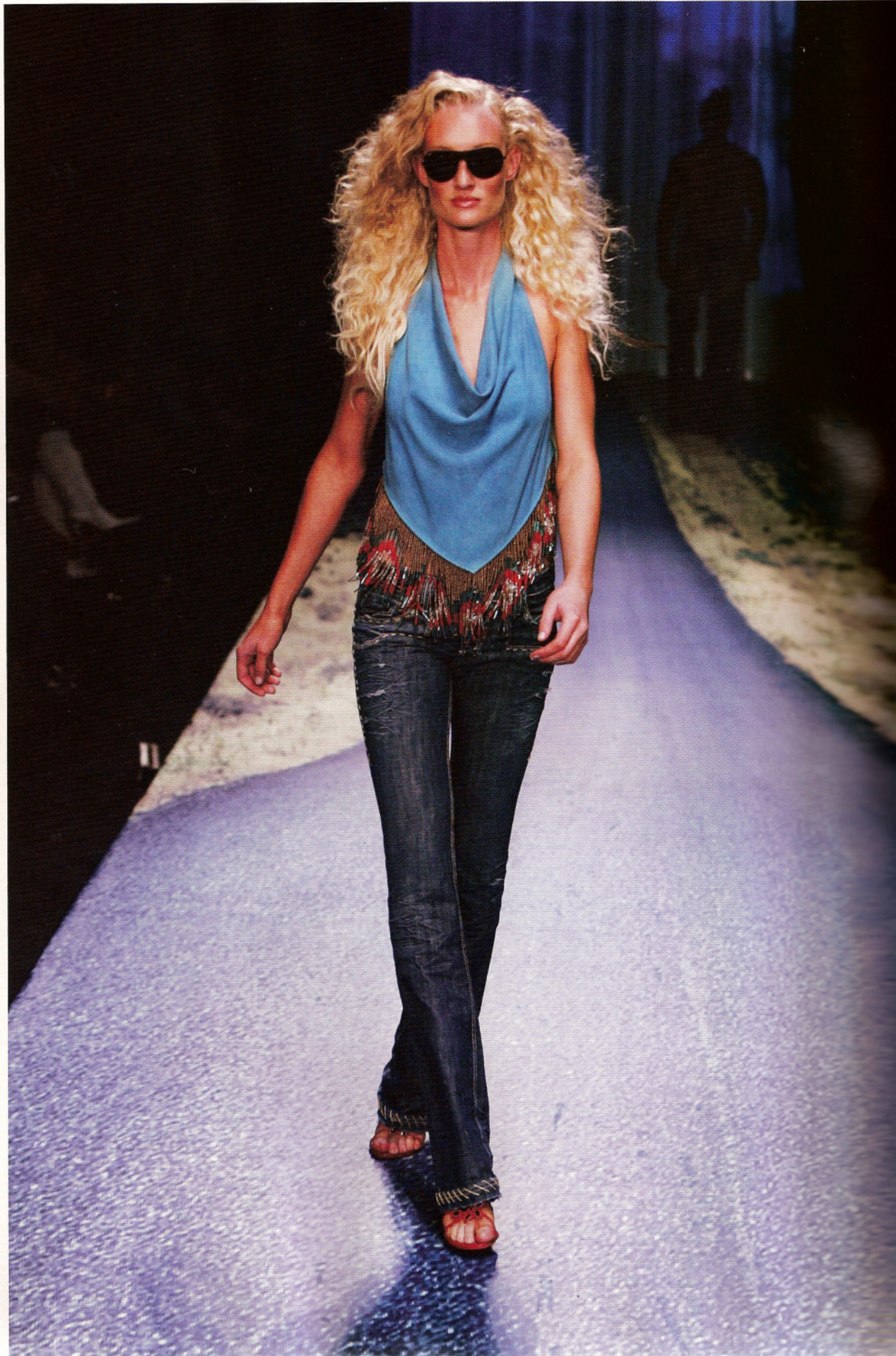


designers: alex + philippe



DENIM MORE WITH ANTIK

a glance inside the designers' studio



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Judging by the unruly mob scene at Antik Denim's runway show during autumn 2005 Fashion Week in L.A., it's safe to say that this is one of the hottest new labels on the market today. Hundreds of invited fashion-conscious Angelinos waited not-so-patiently behind guarded velvet ropes only to be finally told that the seating area was already filled to capacity. Disappointment bordered on hostility for the eager Antik fans, as they knew they would be missing out on one of the highlights of Fashion Week.

