

ON VISION

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AS THE ESSENTIAL INDUSTRY EVENT FOR GLOBAL FASHION AND TEXTILE PROFESSIONALS, THE NEWLY RENAMED PREMIÈRE VISION PARIS HAS REAFFIRMED ITS UNIQUE AND NOBLE MISSION: TO SERVE AS THE CENTRAL HUB FOR ALL THE LATEST TRENDS IN TEXTILE MANUFACTURING, FROM YARN TO FINAL PRODUCTS. WITH EXTENSIVE KNOWLEDGE OF KNOW-HOW, INNOVATION, AND MATERIALS, PREMIÈRE VISION'S FASHION DIRECTOR PASCALINE WILHELM OFFERS HER PASSIONATE YET OBJECTIVE TAKE ON THIS RICH AND VARIED INDUSTRY IN OUR DEEPLY ENLIGHTENING CONVERSATION.

What insights can you share about how trends evolve?

Trends are relatively slow to change from one fashion season to the next. Beyond the micro level phenomena concocted notably by the media, there are several more fundamental trends connected to innovation. These trends take a lot more time to emerge. For example, we are still waiting to see a lot of developments related to sports and fashion. It's marvelous to see how the textile industry continues to offer aesthetic, functional, and comfortable solutions with brio. Today we can produce fabrics that keep their curve as they move. Though they originally grew out of sports technology, the applications of these fabrics lie far outside the sports world. New fabrics like these have enabled us to make fashion apparel that we would never have dreamed of ten years ago. For example, scuba fabric – the stretchy, wrinkle-free material made by inserting a thin layer of foam between two fabrics – gives clothing a curve and shape that we simply could not produce in the past. New laminating techniques have also made it possible to combine different fabrics in new ways. It's an innovation that packs enormous creative potential. And it's also an extremely subtle innovation, based on an invisible technology. There is still a lot of innovation potential when it comes to adapting the assembly techniques used for sports clothing to fashion. We are witnessing a genuine technology transfer. It's interesting to see how one field of fashion bleeds into another. In the same way, we saw the trend of washed fabrics come and go, though it took a long time to truly emerge. Trends are not necessarily right for everyone at the same time.

How have these textile innovations changed the way fashion designers work?

One of the most interesting things today – and it's a trend we'll have to continue to track – is the way our fashion vocabulary is evolving. New forms are emerging in women's collections and we have no new terms for them yet. We might say that a design is neither a blouse, nor a shirt, nor a tunic... So what is it? No one knows. Designers are developing creative new items based on innovations in textiles. It's the partnership between designers and manufacturers that introduces new ways of working. But the technology has to stay modest and fit neatly inside the clothes we design. Some stylists can make this technology beautiful, others can't. Sometimes on the runway we see designers who might have good formal ideas, but they don't use the right fabrics. It's hard to find the right combination. For all its complexity, fashion is a tough job.

In your opinion, people no longer want completely natural materials because they are uncomfortable and sometimes heavy. At the same time, we're seeing a lot of interest in the natural benefits of so-called eco-friendly fabrics like hemp, nettle, and linen. It's something we've been talking about for 15 years. That's why we

created performance codes. Every season we promote products that meet these expectations. The textile industry continues to do more in this direction. It's a fundamental and evolving issue. The tough part is making a material sexy: that's essential. But blended fabrics are not necessarily less sustainable. I'm optimistic about the new initiatives taken across the entire production chain: they have a big impact.

What expectations do luxury brands have at Première Vision Paris?

At Première Vision Paris, we try to offer different solutions for different targets. We have different forums adapted to different uses, with more conceptual and more poetic offerings. Silhouettes are one of our strong points, for example. That's something we don't do for luxury brands. The luxury market doesn't want formulas, it wants to be surprised. And some brands need bigger surprises than others. In our "Maisons d'Exceptions" area, we feature exhibitors that offer rare, artisanal know-how and have the expertise to take a unique, unexpected approach to design. But for all brands today, whether luxury or not, differentiation comes from interpreting an idea or technique. Depending on their status, brands will tackle the same idea in different ways, notably in terms of cost and materials.

Can you discuss combining six shows under the name Première Vision Paris? Yarns, fabrics, leather, designs, accessories, and manufacturing are all part of a single entity now.

The best part is that we can speak with a single voice now, and that's extremely important. We are fortunate to have the entire fashion industry present at the same event. Each business activity has its own needs and characteristics, and we can help ensure that each one of them has a future. We brainstorm ways to retransmit industry knowledge in order to better prepare for what lies ahead. For example, we have a direct line into fabric trends thanks to our qualitative surveys of buyers' first decisions in terms of colors, etc. In that way our role is a bit different than a trend-spotter.

Première Vision has been around for 40 years. Can you tell us about how it developed and the unique way it operates?

When it was established 40 years ago, the company was absolutely visionary concerning the future of fashion, inventing collaborative work methods long before anyone else. It's actually a very interesting story: 15 weavers from the Lyon area banded together to pool their customers. Nowadays we work and collaborate with several different international experts, a model that has spread throughout the industry. What is now the classic model for collaborative dialogue was first developed at Première Vision.

How does this collaborative dialogue work?

We organize meetings to set seasonal fashion trends. Representatives

from every country take part in the spirit of their national traditions. In France, for example, we work with style agencies, which is an extremely French profession, as well as different professional federations. In Italy, we work with designers and exhibitors, among others. Together with our international partners, we define the Première Vision color palette. It's magical to see how much perceptions and concepts can change from one country to the next. We put together a highly detailed set of specifications concerning color guidelines, synthetic information and material trends. We aren't a typical trend agency since we have the opportunity to stay in contact with market realities thanks to our close relationships with manufacturers. From yarns and designs to manufacturing, Première Vision Paris collects, analyzes, and transmits color, silhouette, and material trends to fashion professionals.

Première Vision puts on several shows a year. You explained that the shows are not the same size, that not all businesses are represented internationally, and that you adapt information to the local context, just as exhibitors adapt their selections. Does that mean fashion isn't so homogenous after all?

That's right, Première Vision organizes 26 shows in seven different countries every year. Now that everyone has been talking about the homogenization of fashion and raving about customized design for years, the textile industry has finally adapted to meet this demand. Giving fashion manufacturers the technology they need to fill small orders was a revolution for the industry. That eventually led to the idea of positioning the same design in different ways on the same piece of fabric. Many extremely interesting techniques appeared to meet this new need for textile manufacturers to differentiate their offer. For example, digital printing techniques enabled small series production. Before then, the cost of producing a specific design was huge: no one but big companies could afford to do it. Not only has the price changed dramatically today, but now you can even customize the design. It's incredible! It's an extremely advanced technique nowadays. A decade ago we could only do it on cotton, and then on silk. Now we can do it on any type of fabric. The need to differentiate is not just a matter of style, it's a cultural phenomenon. To give you an example, we define a standard color palette through a process of international dialogue, but we also organize seminars around the world about how colors are used or how different harmonies have evolved in the specific market conditions of different countries. We don't talk about color in the same way in every country. The harmonies we develop for our seminars in the United States are not the same as the ones we use in Brazil, China, or Turkey.