

Anna Foster & E.L.V. DENIM

Tackling the lack of sustainable fashion one pair of jeans at a time

WRITTEN BY Priya Raj



Anna Foster

The London-based denim designer on city life, steaming and why buses are the best way to see London.

Anna Foster began her tenured career in the fashion industry as a stylist, and over her 20-year position, she became hyper aware of the culture of overconsumption and newness in the garment industry. To combat this, her brand, E.L.V. DENIM [East London Vintage] was born from the ethos of only designing from discarded clothing. The essence of "honest luxury" permeates the brands' surface through the art of up-cycling, the individuality of slow consumption and hand-crafted designs.

Walking the walk, rather than just talking the talk, is Foster's advice to future [and current] sustainable brands. Though the power is in consumers' hands, to buy & to appropriately care for their chosen purchases, brands must be wholly transparent. "Being an early adopter isn't easy, we have so many 'status quos' to disrupt. If we communicate these challenges positively and honestly, we can change *how* consumers shop."

For Foster, her brand is as close to home as they come, with all garments being produced by local ateliers in East London. But what is it that makes London special? Fashion Minority Report speaks to the E.L.V. DENIM designer to find out just that.

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Other than designing and making jeans, what is your favourite cultural activity to do in East London?

Outside of E.L.V. DENIM, I am a mother of three ranging from six to sixteen, all with completely different interests. Whether it's walking down Ridley Road or Columbia Road Flower Market or taking them to the Thames Barrier Park, each trip has new cultural experiences. However, having done some soul-searching in answering this question, it's clear that I need to take more time to do cultural activities for myself!

If you could eat your way through East London, where would you go?

Planque, The Baring, Jones & Sons, and then my childhood favourite, The Bel Sit in Woodford Green.

What is your favourite vintage/secondhand shop in London?

I love Curate & Rotate (online), and One Scoop Store in Stoke Newington.

Where do you go if you need to be inspired?

On my own (see statement above!). I [also] love to go to the V&A or local galleries such as Home by Ronan McKenzie.

What is your favourite way to get around London?

The reality is that everyone is rushing to get somewhere in half the time it should take. Taking the time to see what is around you shouldn't be a luxury, it should be a daily pleasure, and the top deck of a bus is the perfect place to do that.

What does it mean to you to be a "Londoner"?

London is home. It is where I was born, where I grew up, and where my family is and that is what matters the most to me.

With so many great brands and businesses being launched in the city, what about London do you think it is that inspires these creatives?

London is vast, there are so many pockets of different influences, and you can find what you need in any of them. We also have incredible colleges, and the students (who will eventually establish these great brands and businesses) come to be inspired and educated here, then they find their tribes and stay.

What are your favourite minority-owned businesses/brands?

Sojo, founded by Josephine Philips, is an alterations and repairs online service that is close to my heart, as it links you to a range of services to prolong the life of your wardrobe. I love the vibrancy and prints of SIKKA, founded by Phyllis Taylor. Everything is designed in London but influenced by and produced in Ghana.

How can people prolong their existing wardrobes?

We don't wear out our clothes, we wash them out. Steaming is perfect for removing bacteria and uses a fraction of the water. The fibres and the colour of the garment last much longer. I use Steamery products, they are expensive, but they last, and that is the sign of good quality.

What are your wardrobe "bare necessities"?

E.L.V. DENIM jeans, E.L.V. DENIM stripe shirt, blazer and velvet loafers.

Visit the E.L.V. DENIM studio at Unit J2, 2 Leswin Place, London N16 7NJ, please contact beforehand for availability.

elvdenim.com