



# Textile Materials

For thousands of years man has been utilising natural fibres for covering his body or decorating his home. Fibre was twisted with fibre into threads and then worked into a surface - the essence of anything textile is the joining together of individual components to become a whole. Basically almost all plants and hairy mammals are a source of fibres, albeit of rather diverse quality and quantity, this being the reason why only some of them were cultivated. Each raw material has its own specific properties and language which are useful for different fields of application.

In our latitudes for a long time linen and sheep's wool were mainly used. The flax plant from which linen is derived grew well on the poor granite soils of the Mühlviertel and was the basis for the livelihood of the people of the region. Many laborious steps from sowing to spinning dictated the work rhythm in harmony with nature and were accompanied by customs, songs and celebrations.

As the material came from their own soil or the animals around, people considered textiles as part of their own habitat almost like the food gathered from their own ground. However, this close relationship with the material changed in the 19th century when more and more cotton and silk were imported from other continents. This coincided with the beginning of industrial production which dictated entirely different workflows.

More than half of today's textiles no longer consist of natural fibres but are produced synthetically. Vis-cous substances are pressed through thin nozzles to form fibres. Modern technologies and innovative minds have produced specific materials with uses that by far exceed the classical uses for clothing and furnishing. Because of the increase in world population and its consumption of textiles it would no longer be possible to satisfy the need of textile material from natural fibres. Our planet's resources are limited, the strife for cultivation areas, water supply and energy began long ago.

Textiles which once were the precious fruits of one's own labour have become mass products with a short life-span. Slowly a change of thinking is developing, and recently criteria such as sustainability, regionality and the ecological balance of a product increasingly gained public attention.