



Mick Keus

FOUNDER AND OWNER OF MICK KEUS JEANS ATELIER

"A great pair of jeans makes my heart skip a beat."

Looking for the perfect pair of vintage Levi's 501s, but ill-fitting, dad jeans are all you can find? Make a pit stop at jeans-magician Mick Keus' atelier, where he re-appropriates vintage denim to create impeccably tailored, custom-fit jeans.

When the large wooden door of Keus' atelier swings open, a flight of stairs takes you up to a vast, minimalistic white space that looks like it could be a page ripped out of an interior design magazine. As soon as you walk in, a huge wall-to-wall cabinet immediately grabs your eye. It's filled to the brim with meticulously stacked pairs of Levi's 501s, organized by colour, fit and size. The upbeat designer, dressed head to toe in black, plops down on the brown vintage Chesterfield sofa and enthusiastically starts chatting about his work and how he started out in the fashion industry.

"I was trying something with a piece of sailcloth, and that's when I had a light-bulb moment."

Goosebumps

Keus was born and raised in the seaside town of The Hague, the Netherlands. After he finished his studies in his hometown, he enrolled at the Amsterdam Fashion Institute where he studied design. Keus: "I feel like fashion has always been a part of me, but it was during my time at AMFI that it really manifested. That was where I really learned about design; I found that it could be so beautiful that it gave me goose bumps. That's where I caught the disease that is fashion." He credits his favourite professor, Peter Leferink,

who just came by the atelier this morning, for sparking the flame. "He always told me: 'A coat can change the world.' I used to think that concepts like that were such crap, but he is the one who really made me understand how fashion can tell a story and how it can have an impact on our world and our society."

my jeans and he was really enthusiastic. That was the moment when I realised: I'm onto something here."

Organic

A fitting with the designer takes about half an hour. All you have to do is tell him your preferred wash and fit and moments later he re-emerges with the denim of your dreams, ready to be altered. "When I rework a pair of 501s, I try to change as little as possible, while still getting the perfect fit. The finished product shouldn't be noticeably altered. I don't like clothes that are overly designed or manufactured. I think the most beautiful things are always created organically." After you've done a fitting with Keus, it takes about a week for your jeans to be ready. Not spending a full week in Amsterdam? Keus ships his creations all over the world. When asked to describe his clientele he laughs: "I have the most diverse client base. My youngest is eight years old and my oldest is a 96-year-old lady. It's literally for everybody. I've never been unable to make it work."

Treasure

The jeans that Keus' uses are all in pristine condition. "Only the cream of the crop makes the cut. The rest gets used for patchwork or other projects. I still get giddy when a new batch arrives. I love going through them and selecting the best pairs. A great pair of jeans makes my heart skip a beat. It's like finding a treasure." ■

"A great pair of jeans can make my heart skip a beat"

Sailcloth

When Keus graduated in 2008 he thought he would immediately start designing for a large fashion house. "I had this really romantic fantasy where I thought I'd have my pick of jobs at fashion houses like Comme des Garçons or Ann Demeulemeester, but that really wasn't the case. So I ended up sitting in my atelier and thinking: 'Now I really have to figure something out.'" Like most great ideas, Keus' business was born out of a need he had for himself. "One day I randomly bought an old industrial sewing machine because I was trying something with a piece of sailcloth, and that's when I had a light-bulb moment. At that point, I'd already been altering my own jeans for about fifteen years because I have super skinny legs and nothing would ever fit me right. I was already wearing a lot of Levi's 501s because I don't like stretchy fabrics or over-the-top washes. I altered a pair on my new machine and the result was beautiful. After that first experiment, I was able to buy a huge pile of vintage 501s and I started reworking them, for myself and the people around me. A little while later, a man approached me on the street and asked: 'What kind of jeans are you wearing?' He turned out to be a higher up at Levi's. I sent him one of

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