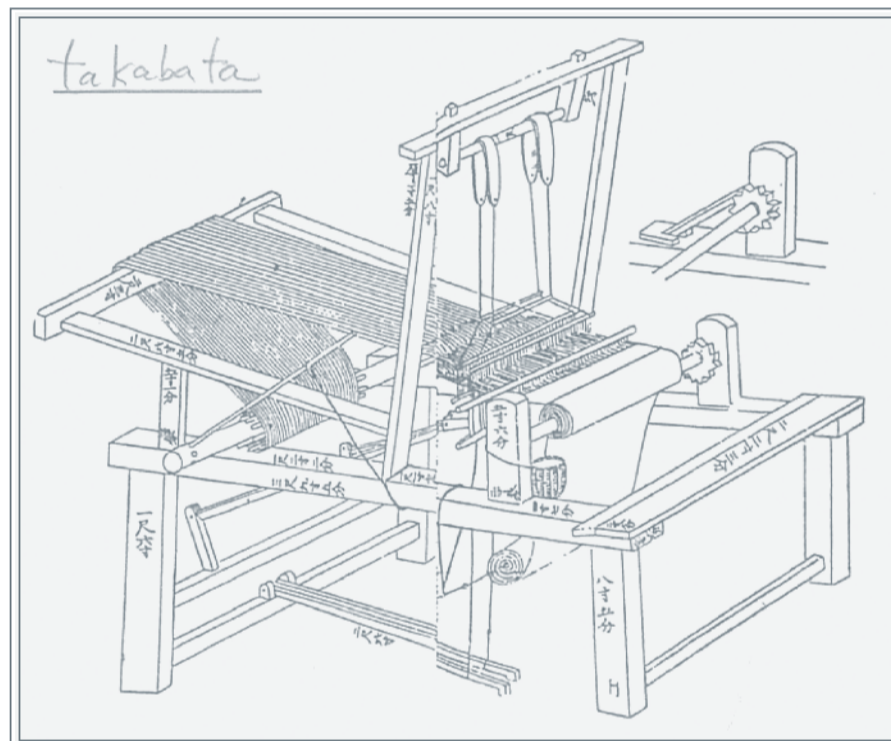
Hemelaar felt that this was caused by the fact that beer is always associated with volume. Therefore he developed iKi Beer with green tea and lemon 'yuzu'. The combination of the natural ingredients and the fermentation that takes place in the bottle creates several anti-oxidants that serve the body well. iKi means 'Life' and is best served in between activities. To ease your mind and body, to slow you down and take you back to the Now. So step into our store, and sit back and relax for a moment to enjoy life with us.

—



Momotaro

And the legend of the peach boy



In June 2008, when the design of the store was nearly finished, we received a phone call from a Japanese young man. He introduced himself as Katsuhito Manabe and told us he wanted to meet up. I asked politely how he came across my telephone number and he claimed that a guy I had never heard of in Brussels had told him that we should meet. And so we did. Katsuhito, or Katsu, as we may call him, came to Amsterdam one week later. He carried with him a huge suitcase on wheels and rang my doorbell a day before we were supposed to meet. He had written in an e-mail that we would meet 'in six days', but since it was already past midnight in his location when he sent me the e-mail, due to the time difference he arrived a day earlier than expected. Luckily I was at home and I was able to conceal my surprise.

The modest and polite gentleman standing in our doorway turned out to be the son of the most gifted denim producer of Japan: Hisao Manabe. The suitcase Katsu carried with him all the way from Paris was stuffed with the most extraordinary denim products we had ever seen. We were told that this was just a glimpse of what was about to come our way. From that point in time I refused to ever believe in the word coincidence any longer. This seemed so crazy, it had to be fate, kismet, you name it. How in the world did this man find two young blokes like us sitting in an Amsterdam apartment, building a denim dream that was not even physically there?

The Japan Blue company is based in the Mecca of denim: Kojima, Okayama and is basically divided into two strategic business units. The

first, Japan Blue, is the largest and sells denim fabric to an impressive clientele. On the day we met Katsu I was wearing my A.P.C. New Cure, bought in New York at the local A.P.C. store. When Katsu smiled and told me it was his denim I thought he meant that I wore one of his jeans, but not long after I understood what he wanted to say: his father made the A.P.C. fabric. Besides my jeans Katsu explained they make denim cloth for clients like Christian Dior, PRPS and the amazing Pure Blue Japan. His job was to search for partners in Europe to expand their business and the company decided that he would be living in Paris from then on.

