

Functional Textiles of the Future - TODAY!

Notes from the 19th Taipei Innovative Textile Application Show (TITAS)

by Alex Geyman

Organized by the Taiwan Textile Federation (TTF) under the patronage of the Bureau of Foreign Trade, Ministry of Economic Affairs, the 19th Taipei Innovative Textile Application Show (TITAS) took place on October 19-21 and featured 790 booths by 370 exhibitors from 10 countries and regions including Taiwan, China, Germany, India, Japan, Singapore, South Korea, Sweden, Switzerland and United States. According to the official Press Release, this edition was the largest ever show scale with a record-high number of buyers (34,000) from international brands and retailers. TITAS is the only professional textile trade show you may find in Taiwan, as well as the most important innovative textile exhibition in Asia. The show has successfully positioned itself as a platform for functional textiles.

When it comes to clothing, consumers today are not only seeking fashion, but also comfort, health, performance, sustainability, and preferably, all in one package: pure cotton wrinkle free apparel for office goers, sporting fabrics made of elastic filaments, materials with optimal absorption and sweat discharge, sun protective textiles, thermal textiles as well as far-infrared products featuring heat preservation among others. And the latest, smart clothes with embedded sensors or embedded smart technologies.

The current American fashion apparel market mainly is focused on natural fibers: cotton, linen, silk, wool, etc. This is because natural fibers absorb moisture well, they breathe, they don't irritate the skin- they are great traditional natural materials! However, after visiting this last edition of the TITAS, I see a brighter neon glowing future for man-made materials and strongly recommend American fashion designers and entrepreneurs to pay better attention to this rapidly evolving industry.



Frequently attending various sourcing shows throughout the world, I feel excited finding something new, creative and potentially very profitable- and I am happy to shout about it to the world. The TITAS show has exceeded my expectations in every possible way, and here's why:

- The show was packed with attendees (mostly buyers) all day long, each day of the three days show. In comparison with other sourcing and trade events nowadays, this is a rare treat and indicates the VALUE- the show is relevant and important to international buyers. This is a good indicator that the show delivers the goods and makes many people happy.

- It's so obvious that if you're not up to date with new technologies and advances in modern textiles, you're missing out a lot (of business). Buyers from Nike, Adidas, and other big brands come shopping at this show for a good reason- they work on the future multi-million dollars bestsellers. Why don't you? I see mind-blowing possibilities utilizing technological fabrics/materials in fashion proposals!



- It's my job to be aware of the future trends and tendencies and I was very pleased to see that the technical textile industry, and particularly, Taiwan's textile industry, takes these issues very seriously: sustainability, eco-friendly, recycling, water conservation, environment friendly, etc. features have been displayed by almost each exhibitor. Environmental and social responsibility is a huge trend and besides that taking care of our planet and its' resources is the right thing to do, it is also directly related to your business' profitability and social acceptance in the future, as simple as that. And to simplify this point, modern consumers are making their choices that favor environmentally friendly, healthy and socially responsible products. This is the trend and an opportunity, just think about it?

- Representing fashion industry, I can't not to mention the amazing versatility and appropriateness of new fabrics for fashion projects. Imagination is the limit, and isn't this what fashion is about, creativity? To all the critics of man-made materials- what's available to you today and what I have seen at the TITAS is TIMES better than what used to be on the market just a few years ago. Earlier I've used the words "mind-blowing", because this is exactly right. The synthetic technical fabrics today look and feel just like natural fibers. Often, better! But on top of that these new fabrics also possess FUNCTIONALITY:

- Temperature control (heating, cooling, insulating), fire resistance;
- Moisture control (absorbing or waterproofing);
- Stain/dirt resistance and bullet proof;
- Regulated color change;
- UV-light protection, antibacterial, deodorizing and moisturizing properties;
- Stretching, damage resisting fibers, shape restoring fibers;
- Light emitting properties (glow);
- Fully recyclable and sustainable, cost effective, water-saving production and low carbon footprint;
- And many more!



SOURCING

Nanotechnology?? A company from Switzerland called Litrax transforms a wide number of organic, mineral and manmade materials into nanoparticles, which is the molecular level size, and then combines these components in various forms and/or combinations with other fibers to create totally new non-existent before properties. The applications range from water and stain repellency, wrinkle resistance and flame retardation to higher-tech applications such as microbe resistance, electro-textiles — such as printed circuit boards — and chemical/biological detection and other protective applications. Commercial applications range from the Speedo® LZR swimsuit — using a cold plasma technology to repel water — to the Nano-Tex technique of pad-applying to a fabric or dip/spray-applying to a garment with solution containing particles to create so-called nano-whiskers on the surface of a cotton fiber, thus dramatically increasing fibers' strength and longevity. And, these guys can create customized product to satisfy each customer's specific needs. How cool is that?

Or, the Luminescence fabrics, a straw-based fiber and cooling filaments were among highlights of the TITAS show, with Taiwanese textile manufacturer Far Eastern New Century Corporation (FENC) showing its latest developments in smart technologies, green sustainability, healthy living and athleisure. Their TopLumins absorbs ambient light to charge, then self-fluoresces under low light in dark conditions for up to 4 hours, thus enhancing the safety of nighttime sports; it is highly durable and rechargeable for repeated use. It is suited for gloves, caps and shoes etc. Furthermore, they have introduced the sensors infused thin strip of fabric that when placed in contact with the person's chest (on the inside of a shirt), they would transmit to the iPhone-like device the persons' vitals, like pulse, blood pressure and temperature!

New Wide's exhibits has centered on "Healthy Life" as the theme to showcase functional textiles made from special materials, such as bio-tech composite fibers and antibacterial knitted fabric containing silver nanoparticles. The apparel zone within New Wide's stand has highlighted the Group's strength in sports and active wear covering seven sport categories: running, yoga, basketball, baseball, biking, climbing, and football. For footwear manufactures, the new Polypropylene suede can be used effectively as the natural suede substitute: it's cheaper, offers excellent mimicking of the natural suede's feel and look and durability and it contains no animal fibers. And of course, it's fully sustainable and recyclable.

The TITAS show is a very informative unique sourcing event, offering excellent business opportunities to those progressive minds who seek and recognize such opportunities. Fashion, by definition, is a creative original proposition that defines the present lifestyle of the generation and sets the tone for the future. Sadly, most "fashion" designers I see on runways, and the shoes, clothes, and accessories they put on shelves have little or nothing to do with creativity. Plagiarism is a better word. They add a bow to an old dress, put horns or a paper bag over the model's head, or start painting the shoe outsoles in red tones ... some creativity! Instead, why not play with new materials? Play with color changing fabrics, color producing fabrics, environmentally friendly new materials, smart textiles? Forget the horns, this is the way to get creative and to be successful. And this is the purpose of this article, to introduce to the professional audience in America an alternative sourcing market of materials, machinery, technologies and services that undoubtedly will change the world of tomorrow to a better, greener, safer, more comfortable, smarter future!

More information: Taipei Innovative Textile Application Show (TITAS): www.titas.tw;
Taiwan Textile Federation (TTF): www.textiles.org.tw

