FOSSILISED TEXTILES

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Tactility Factory is a spin-out company resulting from a successful collaborative research and development project between a textile designer and an architect.

Conceptually Tactility Factory sets the utopian challenge of making hard things soft

In the case of its first product range, Girlit Concrete ‘hard’ is represented by concrete and ‘soft’ by textile technologies.

Tactility Factory starts from an understanding that most Built Environment elements and materials are designed only to meet technical performance specifications. In contrast, Tactility Factory focused as much on the human ‘performance’ (beauty, sensuality and, in particular, tactility) as the technical.

Tactility Factory questions Architecture’s celebration of technology to the point where it can and often do become the first and last interface that the user has with space. In contrast, interacting with a textile is a personal and unique cosy, cuddly, slippery, scratchy, warm encounter. It is the remarkable achievement of textile designers to take ‘hard core’ technologies and transform them into something that evokes intimate physical and emotive reactions.

Inclusive Aspects

Tactility Factory designs building products from the perspective of the user. We have developed patent technologies (Girlit Concrete) to achieve this and have carried out a few initial commissions to prove it (see commissions listed on the website)

Concrete is a ubiquitous construction material. Used across the globe in all cultures, concrete is a core, mass material for the industry.

However, although concrete as a material is immensely flexible and can achieve high levels of technical performance in a range of contexts, it has negative characteristics i.e. it is: grey, cold, hard, ‘unfriendly’ and acoustically harsh

The Girlit Concrete processes have however produced a material that draws on the wonderful characteristics of concrete - ubiquitous, flexible, low cost and counteracts its negatives with a new set of positives to make it colourful, warm, soft, welcoming and acoustically soft.

The technical ‘trick’ to the Girlit Concrete range lies in specifically designing fabrics that combine with concrete in such a way that some of the textiles remain on the surface of the concrete and are fully integrated within it, creating positive / negative patterns of textiles and/or concrete.

The outcomes: The textiles are designed to be neither subsumed by the concrete nor do they peel off the surface and all textiles are based on yarns that have been tested to withstand the harsh alkaline environment of concrete.

The application of innovative and high tech technologies results in materials of substance with unique antique qualities and high levels of visual and tactile qualities.

inlin and stitched concrete

These technologies of ‘linen’ and ‘stitched’ can be combined to produce slum.

Stitched concrete

A variety of technologies is used to allow the stitched surfaces to remain on the surface. Yarns in a range of colours, weights etc. can be used to create endless variations in pattern and design.

Experimental concrete

Whilst Tactility Factory has developed and perfected a range of techniques, it continues to innovate on a range of techniques

The work has been funded by AHRC Practice Led and Applied Scheme ‘Woven Concrete’, Pre-proof of concept funding Higher Education Innovation Fund for Academic Enterprise and is currently supported by Invest NI. It has received University of Ulster innovation awards and recently won an internationally judged competition ‘The big idea’. It has been cited in numerous recent publications and is a case study on Gendersite website (www.gendersite.org)

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