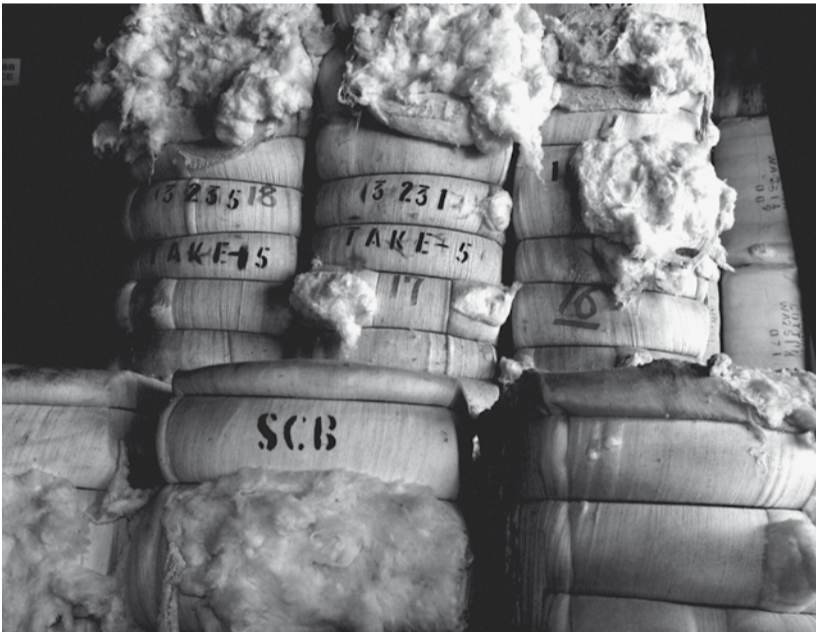
Their second business unit is Momotaro, the private label of the Manabe family. Now we know that there are numerous Japanese brands that claim to be the real deal. And

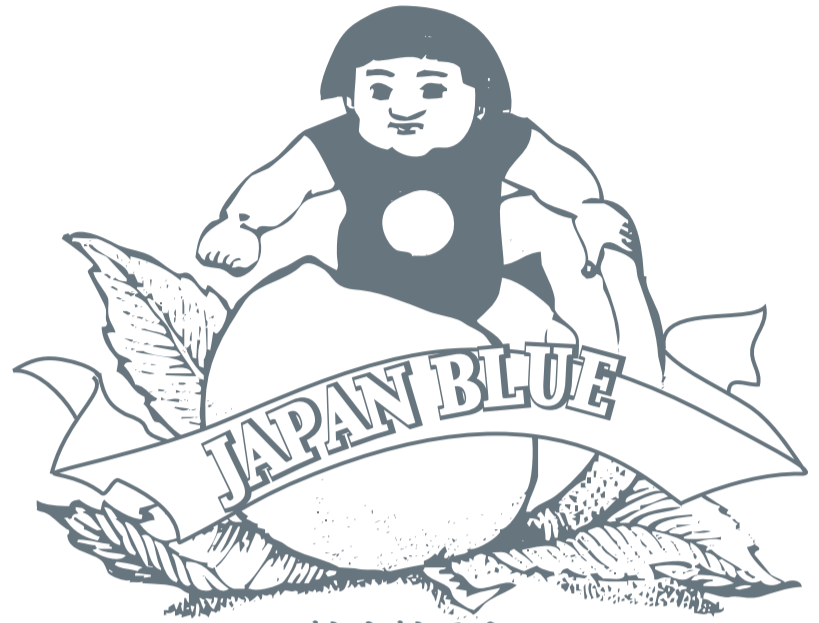
furthermore there are a lot of brands from other places in the world that claim to be Japanese anyway. The fact which makes Momotaro one of the few truly incredible brands of the world is that they actually produce the fabric that they use for their jeans. They create a jeans from the first yarn to the last logo rivet. We know that sounds pretty obvious, but how many hardcore denim labels do you know of that actually make their own fabrics as well?

Momotaro is based in Kojima Japan. Momo is the Japanese word for peach and Taro is a common name for a boy. According to Katsuhito the Momotaro is a popular tale in Japan that dates back to the Edo period, the time when cotton fabrication in Japan first took off. The story has a lot of different versions, but the one Katsu shared with us was about a

woman who finds a peach in the river and brings it back for her husband. Just before he cuts the peach in little pieces it starts shaking and opens up. A beautiful boy steps out of the peach and tells them to not be scared. The boy says to the flabbergasted couple that he is their long-desired son. The man and the woman start crying with happiness and name their son Momotaro. The boy turns out to be gifted and once he is an adult, he joins the Samurai in their fights against demons. He then lived with his parents until the end of their lives.