For a brand that's only been in existence for a little over a year, Antik has enjoyed explosive success. The designers, Alex Caugant and Philippe Naouri, both have a long history as denim experts, as well as a friendship that's endured more than 20 years. Caugant started with the European brands Goa and Chevignon, while Naouri worked with Diesel, Levi's, and G-Star before they decided to team up. They began with little money, footing the bill themselves to display their wares at various fashion events. It didn't take long before people took notice. "Everybody was excited. There was a buzz around us," says Caugant.

Today they're a multimillion-dollar company, and their handiwork has been spotted on the derrières of A-list celebs like Cameron Diaz, Kate Hudson, and Lindsay Lohan. They have a 2,000-square-foot flagship store on trendy Melrose Avenue, which only adds to their blossoming reputation as Hollywood design hotties.

When visiting Antik Denim's workspace in an industrial neighborhood of L.A., it's obvious that events here are only marginally calmer than they were at Fashion Week. There's still the distinctive buzz in the air—an inspired electricity that manifests itself through

the artistic vision of veteran denim designers Caugant and Naouri, plus through the countless others who sew, stitch, and cut. The whirl of machines and constant chatter from bustling employees fills the air. As well, it's a melting pot of languages—French, English, Spanish, and a few others.

To keep up with current demand, Antik has a huge design space. Tables seem to sprawl out endlessly, with a cutter or sewer working intently at each one. Rolling racks rife with jeans, jackets, and skirts line the walls, one after the other. Jeans and denim swatches lay in piles on the floor, requiring visitors to step over them while trying to sneak a peek at the colorfully embroidered back pockets. While Philippe Naouri is taking a break in Mexico, the other half of Antik Denim, Alex Caugant, is ready to sit down and talk denim.

What makes Antik so special? The designers' passion to create quality denim is palpable. Anyone who's laid their hands on a pair of Antik Denim jeans knows that it's all about detail. Ornate designs bedeck the back pockets, and exaggerated, multicolored whipstitching adds a certain flair to the hems. The jeans are distressed to perfection, making them look, well, antique (yes, that's how

they got the name). They have a slight stretch to them, making them comfortable enough to wear often; they're not just the jeans a girl will squeeze into for special occasions. Pick up a pair and you're bound to notice the little embellishments that set these jeans apart from the rest of the premium denim out there today.

Antik has a distinctly Native American/Southwestern flavor, which may seem strange considering the designers are French. Consider it cultural curiosity. "In France we're dreaming about the cowboys and Indians in your culture," says Caugant in his thick French accent. "It [U.S. culture] is more popular in all the world than for you here. We love Indians, we love the culture of the Indians. It's your origin. In France and Italy, we love all of your culture."

While France and Italy may have a fascination with our culture, the States seem slow to pick up on European trends. "Skinny legs have been the fashion for three years in Europe. Big fashion," says Caugant. "Here, it just happened." Upon first introducing the skinny leg jean to the Antik line, their rep told them they would never sell here in the States. Now, Hollywood starlets are sporting the skinny leg look, which means a nationwide trend

is just around the corner. The one thing that remains constant in the U.S. is body-conscious styling. "Girls want sexy, nice butts," says the designer, regarding American women's desire to beautify the backside.

Aside from skinny leg jeans, the next hot trend for Antik is Bermuda shorts. Caugant, always observant of what people are wearing, noticed that in Europe the girls were cutting off their pants at the knee. "For me, fashion is on the street," he says. "You have to look at what the girls are wearing." Another upcoming trend for Antik are hot pants. While it's not a look that just anyone can get away with, Caugant says it's a perfect look for the beach.

Soon, Antik will be a total lifestyle brand, with sweaters, T-shirts, and watches. If the past year is any indicator, whatever endeavors they attempt next will likely be a smashing success—they've certainly had a huge impact on the world of high-end boutique denim. And if you happen to make it to the next Fashion Week featuring Antik Denim, be sure to bring your riot gear. ●

www.antikdenim.com