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O ECOTEXTILES BACKGROUND

O Ecotextiles was conceived in 2004 when a Seattle woman—Leigh Anne Van Dusen—decided to re-upholster her sofa. Van Dusen found many fabrics that were sophisticated, but not environmentally friendly; or green (mostly recycled polyester), but not stylish. Even the “organic” fabrics were processed with chemicals that were harmful for people and the planet.

Since she couldn’t find a company that was creating sophisticated, stylish fabrics using organic or sustainable methods, Van Dusen decided to create her own. She enlisted her sister, Patty Grossman, an MBA from MIT who has expertise in corporate start-ups, and they formed O Ecotextiles. Their mission was to use modern technology to turn rare and revered old-world fibers into new and appealing high-end fabrics.

Immediately, Van Dusen and Grossman discovered that textile processing is chemically intensive; the industry is one of the world’s worst environmental polluters, and many of the residues left in finished textiles could present health hazards. The sisters were determined to prove that it's possible to produce luxurious, sensuous fabrics in ways that are non-toxic, ethical and sustainable.

O Ecotextiles began a world-wide search for manufacturing partners interested in a cradle-to-cradle process of creating no-impact, perfectly safe, incredibly luxurious fabrics. They located Romanian farmers who dew- or field-ret hemp stalks; a Japanese mill owner committed to “green” processes, even new methods such as using ozone to bleach fabric; a 100-year-old Italian mill that produces no wastewater; a Chilean mill shifting to entirely green processes; an Italian dye house that produces biodegradable, heavy-metal free textiles; and more.

The resulting fabrics are, as Van Dusen envisioned, sophisticated, stylish and “green.” Now, O Ecotextiles is encouraging other manufacturers to follow its lead, and working to convince designers that the public wants, and will pay a premium for, these fabrics. One early adopter is Britain’s Emily Todhunter, who has just introduced, to much fanfare, the Emily Todhunter Organic Fabric Collection by O Ecotextiles. Others are quickly following suit.

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O Ecotextiles is a Seattle-based textile company committed to producing luxurious, sensuous fabrics in ways that are non-toxic, ethical and sustainable.