

Sector: New consumer markets - use of natural fibres, biopolymers, and natural pigments in creative Industries, fashion and clothing

The value of sector:

The UK fashion industry is valued at £1.6 Billion (retail figures, NESTA, 2008). *Creative Industries Mapping Document 2001 (DMCS, 2001)* suggested that the revenues generated by UK creative industries has grown to around £112.5 billion.

The projected growth of sector:

Creative industries sector as fast growing, diverse, with wide variations in growth between sub-sectors, with average growth of 5%. For UK adult designer clothing market the growth in 2007 was 2.5%

Areas of innovation / green technology:

Reduced impact on the environment is materials selection (biopolymers, natural fibres, plant pigments), and increasingly product design that takes into account the impact associated with product consumption and end-of-life (compostability, controlled degradation).

Where will this impact most?

Use of bio-based/sustainable materials, development of energy-efficient processing, improved end-of-life.

Practical examples that have translated into sustainable new business:

Woad-inc www.woad-inc.co.uk is selling a range of woad products ranging from woad pigment, woad-dyed yarns (wool, bamboo, cotton) to woad-based art products. The company is working with craftspeople to provide superior, contemporary homewares and clothing.

InCrops can help by:

Provide with information on bio-based and sustainable materials
Carry out market research on use of bio-based materials in creative industry
Source samples of materials
Link with UK and EU suppliers
Link with testing and certification organisations
Assist in carrying out Life Cycle Analysis or refer to organisations that can provide it
Link with national and European organisations promoting sustainability in creative sector
Advise on available funding opportunities in this sector
Assist in preparation of a bid/project application to develop applications and find suitable partners

The UK fashion industry is valued at £1.6 Billion (retail figures, NESTA, 2008). The UK adult designer clothing market alone reached £1.9 billion in 2007 Retail figures for 2007 (Mintel, 2008), and represented 6.5 per cent of the entire adult clothing market. It grew by 2.5 per cent for 2007 (ibid). According to NESTA, there are around 400 active UK designer businesses, from start-ups through to mature businesses.

The designer sector is distinct from the general clothing sector: its more exclusive, high value products are often marketed through international fashion shows and its high-end designers are still the main fashion trendsetters. These trends underpin the wider fashion

industry, as well as adding value to many lifestyle and consumer products that increasingly look to the designer sector for inspiration and content.

Today, green issues feature highly on many agendas and increasingly designers are realising the environmental impact of their creative decisions. Research shows that if designers make informed and appropriate design decisions at the outset, then the environmental performance of any product can be improved by up to 80%. The most obvious starting point for any designer trying to create textiles that have a reduced impact on the environment is materials selection. Moving beyond materials selection, the designer can take a broader view of the product/their design and its environmental impacts. Finally, the designer can go beyond product design and broaden their focus to reanalyse the whole system in which their textile product is produced and consumed. At the heart of most of the environmental problems is the issue of consumption. Society needs to address its over-reliance on product consumption and the subsequent environmental impacts that are associated with this.

Designers should therefore be encouraged to disengage from consumer culture and to play a radical and innovative part in the creation of a more sustainable society and to find new directions for product and service innovation.

InCrops has built relationships with the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts and jointly ran a successful workshop "Innovation and Art" where artists were experimenting with natural materials produced by regional businesses and developed new ideas for products and exploitation.

InCrops has developed other relationships in this sector: with the Textiles Futures Research Group which comprises over 30 leading designers and researchers located across Central St Martins, London College of Fashion and Chelsea College of Art and Design. Specialist areas include: upcycling, smart materials, biomimetics, photonics, electroluminescence, communication wear, conductive materials, rapid prototyping, 2D to 4D digital media and virtual worlds. We are looking for development of joint projects where designers and students will be working with local businesses who produce and process natural materials.