SMART CREATION PREMIÈRE VISION GIVES THE FLOOR TO BLUESIGN TECHNOLOGIES AG.: THE KEYS TO MORE RESPONSIBLE FASHION

As part of its program SMART CREATION dedicated to fashion and responsible creation, the latest edition of Première Vision Paris (13-15 Feb. 2018) gave the floor to Bluesign Technologies AG., a player recognized for its technological developments in the service of sustainable fashion. The Swiss company was already exhibiting at the SMART CREATION SQUARE exhibition in September 2017.

Jill Dumain, who spoke on February 14, is familiar with the fashion industry and its new challenges. For almost 28 years, she worked in this field in California, for the brand Patagonia in particular, on the textile innovation part. Today CEO of Bluesign Technologies AG., in Switzerland, Jill Dumain speaks at BtoB fashion events about her company and discusses the responsible actions that need to be taken to make the fashion industry more sustainable.

The Bluesign Technologies system aims to unite the entire textile supply chain to jointly reduce its impact on people and the environment. Bluesign Technologies’ goal is to bind chemical suppliers, textile manufacturers and brands to enable them to exchange, in order to achieve a healthier, more responsible and profitable industry at the same time.

Bluesign technologies is the unique combination of expertise in key segments of textile production such as: chemistry, textile technology, environmental technology and supply chain management.

The aim of the conference was to find out if there was a fundamental opposition between fashion and sustainability. The important notions of «resources» and «social responsibility» were highlighted. After teaching or reminding them who Bluesign Technologies AG. was, Jill alerted the assembly to the current situation and made them aware of the impact of fashion on the planet through facts, figures and concrete examples.
FASHION AND ENVIRONMENT: THE REALITY

As Jill Dumain points out, the clothing industry has a strong impact on the planet, sometimes with serious irreversible consequences for the environment and humans: a decline in resources, climatic disturbances, animal suffering (the Mumbai blue dog is one example among many others).

The fashion industry can also lead to significant water and air pollution, habitat and building destruction (remember the collapse of the Rana Plaza textile factory in Bangladesh), food insecurity and human rights violations (health problems related to toxic products, low wages...).

Figures related to the impact of fashion are often alarming: the average American would throw away, per year, the value of 32 kilograms of clothing, i.e. 11 billion kilograms of clothing; the world’s landfills are made up of 4% of various clothing and textiles; the production of a cotton T-shirt requires a quantity of 700 liters of water and the cultivation of cotton requires 2.6% of the world’s water resources... when, at the same time, we learn that about 99% of the clothing used is potentially recyclable.
FASHION AND SUSTAINABILITY: WINNING EXAMPLES

Fortunately, awareness is so high that many players in the fashion industry are mobilizing for a radical transformation of the sector. The environmental economy, innovation and transformation as well as sustainable consumption must go through aggressive and bold actions and a lot of leadership.

This is the case of brands such as Eileen Fisher or Stella Mc Cartney, which reduce the impact of fashion on our planet. And more and more young international brands are choosing to fight for more sustainable fashion.

Levi’s was one of the driving forces behind this change management. Since 2011, the brand has saved 1 billion liters of water thanks to new manufacturing processes.

Brands such as Patagonia play the card of transparency by indicating directly on their site, via a virtual card, «The footprint chronicles», the worldwide location of their textile factories, manufacturing plants and farms. Gap, Puma, Esprit, Inditex or New Balance follow the movement.

It’s a fact, many brands don’t know who makes their clothes. In this context, how are we consumers supposed to make informed, ethical and sustainable purchases?

“Behind the barcode’s” latest report found that 87 of the world’s leading fashion brands publicly communicate on less than half of the source countries that manufacture their garments. Only 16% of them publish a complete list of the factories they work with and less than one-fifth of the brands know where their zippers, yarns and fabrics come from.

This craze has given rise to a worldwide movement: «Fashion Revolution». Believing that transparency is a first step towards transforming the fashion industry is an integral part of the «Fashion Revolution» Manifesto with this question to brands: «Who made my clothes?». This movement should allow this great fashion industry to become more transparent.

In one year, the number of brands that have disclosed information about their supply chain has risen sharply. In 2016, out of 40 companies surveyed, 12.5% had published information related to their supply chain. In 2017, 32%, or one third of them, did so.
To conclude this conference, Jill then referred to Bluesign Technologies «The Blue Way» approach -identifying the use of chemicals along the entire textile value chain, enabling actions to put the industry’s brands on a sustainable approach- as part of the answer to the original question: is there a fundamental opposition between fashion and sustainability?

Sustainability is not a trend but an expectation from fashion brands. There is a need to rethink the fashion and integration of a holistic approach. Practical actions can be implemented within a company to completely change the supply chain.

This is done through various means in companies:

- Collaborate with others by building a team, with colleagues internally and externally, with different expertise, to create a network and share ideas.
- Identify the key success factors that will reconcile commercial objectives with sustainability values.
- Know your supply chain for easier change. This means creating relationships with suppliers and ensuring cohesion to achieve better results.
- Determine its impact zone: choose its design and raw materials, two pillars that determine the environmental impact of a garment.
- Educate colleagues and raise awareness in the supply chain: people are more inspired and act more when they understand why environmental change is needed.

Last but not least:

- Be transparent with its consumers: consumers want to know the values of a brand and its commitments. Brands should not worry about not being «perfect», the important thing is to dare to show change for consumers.

The conference ended with a quotation from Vivienne Westwood which perfectly sums up the themes discussed «Buy less, choose well, make it last» because NO: fashion and sustainability are not opposed. These two notions go hand in hand and more than ever in our current society, at a time of awareness and many commitments for the planet.

The Fashion Industry still needs to make a lot of progress, but the evolutions and actions undertaken in recent years by brands and their decision-makers are very encouraging!
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