Last year, Taiwan-based fabric manufacturer Singtex launched a new product derived from recycled coffee grounds. The new fabric, S.Café, which offers a series of performance qualities—including fast drying, UV protection and odour and moisture management—quickly caught the imagination of apparel designers like Noemi Ivanova who also like S.Café's green cachet.

Café culture

Swedish fashion designer Noemi Ivanova is a specialist in women's intimate apparel, but, in response to the trend of the 1980s influencing fashion in 2010, she has come up with a trekking suit, consisting of leggings, a black leotard with white pinstripes, and a tight-fitting yellow top with big Grace Jones and Dallas shoulders and a built-in neck roll.

The Stockholm-based designer explains that the 1980's phenomenon that most inspired her was power-dressing; she likes the look of the women who represent that era, describing them as strong, powerful, smart and city-like. To bring this into the new decade, she decided to apply the principles of power-dressing to something sporty and functional, and the trekking suit is the result.

While eighties women might have been more inclined to rub shoulders in the wine bars that became ubiquitous then, the 2010 equivalent is probably a coffee shop. That this, too, was in Ms Ivanova's mind is clear from her choice of fabric, the new S.Café products from Taiwanese textile manufacturer Singtex. Environmental issues are of great concern in Taiwan and Singtex introduced S.Café last year to make a contribution towards easing the island's landfill concerns. It uses a patented process to transform coffee grounds, collected from branches of major coffee chains, including Starbucks, into S.Café yarn, which it then uses to produce a range of styles of knitted, woven and softshell fabrics.

On hearing about this, and liking the idea (as well as the Singtex slogan, 'Drink it, wear it'), Noemi Ivanova asked specifically for samples of S.Café to make her trekking suit in preparation for a promotional visit to Europe by the



Swedish designer Noemi Ivanova presented a trekking suit at the Taiwan Eco-Fashion Fair in Stockholm in October, using S.Café fabric from Taiwanese textile manufacturer Singtex.

Taiwan Textile Federation

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Fair play

The Taiwan Eco-Fashion Fair was an event that took place in Stockholm between October 4 and October 13 last year. The venue was a gallery called So Stockholm in the heart of the Swedish capital. One of Taiwan's top designers, Sophie Hong, and rising stars Xiu-Zhen Liu, Kuan-Wen Liu and Li-Lin Wan all took part in the event along with 11 Taiwanese textile manufacturers, including Ji Cai, Formosa Chemicals & Fibre,Tai-Fou, Li-Fun, Hao-Jey, Li Peng, Formosa Taffeta, Fabric King Textile, Tri Ocean, Giftstart and Yu Yuan Textile. Noemi Ivanova gave a detailed presentation on the trekking suit she made using S.Café fabric from Singtex.

The event took place with the help and support of the Taiwan Textile Federation, with the organisation insisting that the developments that have taken place in Taiwan in recent years can help designers and apparel brands all over the world become greener by reducing the resources they consume, and reusing and recycling as many materials as possible.

The Taiwan Textile Federation thought Noemi Ivanova's trekking suit an excellent example of this and invited the Swedish designer to travel to Taiwan later that month for the 2009 Taipei Innovative Textile Application Show (TITAS) for her to talk about her idea and her use of the fabric to visitors there.

Taiwanese Textile Federation in October (see panel). "It was a challenge," she says now, "but it was easy to sew and cut. I used small pieces: the tights or leggings are the same fabric as the yellow top, with a bit of stretch value added, while the black fabric of the leotard is a different variety of S.Café. I liked the idea that it's breathable and anti-odour, but I especially like the eco, sustainability aspect. For me, that's the most important part of the story. It's the same as normal high-tech fabric for sports clothing, but with this extra eco story."

She says her preference is for fabrics that don't demand anything from her, but that allow her to demand a lot from them; the fabric should adapt to her needs, to her life, she says.

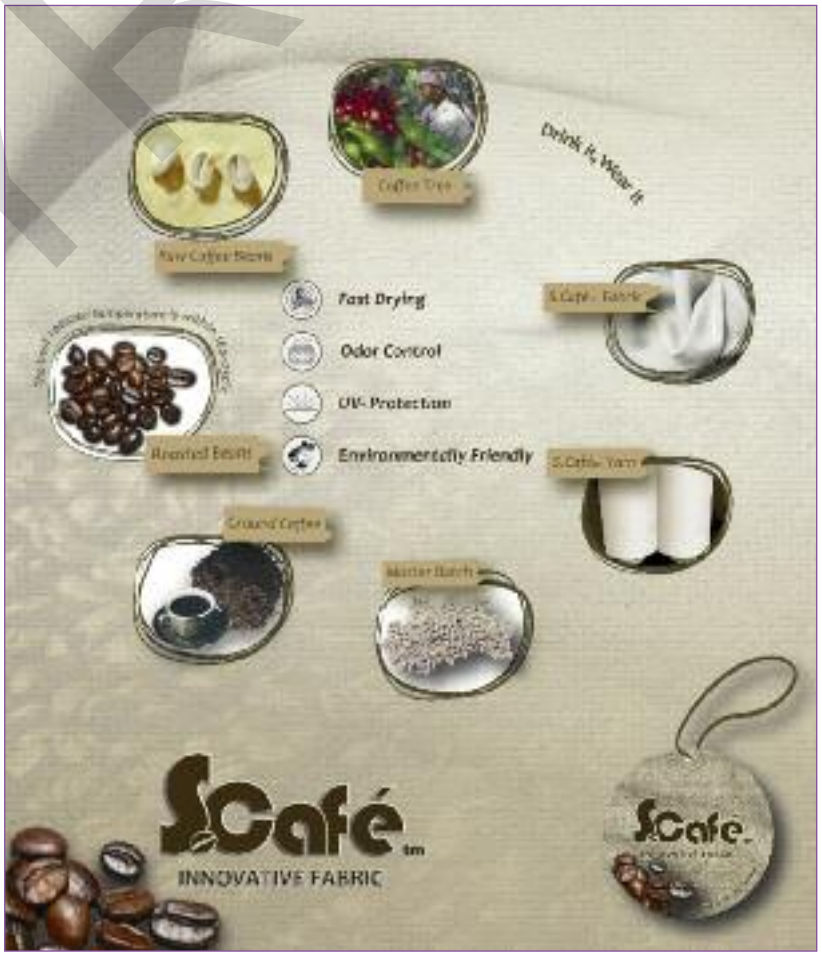
Love of language

She describes herself as fascinated by the "language" of power-dressing, and having a turtle-neck top as part of the suit, something that can completely cover the wearer's neck, is part of that, part of the 1980's thing of "a woman, when dressing, trying to hide what she has as a female and accentuating what she has as a man", while still holding on to some feminine touches.

The shoulders may be the most obvious example. The shoulder pads are obviously masculine, the designer says, but she has made them in the form of detachable epaulettes, so the wearer can remove them if she wants to appear more slender. Similarly, while the baselayer top covers up the whole chest and neck area, there is quite a deep décolletage on the leotard, which would accentuate femininity, but also, possibly, suggest a touch of vulnerability, she suggests. And because every element had to contribute to the functionality of the overall piece, she added a suspender, but converted it into a holder for a water bottle. "I was playing at combining all those attributes," she explains.

Coffee appeal

The designer could have made her trekking suit from more mainstream fabrics, but admits that when she heard about S.Café, she wanted to try it out. She says: "I was just fascinated by the fact that it had come from coffee. I drink coffee every day, and now it's here in this fabric. It just feels like normal functional fabric. It's opened a door for me."



Singtex produces its S.Café range of fabrics from used coffee grounds by a patented process.

Singtex

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