THE FABRIC OF INSPIRATION

Since 1971, Turkish textile maker Soktas has been researching the unique qualities of cotton and using its knowledge to create the softest of yarns. Today Soktas fabrics are favoured globally by top designers and tailors – thanks to the creative minds and skilful hands of its 1,200-strong team in Soke, home to an integrated process of spinning, weaving, dyeing and dispatching.

OVERVIEW

“Our people are very important to us,” says Seyhan Aktemur, the vice-president of product development at Soktas. She is showing us around the company’s airy design centre in Soke, an hour’s drive from İzmir on Turkey’s west coast and the starting point for the company’s two seasonal collections a year. Featuring over 4,500 fabrics each, they are the result of the efforts, energy and skills of highly trained staff, most of whom have been with the family-owned company for generations.

Aktemur herself has worked at Soktas for more than 20 years and is now the mastermind behind all new products, supported by a design team of six creatives and four technical specialists in Soke. “This design centre is where we show our design excellence and visually represent that understated elegance that Soktas is known for,” she says.

On the second floor, senior fabric designer Seckin Yenici muses over inspirations for the next two seasons. “It’s a complicated process,” he says. “It’s not just about coming up with a good blend idea or a beautiful pattern; the trick is to figure out how to make it work, to ensure that it can be done.”

He works among mood boards and colour schemes from the spring/summer 2016 collection while, just across the floor, the company archives provide further ideas. “Over 300,000 fabrics are stored in our archives, providing inspiration for new and classic designs,” says Yenici, who is often on the road at trade shows such as Premier Vision in Paris, where Soktas has just introduced Bespoke Selection and Noblesse. During this visit, the rest of the team is in Japan and India – a reflection of the awarding Asian market. Soktas has also opened a location in the north- ern Italian town of Biella to support demand in Europe, which remains the company’s biggest market.

“In our archives, Soktas keeps a sample of every fabric it has made since ’71,” says Yenici.

Tell us more about the EcoLogic line.

We always had some sustainable products in our range but we’ve had this EcoLogic line for four seasons as a separate part of the collection. We use organic-certified cottons and recycled cottons.

For decades you’ve been known primarily for your shirting fabrics but recently you introduced the Taylord line: fabrics specifically designed for jackets and trousers. How does that work?

We added Taylord two years ago to complement the shirting fabrics line with pure cotton, as well as cotton blended with wool or cashmere for winter and silk or linen for summer. It’s an extensive line that matches the quality and aesthetics of our shirt fabrics.