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‘Digital fashion needs craft’

With a high-calibre panel discussion, the European FashionTEX project is being launched in Chemnitz as part of the Capital of Culture 2025 programme.

The aim of the initiative is to transform the textile and fashion industry through digital transformation, sustainable production and innovative technologies. The event served as the kick-off for a dialogue between industry, science and the creative industries, which is intended to and creative industries to initiate future collaborations and developments. It also promotes exchange between different disciplines and focuses on joint search for sustainable solutions. The panel discussion was moderated by publicist Axel Brüggemann. The ‘fabrik chemnitz’ - a former tulle factory - provided an impressive location that combines history and innovation.

As the former ‘Saxon Manchester’, Chemnitz was already a world-famous city for the clothing industry. In 2025, next year's Capital of Culture will once again become the focus of fashion designers. Because in November, students from European fashion universities will come together here for the first time with thought leaders and leading representatives of the fashion and textile industry from all over the world as part of the European ‘FashionTEX’ project. ‘FashionTEX is an important stage for visionary thinkers and doers who want to discover new perspectives,’ says Stefan Schmidtke, Managing Director of the European Capital of Culture Chemnitz 2025 GmbH.

Wolfgang Grupp, entrepreneur and former owner of TRIGEMA, emphasized that the key to the future lies in focusing on high-quality products and training young talent: ‘Digitalisation is not new. It started with the first computers. Today, it is the task of my children and the next generation.’ He also marks the importance of regional production: ‘Entrepreneurs bear responsibility for their region. When we manufacture high-quality products, we not only strengthen our company, but also the community.’ Dr. Susanne Richter, Managing Director of Zweckverband Sächsisches Industriemuseum, highlights the role of history as a driver of innovation. ‘Saxony's industrial heritage shows how innovation can arise from tradition. The textile industry is European and interdisciplinary. We need to develop concepts that combine the past and the future.’ She emphasised the importance of the Chemnitz region as a place of transformation: ‘Places like the Gebrüder Pfau cloth factory in Crimmitschau make transformation tangible. Here you can experience how history is being transferred into the present. The question is: How do we bring traditional values into a modern environment?’ Flavia Bon, founder of AUGMENTED WEAVING, brought in the perspective of digital technologies. ‘Digitalisation brings the world home. It gives us tools to reinterpret decades-old knowledge and integrate it into modern technologies.’ She repeatedly underlines: ‘Digital fashion needs craftsmanship.’ The visionary thinker sees artificial intelligence as a way to create creative freedom: ‘AI helps us to do things we don't like to do and gives us time to focus on innovation.’

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It's our job to find new ways of working and combining the knowledge of the past with the possibilities of the future.'

Annett Reeder, FashionTEX project manager, categorized this project once again, explaining the importance of education and courage in the academic world. 'Teachers must be prepared to try new approaches and pass on the latest developments to young talents. The design process has long been digitalized and it's our job to prepare the next generation for it.' This is exactly what FashionTEX stands for, a platform that strengthens the dialogue between crafts, research and companies: 'Chemnitz is the ideal place where tradition and innovation come together. New creative ideas emerge here every day, which we want to combine and develop further.'

The panel discussion made it clear that the textile and fashion industry is facing major challenges - from digitalisation and sustainability to the combination of tradition and innovation. However, the guests also showed how important it is to tackle these issues in an interdisciplinary and European way. As part of FashionTEX, there have already been meetings in Lisbon and Amsterdam with all participating universities, and training courses on 3D fashion design are already being offered for teachers.

Background

FashionTEX, a European project that combines the tradition and future of the textile and fashion industry, is being launched in the Capital of Culture year 2025. The aim is to promote digital fashion, sustainable textile production and innovative technologies. FashionTEX serves as a central platform for exchange and networking within the industry and brings together the activities of eleven European universities.

The combination of traditional craftsmanship and technological innovation is also visible in the project 'The Red Thread', another contribution to the Capital of Culture year. Here, contemporary witnesses talk about the regional textile industry and young people from Chemnitz and the surrounding area work with them to design and produce new creations. FashionTEX and 'Der rote Faden': two projects for the future and a special co-operation.

As part of the Makerspace Residency Programme, which starts in August 2025 in one of the nine Makerhubs of the Capital of Culture in Schneeberg, young designers can develop their skills together with experts. This experience strengthens both the career prospects and the potential for success of the graduates, particularly through the focus on digital fashion and international collaboration.

At the FashionTEX Festival, which will take place at 'fabrik chemnitz' from 5 to 7 November next year, the students' work will be presented both physically and digitally. One highlight is the holographic catwalk, where fashion will be shown exclusively via avatars.

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The students also explain their work on digital display boards. A classic fashion show in the form of a moderated gala complements the programme, during which a top-class jury nominates the best works for the European 'Next Generation' award. Panels und Discussion panels shed light on current trends and answer questions about the future of the textile and fashion industry. This is an ideal platform for dialogue between companies, start-ups, research institutes, designers and educational institutions from the region and across Europe.

You can also find all information at:

www.fashiontex.eu

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