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WOOL 2.0

NATURALLY WARM AND STRETCHY, THERMO-REGULATING, ANTI-BACTERIAL, BREATHABLE AND BIODEGRADABLE, WOOL HAS EMERGED AS A KEY MATERIAL TO DON WHILE PARTICIPATING IN OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES OR SPENDING TIME IN THE OPEN AIR.

Text Maria Cristina Pavarini

REDA ACTIVE RUNS FAST

Participating in the June 2018 edition of Pitti Uomo's *J Go Out* outdoor-focused pavilion was special guest Reda 1865, a vertical wool manufacturer from Biella, Italy's historical wool district. This company, founded more than 150 years ago, is run by its visionary co-owner and CEO Ercole Botto Poala, who has taken various actions aimed at rejuvenating his company and product offer and who is constantly involved in cutting waste and preserving the environment. Among his newest initiatives Botto Poala created a new division called Reda Active that offers highly advanced woven fabrics and knitwear. They are easy-care, can stand heavy washing, but are also lightweight, breathable, water-, wind- and cold-resistant. Debating at Pitti was a new group of fabrics bonded and added with a new internally developed high functional and simultaneously 100% biodegradable membrane.

Botto Poala had also launched Rewoolution, his own wool sporty apparel collection employing his own new generation wool fabrics. "Outdoor, sportswear and athleisure are constantly growing as such products are being used everyday," he explains. "Wool is a perfect fiber to be worn in the open air as it is sustainable and biodegradable," he underlines also pointing to his company's activities including water-saving and photovoltaic panel employ. "Wool can be worn in formal occasions, but also for sporty and travel apparel." Out of Reda 1865's entire offer of 200 fabrics and related 2,500 variants, Reda Active offers 50 high-tech materials of which half are woven and half knitwear. Reda Active's clients include top quality brands such as Salewa, Houdini, Zegna Sport, Rossignol and Cark, but also technical

apparel including, for instance, pieces worn during space travel missions. In addition to employing technical fibers, functional membranes and coatings, Reda Active also uses Laminor, another high-tech material added for glow-in-the-dark fabrics.

"Sports and fashion brands are gaining always more success and increasingly looking for our products," explains Massimiliano Pera Visini, designer of Reda Active. "Consider that in New York, in the Time Square area, there are always more spas, gyms and wellness locations opening. Playing sports and caring for one's health and image are becoming always more important. Similarly always more companies are launching new sport-focused capsules, as fashion brands are always more keen about their products' performance and look," he adds explaining why high-tech and high-performance wool are meeting such success. The Rewoolution apparel collection is growing as well. "It is giving us a great opportunity as we can study collections for that special target interested in high quality, though more casual and sporty, products," says Botto Poala.

Reda 1865 closed 2017 registering €100 million sales in 2017, +18% compared with 2016, and it aims to reach €150 million sales by 2022. Also Reda Active has reached significant results as it hit €10 million in sales in 2017. "It's a great result in a stagnating market as the present one. Reda Active might also become an independent company if it continues such growth," says the CEO. He adds: "We had a great intuition as we were first in tracking the athleisure market by innovating our wool selection," referencing that Pitti Uomo had already hosted Reda Active in January 2018 within the *Athlovers*, a special project hosting up-and-coming designers interpreting Reda Active materials.



OROXIA COMBAT WOOL FABRIC (PHOTO SHUTTERSTOCK)

LORO PIANA STORM SYSTEM: VALUE MEETS PRACTICALITY

Storm System is a Loro Piana's own brand that identifies natural fabrics added with an own advanced technology that makes them become water- and windproof. This technology creates a double barrier made up of the water-repellent treatment Rain System and an exclusive own water-resistant, breathable and windproof membrane. Rain System also protects fabrics from dirting by dust, spots and liquids. Starting from s/s 2018 Loro Piana has started employing a new PFC-free eco-friendly Rain System technology that employs over 60% components from renewable vegetal origin resources. Materials employing this technology can stand up to ten water washings and five dry cleaning processes.

The Storm System treatment can be applied to the noblest fibers keeping their intrinsic characteristics and softness unchanged.

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Such fabrics can be employed for many different garments, climatic conditions and uses such as city life, leisure time, sports activities and traveling.

HOW WOOL BECOMES TRANSVERSAL

Italian wool manufacturer Giuseppe Botto SpA has recently launched Zeta, a wool fabric selection added with a weather finishing and special membranes that guarantee high-performance and comfort. Silvio Botto Poala, CEO, Botto Giuseppe SpA, says: "Such materials are transversal and perfect for both more classical products and for items aimed at younger and sportier consumers; therefore they help us increase our client base."

MODERN PROTECTION SHIELDS

Marrotto Fabrics, a specialized wool fabric manufacturer operating for over 180 years, has developed its own line of technical wool

fabrics, Scudo, whose name is the Italian word for "shield." These materials are added with a superlight inner breathable and weather-protective membrane helping expel inner dampness and protecting from external agents.

THE FABRIC OF THE FUTURE

Italian manufacturer Brugnoli offers fabrics for different uses including beachwear, underwear and outdoor. It also produces Nywool, line of fabrics made with fine merino virgin wool added with polyamide. This family is easy-care, machine washable and doesn't pill. Such fabrics don't twist, guarantee freedom of movement and bright and long lasting colors. In addition they have a very soft hand.

WOOL CITY ARMORS

Adding performance also means increasing wool fabrics' sturdiness, strength and tear-resistance. Such characteristics are part of

the newest Cordura Combat Wool fabrics. These fabrics employ 73% wool and 27% 6.6 nylon fiber that, while keeping fabric's softness and aesthetic aspects, the fabric's resistance by ten times when compared with 100% merino wool fabrics.

A NEW WOOL ERA

Chinese wool manufacturer Nanoban has recently developed its new Optim technology it applies to Neulana Double, a 100% pure wool double-face fabric that looks like a bonded fabric, though it doesn't employ any glue, synthetic material, membrane or lining. It is suitable for high-end casual jackets. "Wool is an amazing performance fiber. Modern innovations and collaborations have led to the creation of lightweight, technical fabrics for the modern-day consumer," says Julie Davies, The Woolmark Company general manager of the processing innovation and education extension. We are just at the dawn of a new wool era. Let's see what else the future will bring us.