Beloved all over the world these days, Japanese jeans are the most incredible when it comes to dyeing, weaving, sewing and washing. As we will point out in 'SYOU-AI' on page 34 in this issue of our Journal de Nîmes, the jeans became the best in the





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world by strictly using the D'Artisan spirits. The origin of Japanese jeans is in Kojima-Okayama. Almost all hardcore denim companies are situated in this region.

Momotaro jeans are made by craftsmen that will only settle for world-class quality. All the Momotaro jeans are woven on traditional 'shuttle looms' invented in England in 1785. The looms provide the characteristic, peach coloured, selvage line.

The Momotaro denim label consists of three basic sub-labels. The most extraordinary is the gold label, museum material basically. The jeans that are produced in this range are all made from natural indigo dyed fabric and are hand-woven on two unique, vintage looms that are unique in the entire world! Rice wine is added to enrich the fermentation

process of the indigo. The Zimbabwe yarn is dipped by hand and the looms only produce 1 meter of fabric a day. All the Gold Label jeans have silver buttons and rivets, a silk back yoke and a hand-woven patch. One pair of jeans takes about a year to fabricate.

The Copper label jeans can be recognized by the peach tobacco stitch on right back pocket. The jeans have natural indigo pockets and a natural indigo back yoke. By using exclusive 'Zimbabwe cotton' the pants get a soft, wool-like feel. The characteristic blue colour is rope-dyed. The colour is reproduced from the first domestic Japanese heavy weight denim. It will change after wearing it to the ultimate 'blue jean' colour. The Zimbabwe cotton is long staple cotton, that will deliver sensitive detailed abrasion.

Third is the 'Go to war' label that

is known for the two Samurai war stripes on the right back pocket. The Go to war jeans are the darkest available indigo blue denims. The 15.7 oz combines the soft touch of Zimbabwe cotton with the rawness of traditional heavy weight denim. No skewing (a hot roller goes over the fabric in contradictory direction to avoid twisted legs) or singeing (the hairy top of the denim is burned off with fire) is used for this range, just a one wash finish.

The 'Vintage' label is the last of the four Momotaro labels and is considered the most traditional taste of denim. The 15.7 oz untreated denim has the roughest and hardest touch of all four labels. This is the traditional shrink to fit denim that will loosen up at least an inch after wearing. It is considered the darkest indigo blue denim, but the Yarn still

has an un-dyed core that creates deep shades after wear. The vintage label literally feels like wearing a suit of armor.



SYOU-AI

When we think of denim in the purest form these days we instantly think of Japan. In less than fifty years the Japanese managed to create a leading position in the premium denim market. With their unlimited devotion to detail and their love for unaffectedness and beauty the Japanese are a prodigious nation. And unlike America, where jeans became a sex symbol and a commodity soon after, the Japanese stayed loyal to the original production methods, the fabrics and its traditional American form. Who would ever think that this would make them the most desirable denim pit stop of the entire world.

The Japanese fascination with America started in 1964 when Tokyo hosted the Summer Olympics and they caught their first glimpse of American television and American products. After seeing American movies like Rebel Without a Cause, Japanese youngsters collectively raided all second-hand shops in search of a pair of the magic Levi's jeans.

But although their love of purity and authenticity made the Japanese fall in love with denim so desperately, there is another, even more convincing argument that explains the connection between Japan and the cotton cloth. According to several studies the Japanese are well known for their cotton weaving since the Edo period (1603-1868). The city we now know as Tokyo was the largest city in terms of cotton consumption in Japan. Osaka was the epicentre of trade and as demand for commodities in Japan soared, the supply to meet that demand was transported by cargo ships via Osaka to the rest of the country. The specific demand for cotton was merely created by the popularity of the Kimono and other cotton-based designs in that period. All the cotton fabrics were developed by local farmers who bleached and dyed the cotton. The fabric was hand-spun and hand woven after. During the Edo period the Japanese used a small hand loom called the Jibata that was characterized by the fact that it had no legs. Soon after a more sophisticated version came along: the Takabata, that is still used today to weave some of the natural indigo qualities of Japan Blue. It was not until the 19th century that the Japanese adopted a new production method that would replace part of their local production process: Yoshi. This was the first machine-made cotton yarn that was provided by foreign countries because of the opening of the harbors in 1859. Although little more than a century passed before

the first Japanese attached their production heritage to American jeans and workwear, the old fashioned production process is still considered to be the only one to create the 'true blue'.

These days cotton used for the development of premium Japanese is simply imported from Zimbabwe. The superior quality is a result of the combination of humidity and the sun. Depending on the type of quality that the brand strives for these days, the cotton is woven on new, wide or vintage shuttle looms as used by Levi's back in the day. Because of the Japanese devotion to classic production methods and their attention to authentic details their denim production is often called 'slow denim'. Contrary to the mass production machinery used by the big three since the seventies most of the real Japanese brands seem to stick to their vintage production tools.

