



Q & A

NAME
Jay Carroll

AGE
32

BORN IN
Portland, Maine

HOME
San Francisco, California

JOB DESCRIPTION
Travels the world for Levi's collecting inspiration for seasonal collections

TIME SPENT ON THE ROAD
Two weeks every month

PLACES VISITED
IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS
England, Ireland, Scotland, France, India, Japan, Korea, Turkey, and 15 U.S. states

VINTAGE VOYAGER

BY SERENA RENNER || PORTRAIT BY JAKE STANGEL

Q. How did you become interested in vintage clothes and artisan crafts?

A. I was brought up in New England in a 200-year-old house that had crystal doorknobs. My mom did interior design, so we constantly stopped at antique stores. Many of my interests can be traced to my upbringing and the appreciation I inherited for the old and well made.

For Levi's, you travel in search of brand concepts. How did you get that job?

In 2008, I left Rogues Gallery [an independent menswear brand based in Portland, Maine] and headed to

California. Instead of looking for a new job, I took an assignment from GQ, in collaboration with a friend, to find the best vintage stores in the United States. We made a cross-country road trip, exploring hidden pockets of Americana in places like Wonder Valley, California; Fort Davis, Texas; and Las Cruces, New Mexico. After the trip, we staged a pop-up shop, One Trip Pass, in New York City, and Rene Holguin, who used to work at Levi's, hired me to do another road trip around the theme "Stars and Stripes." We put up an installation of vintage items and found objects at Levi's flagship store in San Francisco.

Having then just fallen in love with California, I agreed to stay on as a special projects guy for Levi's, which led to the concept job.

Can you give an example of how something you discovered on the road ended up in a clothing collection?

Our Spring 2012 collection was inspired by places where the land meets the sea. We went first to Occidental, California, and saw how locals live off the grid, and then to Sea Ranch, a community on the coast of Northern California where modern architecture is perched on a



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JAY CARROLL'S FAVORITE SHOPS



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1. QUALITY MENDING

New York City

"The owner, Oliver, has a great eye for vintage finds. He has a lot of dead stock—never-been-worn items—like military footwear still in the box."
15 Prince St., (212) 334-5334, thequalitymendingco.com

2. KAPITAL

Fifteen stores throughout Japan

"Kapital is the Holy Grail of brands to me. The store in Tokyo's Ebisu district stimulates all five senses. It sells great clothing, accessories, and niche items."
2-20-2 Gaia Building, Ebisu, Shibuya-Ku, Tokyo, 81/(0) 3-5727-3929, kapital.jp

3. INIS MEÁIN KNITTING COMPANY

Aran Islands, Ireland

"Inis Meáin has taken the history and aesthetic of Aran cable-knit fishermen's sweaters, scarves, and hats and evolved them to be relevant today."
Bóthar Chreig Pheaitis, 353/(0) 997-3009, inismeain.ie

4. LABOUR AND WAIT

London

"Here you'll find folky home goods, from wooden brooms to buttons."
85 Redchurch St., 44/(0) 20-7729-6253, labourandwait.co.uk

5. L'ECLAIREUR

Paris

"This shop is like a museum of curiosities. They carry very progressive designers."
10 rue Boissy d'Anglas, 33/(0) 15-343-0370, leclaireur.com

rugged landscape. That inspired new ways to mix up the aesthetics of the collection. We experimented with sun bleaching and saltwater washes, and then a sun-bleached dress ended up in the line. But in the bigger picture, we don't just find a color that we like; we bring in principles from these various communities with regard to craft, sustainability, and innovation.

You also helped found Levi's Made Here line, which spotlights artisans who reinterpret traditional crafts. Why is this important?

For me, it completes the circle of brand storytelling. If you go into a Levi's store and our seasonal concept is, say, "of the Earth," you'll see Native American jewelry from our trip to the Navajo nation. It enhances the store experience, and it's also an effort to inspire a new generation of craftspeople.

What can objects tell you about a place?

The things you find in the California desert, for instance, represent the people who have moved there from all over the country. At an antique store, you might see New England maritime antiques, Pacific Northwest tribal art, weird Las Vegas Rat Pack stuff, and outerwear that no one needs anymore. In Japan, there's such an elevated appreciation for aesthetic and craft, even vintage stores are heavily curated. In India, crafts are inherently sustainable—their ancient methods still work, even if there's no electricity and people use fire instead of gas.

Is there a recent trip that sticks out in your memory?

I did a short road trip from Edinburgh to the Isle of Skye in northwest Scotland last fall. It was only 250 miles, but every 20 minutes the landscape dramatically changed, from thatched-roofed villages to rolling hills to mountains shaped like witches' hats. Getting to Skye felt like arriving at the end of the rainbow. Folks were selling antiques out of their homes, and people in little knitting villages were working with Harris tweed. **A**