

## “I strive continuously to learn new skills”

On the 1<sup>st</sup> February, Caroline Connor moved into her office at Textile Fashion Centre in Borås.

where she will establish her company Material Guidance coming closer to her network.

In parallel, she practises what she preaches, with the hope to inspire others to take responsibility for their skill development.

Meet Caroline Connor, a specialist in Colour and Material design and development.

### - It is never too late to “up-skill”.

I am 48 and I strive continuously to learn new skills.

Especially now, after gaining knowledge of European Union Commission’s visions for sustainable and circular design and textile manufacturing says Caroline

who currently study’s the vocational education course

“Sustainability Developer within Textile and Fashion”

at Nordiska TextilAkademien

whilst building her consultancy company.

She values the opportunities to listen and engage with other students during group assignments and in master classes for each course module.

During the autumn of 2022, Caroline even completed digital vocational courses in

“Circular Design for textiles and fashion” and

“Sustainability Reporting and Legislation”

The advantage with studying digital vocational courses is flexibility, one can study when it is suitable for you, allowing each student to combine learning with other occupations.

Each module is completed with a test which must be approved before one proceeds further in the course, creating a structure for the student and an incentive to complete their studies.

The knowledge that she will gain from the vocational studies compliments Caroline’s 20 years of work experience.

In 2020 Caroline established Material Guidance Sweden AB, offering consulting services to a spectrum of national and international companies and organisations.

If a company are considering to broaden their portfolio with new products, guidance can be offered in the design and development of materials, sourcing and review of manufacturers and their facilities and recommending sustainable production practices.

Caroline’s career within textiles began in the late 90’s when she studied a Masters of Arts degree in Textile Design at the Royal College of Art in London.

- At that time period, there were no discussions in regard to sustainable design practices, only artistry in creating and following trends in design and the arts. Today designers must take their responsibility and focus concepts to align with circular product development and design.

After her Master studies, Caroline moved to Sweden and for 10 years she worked as a Design Account Manager and Textile designer at Borgstena Textile, who manufactured industrial textiles to the automotive and transport industries. Since then, Caroline has worked in a variety of development roles within product and material design, within companies with on-site industrial manufacturing facilities in Europe and in Asia.

- I have always been dedicated to the development processes of industrial products but have never designed garments, my focus has been on technical textiles and other industrial materials for vehicles and other forms of transport such as child strollers and car seats.

### Textile shall be recycled to textile

Today her focus lies, as many others with the textile industry, to work with implementing sustainability practices and increasing the longevity of manufactured products. She highlights the importance of collaborations as an important success factor, that all departments of an organisation shall contribute to sustainability; engineers, technicians, designers and management.

- The complete organisation must take their responsibility within the textile value-chain. It is blatantly obvious that we cannot consume or manufacture as we have done before.

She elaborates that possibilities must exist to repair material that becomes worn or damaged during product use ex. surfaces within a car interior or an item of furniture. When discussing material recycling, she stresses that PET bottles should not be recycled to become raw material for new textiles; instead that existing textiles should be chemically or mechanically recycled to new fibres and materials. PET bottles should continue to be used to contain fluids; allowing a prolonged life-cycle of packaging.

- My vision is that worn or damaged textiles should never be the sole reason for a product to be discarded. I want to contribute to a more sustainable textile industry.

Caroline plans to be available at the Textile Fashion Centre, two days per week.

She can be contacted by email: [caroline.connor@materialguidance.com](mailto:caroline.connor@materialguidance.com)

Would you like to learn more about vocational studies in circularity and sustainability

<https://www.nordiskatextilakademin.se/utbildningar/yh-kurser/>