Textile industry

Eco-fashion from Bangladesh?

Bangladesh is cheap mass-produced goods and poor working conditions. But the self-confidence of the local fashion designers is growing. You are looking at the Berlin Fashion Week for sustainable concepts.

Metallic-sounding music rattles through the hall. As an unending chain members run the models on the brightly lit catwalk. Fashion Designer Iftekhar Rahman from Bangladesh has managed to get a stand-up and sketch fashion pieces in his notebook, now and then he shoots a photo. The fashion show at the former postal station Berlin conventionally only appears at first glance. All clothing items shown here are economically or ecologically sustainably produced. It is the fashion show of the Green Showroom, which takes place during the Berlin Fashion Week, an eco-fashion show for the audience.

"Very nice pattern, beautiful lines, the clothes were great, very very feasible, practical Collections" says Iftekhar Rahman. "People always think eco-fashion cannot be colorful, but now we also have strong colors seen," his colleague Bengali Afsana Serdousi thrilled by his side. Both are invited by the Goethe Institut Bangladesh, the University of the Arts Berlin (University of Arts) and the Weissensee School of Art Berlin as a guest. Together with four other young designers from Bangladesh take on the project "Local International" part, aims to develop sustainable concepts for fashion and seeking
cooperation between German and Bengali designers.

Eco, colorful and sustainable

![Image of leather stuff tanned with rhubarb juice]

After the show, the designer from Bangladesh went to the exhibition hall from stall to stall. Your first question to the exhibitor is always: "What is sustainable on this product?" Then, leather products may be shown, which were tanned in rhubarb juice, instead of a toxic chromium mixture. At another booth, there are stylish backpacks that are made from old plastic bottles. Upcycling does mean in a politically correct fashion world. One floor down in the associated Ethical Fashion Show, where more streetwear and mass-market products are shown, for example, there are biodegradable sneakers.

Berlin is compared to Paris and Milan, not a classic fashion capital; you will not find the big international stars of the industry, but also innovative, alternative concepts. The Green Showroom has existed for more than ten years; he was born long before the debate on sustainability in the textile sector had reached the end users. Long before the collapse of the sewing factory Rana Plaza in April 2013 in Bangladesh, where more than 1,100 people died.

Aimed at changing image

Sustainable fashion in the context of Bangladesh, which may sound paradoxical. After China and India, Bangladesh is the third largest textile exporter in the world. Germany is the second largest market after the US for Bangladesh. Despite the scandals and disasters: The numbers have increased slightly. 2014 the country exported textiles worth 3.25 billion euros after Germany. The South Asian country is known for cheap mass production, for inhumane working conditions. Although conditions have improved locally in the past two years, many companies fear that can produce in Bangladesh to its image.
Iftekhar Rahman knows this first hand. He works as a designer at M & J Group, one of the leading textile manufacturers in Bangladesh. In the factory, jeans for international brands such as H & M, GAP, Esprit, C & A and replay will be made. He evaluates the working conditions of seamstresses in the company as well. "Companies that do not comply with the compliance rules, ie on the compliance with fair working conditions and minimum standards in Bangladesh have no chance," the designer says. The pressure of the importing countries is so high that companies could no longer afford poor working conditions for two years.

**Double certification because of a lack of confidence?**

This allows the plants to certify the working conditions in order to win the trust of customers. During his tour of the GREEN showroom the designer is, however, surprised by the wide range of certification services for the local market. In the context of the growing critical attitude of many end users a new market for seal of approval, audit and consulting firms has developed. The otherwise very restrained Designer wonders why the companies spend in his country a lot of money for the certification of compliance with the compliance rules if European companies resort for the domestic market again deep into their pockets in order to confirm the fair production of goods to leave.
Sustainable fashion out of the niche?

Sustainable fashion is often touted as a growth market. Also, the trade association of textile industry "German Fashion" observed the. However, it was eco-fashion compared to conventional commodity still a niche product. In the Green Showroom and on the connected Ethical Fashion Show is clear that the products are intended here for a small affluent group of buyers. The tanned with rhubarb leather bag costs about 400 euros, the woven plastic bag with an extra bag for tablet PC around 170 euros in the store. Customers are concept stores and selected online shops, not the masses.

As part of the Green showrooms of International Association Natural Textile Industry has given (IVN) for the first time market data to develop the industry known. Although it 14 years ago, a very small market was that the sales figures have increased annually by an average of five percent. Whether sustainable fashion can also penetrate to the masses, the Association is optimistic: "If manufacturers are able to offer innovative products that reasonably can compete with conventional products in price and fashion aspect, it will be possible from the niche completely . that step out the fulfillment of this condition is not a utopia, prove several thousand companies that are already certified or in large part a sustainable manner "world, says IVN Office Manager Heike Scheuer.

Back to basics

In exchange project "Local International" 2014 binational teams have been formed in the fall. Jointly develop German and Bengali Designer sustainable solutions, concepts, products or collections that will be presented at Berlin Fashion Week in July 2015. Away from mass production to traditional craft techniques revived and sustainability-oriented production methods are encouraged. The increase in the quality of fashion from Bangladesh is the young designers very important. Also, to avoid a possible migration to even cheaper production countries. Iftekhar Rahman and his colleagues observed a growing, confident fashion scene in their country, strongly influenced by the so-called fusion wear, is mixed in the traditional fashion with western style. With the promotion of old craft techniques also the location of Bangladesh would be strengthened. Until recently, the designs came in the textile factories exclusively by Western brands. Bid Now more and more designers Bengali Western customers own collections.