Creating Textile Values

ROHI COMPANY PROFILE

The rohi woollen mill, based in Geretsried, Upper Bavaria, is one of the world's leading providers of woollen seat upholstery fabrics. Founded in 1933, the company has established itself as a provider to the aviation and international furniture industry, as well as for public buildings using proprietary production and finishing methods. In these three business segments, AIR, LIVING and CONTRACT, the company relies on 100% domestic production for thorough quality control. The new product group 13RUGS was launched in 2016.

rohi's customers include international companies like Lufthansa, Singapore Airlines, Cathay Pacific and Qatar Airways, Vitra, Rolf Benz and COR as well as Daimler Berlin, Olympiahalle München and Staatsoper Unter den Linden. 13RUGS is represented at Steelcase and Motel One, among others.

THE GRANDE DAME OF DESIGN

rohi started life as a hand weaving firm in an attic in Schönlinde in Sudetenland. Designer Marga Hielle-Vatter founded the company with her husband Rolf Hielle, a textile engineer, in 1933. The name rohi is an abbreviation of Rolf Hielle. Soon after it was founded, the company focused on producing upholstery fabrics, which remain the manufactory's core business today.

TECHNICAL INNOVATION AND DESIGN HISTORY

After the war, the family moved to Ammerland on Lake Starnberg, and started rebuilding the textile manufacturing company with a single spinning wheel. In 1951, the company moved into its current premises in Geretsried. While Marga Hielle-Vatter perfected her minimalist and holistic signature design, Rolf Hielle optimised production processes with high-efficiency looms. The textile testing machines he invented are still in use today. Together, the husband and wife team wrote textile history. The understated designs followed the principle of 'less is more' and were ahead of their time.
Marga Hielle-Vatter favoured a natural material: wool. The designer used its aesthetics to produce ever new structures and colour compositions. In 1958, she took part in the World Exhibition in Brussels, and received multiple awards, including the silver medal of the Milan Triennale in 1957. In 1997, the grande dame of textile design passed away at the age of 84.

INTERNATIONALISATION AND EXPANSION

In 1970, the second generation joined the family company. Under the management of Bernd Hielle, the furniture fabric range was supplemented with textile product innovations for the aviation and building sectors. He also took rohi onto international markets, making the company one of the largest providers of textile surfaces for aircraft interiors worldwide.
rohi was one of the first textile manufacturers approved as a vendor for AIRBUS and BOEING. The manufactory's customers include leading airlines such as Emirates, Lufthansa and Singapore Airlines. Exports generated on all continents currently account for over 80 percent of turnover.

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QUALITY MANAGEMENT AS A SUCCESS FACTOR

In the early 1990s, the third generation entered the company: Bernd Hielle's two daughters. Today, Katrin Hielle-Dahm and her husband, Philipp Dahm, run the company as managing director and she heads the design department. With her textile vision, Katrin Hielle-Dahm is following in the grandmother's footsteps and has also won multiple awards, including the 'red dot award: best of the best' from Design Zentrum Nordrhein-Westfalen.
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. The CONTRACT division for the building sector and LIVING division for the private residential applications achieved double-digit growth rates in recent years. "Among other things, we owe our success to the synergy effects within our three segments AIR, LIVING and CONTRACT.
For example, we transfer our expertise in creating an atmosphere of well-being from the furniture sector to aircraft cabins, building a clear unique selling point. Conversely, we were able to use the technical textile expertise from the aircraft industry for the CONTRACT segment. The quality requirements for public spaces are exceedingly high," explains Philipp Dahm.

NATURE'S BEST

The foundation for the unique quality is the years of experience with wool, a high-tech fibre. rohi uses only the best quality wool – 'filet wool', so-to-speak. State-of-the-art production processes are used to create upholstery fabrics that meet the high standards in the various segments. "As a renewable fibre, wool has unique properties. Our proprietary finishing methods allow us to get the best from the natural material. As a result, we can produce extremely durable and soft upholstery fabrics, which are also breathable, dimensionally stable and stain-resistant," explains Katrin Hielle-Dahm.

Sustainability is the top priority when handling the natural material. No pesticides, heavy metals, nickel and other harmful substances are used. Based on the commitment to sustainability, the third generation launched a new product group in 2016 with the 13RUGS label. It turns rohi selvedges into unique carpets in an elaborate manual process. A multi-phase felting process transforms premium production surplus materials into textile art works for floors and walls. rohi epitomises creativity, innovation and engineering. 13RUGS adds something new: the artistic design process and the wool material are combined with the upcycling concept – thus the circle closes.

rohi stoffe GmbH
Schoenlinderstrasse 1
82538 Geretsried
Germany

For more information on rohi:
presse@rohi.com / rohi.com

rohi on Instagram:
www.instagram.com/rohi_textiles