



Creating Textile Values

85 YEARS OF ROHI: HISTORY & FUTURE OF DESIGN

The rohi weaving mill, based in Geretsried, Upper Bavaria, is celebrating its 85th anniversary in 2018. Founded in 1933, rohi is now one of the world's leading providers of woollen seat upholstery fabrics – for the aviation and international furniture industry, and for public buildings. rohi's customers include international companies like Lufthansa and Emirates, Vitra, Rolf Benz and COR as well as Daimler Berlin and Staatsoper Unter den Linden. To date, three generations have set the company's course time and again, and continuously developed both design and production processes. However, the heart of the manufactory remains the wealth of experience with wool as a high-tech fibre, which has been passed on from generation to generation.

THE START-UP DAYS: DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY HAND-IN-HAND

The company's history starts in 1933. Designer Marga Hielle-Vatter founded the company with her husband Rolf Hielle, a textile engineer. The couple were a perfect match: While Marga Hielle-Vatter developed her own special signature design, Rolf Hielle focused on optimising the production process. The textile testing machines he invented are still in use today. Together, the husband and wife team wrote textile history. Marga Hielle-Vatter's designs won international awards for their creativity and vision.

UP IN THE AIR: THE SECOND GENERATION AND GLOBALISATION

The second generation under Bernd Hielle discovered a new business segment in the 1970s: Whereas the company previously focused on furniture fabrics, it now added textile product innovations for the aviation and building sectors to the range. rohi became one of the world's leading providers of textile surfaces for aircraft interiors. rohi was one of the first textile manufacturers approved as a vendor for AIRBUS and BOEING. The second generation succeeded in growing exports to all continents to the current level of over 80 percent of turnover.

NEW STANDARDS: THE THIRD GENERATION

Today, Bernd Hielle's daughter Katrin Hielle-Dahm, and her husband, Philipp Dahm, run the company and head up the design department. Her sister Tina Wendler is responsible for marketing and the 13RUGS upcycling project. The third generation is also ahead of its time when it comes to quality management. The in-house test laboratory exceeds the regular measurement parameters. In 2003, rohi's quality management was certified to EN (AS) 9100 – the first company in the textile industry worldwide to do so. "We owe our growth rates in the furniture and building sector to the technical textile expertise from the aviation industry, among other things. These synergy effects are extremely valuable. The functionality of fabrics has become a key touchstone for increasingly complex applications," explains Philipp Dahm. Accordingly, all furniture fabrics are acoustically tested and certified. For example 1620 metres of finest rohi wool fabric guarantees perfect seating comfort, an elegant opera atmosphere and ideal acoustics at Staatsoper Unter den Linden in Berlin.

UPCYCLING AND INDIVIDUALISATION

The third generation is also setting new standards in the AIR segment. At the 2014 Aircraft trade fair, rohi presented a patented innovation: ECLECTIC stands out with an apparently infinitely repeating pattern. "There are many advantages: Airlines no longer have to ensure that the fabric is cut precisely, and every passenger gets a uniquely designed seat. As a result, ECLECTIC impresses with efficiency on one hand, and meets modern expectations of a more individual atmosphere in the aircraft on the other," continues



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Katrin Hielle-Dahm. With Emirates (Dubai), Eva Air (Taiwan) and in future also ANA (Japan), more and more leading airlines are choosing the ECLECTIC concept.

In the anniversary year, the third generation also looks back on the third year of a new product group. rohi launched the 13RUGS label in 2016. It turns rohi selvages into unique carpets in an elaborate, hand-crafted process. Using upcycling methods, what were previously production surpluses are used to produce textile works of art for floors and walls – a commitment to sustainability by the third generation. The customer is involved in the creative process and can choose shapes and colours themselves. The artistic design and the evidently hand-crafted character make the carpets particularly authentic and vivid. The unique products do not strive to be perfect, they steer intentionally clear of perfection. “13RUGS epitomises the traditional values of the hand-crafted process and our company philosophy, while the products are also in line with the current mega trend of individualisation and the desire for self-determination. In that way, they represent the traditional and modern in perfect harmony,” sums up Tina Wendler.

For more information on rohi:
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