

NATURAL WINE · DANNY DEVITO · VIRGINIA

Hemispheres

OCTOBER 2023



This magazine has been treated with an antimicrobial process

THREE
PERFECT
DAYS

Johannesburg



Where you can appreciate striking street art, including Sonwabo Valashiya's *Mother of Light*

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Jean Genie

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Inside Raleigh Denim Workshop's Japanese cuisine-inspired design sessions

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By Amber Gibson

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Bespoke shopping experiences are available around the globe, but it would be hard to imagine one that's more fun than the "omakase" at Raleigh Denim Workshop. For \$5,000, customers can book a four-hour appointment with cofounder and designer Victor Lytvinenko, who creates a custom garment for them. At my rollicking session, there's a bottle of Champagne, an impromptu guitar jam, and, at one point, acclaimed local chef Steven Devereaux Greene—who happens to be there to plan custom aprons for his staff at the The Umstead Hotel and Spa's restaurant, Herons—is convinced to don a kilt.

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"I want clothing to feel really personal," says Lytvinenko, who has worked with celebrity clients such as Brad Pitt and Olivia Wilde, and who thrives in the intimate, freewheeling setting of the omakase sessions. "No stress. All fun. Good times."

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The designer started Raleigh Denim Workshop in 2007, building his brand on handmade classic denim, an industry that has a long history in North Carolina: Cone Denim Mills opened a production facility in Greensboro back in 1905. (That plant closed in 2017, but Lytvinenko got his hands on its final roll.) He opened what he calls



The Curatory—a portmanteau of "curious," "curate," and "laboratory"—in the Raleigh Warehouse District in 2010. Out front, he has a retail space featuring a ceiling decorated with thousands of paper airplanes, where customers can buy jeans, jackets, and accessories off the rack. In the back, he has more than 50 antique machines set up in non-standard ways, to do everything from hemming to applying buttons. "This is a place for us to test new ideas," he says.

Clockwise, from top: The Curatory, at Raleigh Denim Workshop; Victor Lytvinenko at one of his sewing machines; chef Steven Devereaux Greene tries on a kilt; Barbie-approved jeans in progress



Indeed, his inspirations sometimes come from beyond the fashion world. While living in New York and trying to make it as a young designer, he worked in the kitchen at Nobu, which gave him the idea for the omakase experience.

"You can't copy what we are doing," he says. "It comes from our heads, hearts, and hands. There's a soul to it."

Another thing that's one of a kind: the asymmetrical, button-up denim miniskirt I walk out with at the end of the day. It has a quilted feel, with willy-nilly freehand stitching and Lytvinenko's autograph in Sharpie on the inside band. I'm already planning the rest of my outfit (crop top and espadrilles) on my way out the door.



Courtesy of Raleigh Denim Workshop (The Curatory, jeans); Amber Gibson (sewing, kilt)