We like to believe that this devotion to the 'real thing' and the stubbornness to keep working with respect for classic materials, recipes and fabrication methods is what makes Japanese denim so popular these days. Secondly we like to think that, as a result of the growing mass production industry a small group of people still yearns for authentic products that have soul. Lastly, due to the economic slump that the world faced the past years people tend to fall back on genuine materials, products that have proven their quality and reliability time and again. Trust gives people stability and faith in better times ahead.

There is one downside about the growing interest in vintage Japanese denim and that is the appearance of conglomerates that claim to be for real, but are not. Over the past couple of months we can tell you about numerous brands that came out of the woodwork, claiming to use Japanese fabrics and snits. Luckily all denim maniacs we know can easily spot a fake, woven selvedge amongst authentic narrow loom ones. A true Japanese denim is a piece with numerous hidden treasures like branded rivets, a classic cinch, chambray pockets and more.

Rene thought it would be nice to describe a few of the most important characteristics of Japanese denim. He made a short list of his favorite, vintage denim features that he wants to share with his Japanese kindred spirits.

RING SPUN YARN

This irregular spinning method creates a yarn that is softer than 'open end' denim. The uneven feel provides a true authentic feel. The irregularities become more visible after intensive wear or washing. The ring spun yarn is literally made by using a ring for weaving.

SELVAGE – 1

This is the trademark of denim of 75 cm woven with narrow looms. It marks the end of the denim cloth. It was originally made to make sure the fabric would not ravel. The big three used their own distinctive colour. Red for Levi's, green for Lee and yellow for Wrangler. When mass production was introduced the cloth became twice as wide, making the selvage invisible on the out-seam.

RIVETS – 2

These authentic denim studs were once made to protect the most tender parts of the jeans. Levi's used to cover them with denim because cowboys complained about the rivets scratching their saddles and couches. They Japanese like these 'hidden rivets' in particular and often use the traditional copper material for the authentic look and feel.

CHAIN STITCH

This is a feature we consider to be one of the most incredible and subtle details of vintage denim. This particular sewing method is often used at the bottom of the trouser leg. This seam is made with a double needle instead of a single one and makes the stitch look like a 'chain'.

COIN POCKET – 3

The jeans is often called 5-pocket because of the little coin or watch pocket above or inside the right front pocket. The Japanese like to refine this historical detail by using selvedge fabric for this little pocket. The top sides of the coin pocket are often strengthened with two rivets.

TOBACCO STITCHING

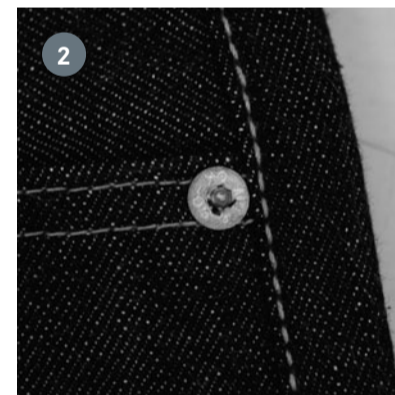
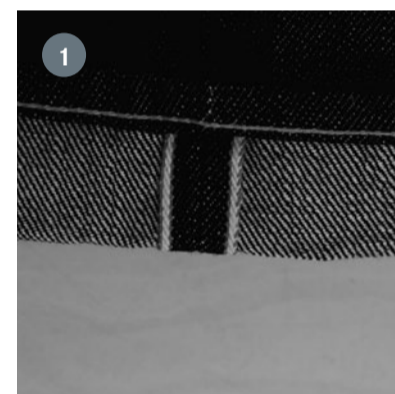
Traditionally the inseam of a pair of jeans is stitched with a brown coloured thread. The tone of the most vintage denim was tobacco-like. Momotaro has its own distinct interpretation with the peach-coloured inseam.

SHRINK-TO-FIT DENIM

A unwashed, dry pair of Japanese denim is often called shrink-to-fit and is hardly wearable for someone that does not like the rawness of a new pair. Back in the days people would step into a bath to make the jeans shrink a size and make it body-fit. Sanforizing (shrinking the garment with hot steam) or simply washing is a way to make a dry denim easier and softer to wear.

LEATHER LOGO PATCH – 4

Originally the logo patch is sewn on the right side of the waistband. The Japanese love to refer to vintage tags with terms like: irresistible quality, genuine denim and built to resist. Back in the day the tag was one of the few trademarks that distinguished one brand from another.



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