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EcoChic: Modern Materials

Have you had your daily dose of fiber? This month's EcoChic column focuses on alternatives to synthetic fibers, which result in an eclectic mix of textiles and design materials. Better for your health, not to mention the environment, technology meets tree-hugging in this gallery of products at the Istanbul Design Week.

A jacket made of Peat- 'Peat Jacket' by Grando Zero Espace

You might wonder what beetroots, crabs, silver, and scaffolding have in common. The answer: they are all being used as alternative design materials. The prevalent alternative is in the creation of new fibers that are a healthier and cleaner option than petroleum-based fibers such as polyester or nylon.

How does your garden grow? In today's world, news stories that combine plants with technology are, more often than not, scary exposés on genetically modified foods; however *these* common plants combined with new technologies sprout into a cornucopia of textiles. Bamboo has recently hit the spotlight as the textile-du-jour when it comes to eco-friendly fabrics. Mainstream companies – including those in the clothing, bedding, or bath markets – have begun to highlight the benefits of using bamboo. Its breathable and anti-bacterial properties make it an ideal choice for sportswear, sheets or towels. Similarly, beetroot, cornstarch, soy, and wood fibers are being transformed into biodegradable polymers with practical and aesthetic purposes. In this gallery, Mabiolac transforms beetroot fibers into yarns, and Ingeo proudly presents the world's first commercially viable synthetic fiber derived entirely from renewable resources (cornstarch). Visionaries Olivier Lapidus and Michel Bordage have produced a thread composed of 5% to 30% flowers, spices or weeds. With every movement, the resulting

threads release a subtle fragrance.

And, although it’s not made from vegetables, “Crabyon” is an amazing fiber made from cellulose and crab shells (Chitin). The resulting textile is surprisingly soft and has germ-bacterial properties that remain even after repeated washing. This has made Crabyon extremely useful in a medical setting, but the applications of such a fiber clearly go beyond the scope of stitches and bandages.

You are my sunshine. The second part of this gallery features textiles that harness the earth’s most natural sources of energy. Photo-voltaic fabric converts solar power in the same way that hard solar panels can. “Morphotex” takes 1980s hyper-color fabrics to the next level by using nanotechnology to change the color of fabric so it reflects changes in the weather. Silver fibers can be used to draw electrical currents away from the body, helping to prevent swelling – something to note for those frequent flyers among us. The best use of these new textiles must be the dramatic improvement of growing fruits, such as grapes, that naturally result in excellent wines. “Vitexol” is comprised of durable, permeable, non-polluting mirrors that can be draped in vineyards to increase the amount of sun exposure.

Progress is being made in leaps and bounds when it comes to these new techtiles.

—Morwenna White

http://www.trendease.com/gallery.php?g=962-60d22220ddae171&_session=bd70ae8524063aa5efcab7724ef067ac