Donkeys and Horses

What do donkeys and horses have to do with textiles? To answer this question, the following exchange between Michael Braungart, EPEA Hamburg and the Managing Director of Gessner AG, Fredy Baumeler, is presented.

Fredy: “Dear Michael, what are your thoughts on the recycling of textile hybrids?”

Michael: “My dear friend, consider this observation. Crossbreeding Donkeys and Horses produces mules, that is to say, hybrids. They have great stamina and strength, are good-natured, and also have a very long life expectancy. But, they are not able to procreate. Now textiles can also exhibit all of these qualities when natural and polymer fibres are mixed, because this produces highly durable hybrids. But until now, textile hybrids have not been recyclable.”

The intimate mixture of different materials prevented continuous renewal in the cycle, which is precisely the impetus that gave Gessner the crucial incentive to innovate.

It was crucial to ask the right questions. As there was no progress on the question of how to make the hybrid fabric recyclable as a whole, the question needed to be how its components could be recovered individually. Thus began an intensive search for a system for a “decomposable textile hybrid.” Gessner AG discovered that it could join different recyclable fibre systems in the fabric using a “textile lock,” resulting in two new products - the Cradle to Cradle Certified Silver CLIMATEX DUALCYCLE™ and CRADURA™.

Gessner decided long ago to develop and manufacture upholstery fabrics that satisfy the increasing demand for ecological and functional products in every respect. So the question was, how could the indisputably desirable qualities of hybrid textiles (e.g., strength and durability) be reconciled with recyclability? The answer was simple, but tough: back to square one.

This motto was suggested more than two years ago by the Managing Director of Gessner AG, Fredy Baumeler. Firstly, the benefits of polymer fibres in terms of durability and resistance needed to be exploited. At the same time, the climatising and haptic properties of the natural raw materials for “Climatex” would need to be preserved at all costs.

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