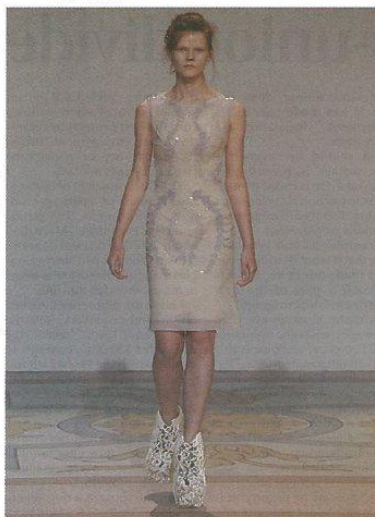


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3D printing technology on catwalk

Dutch designer Iris van Herpen has unveiled a new piece at the Paris Fashion Week for Haute Couture created using 3D printing technology from Belgian company Materialise.

The design was made using a cutting-edge application of the technology, which is creating a small revolution in fashion and design in the same way that it has already revolutionised medicine. Materialise is a pioneer in Additive Manufacturing software and solutions, more commonly known as 3D printing, which has grown in size from a university spin-off to a multinational thanks in part to EU research funding.

Speaking about the latest collection Sren Hermans, account manager for Materialise, said: "For the first time we have worked with Iris van Herpen to produce a hybrid creation incorporating unique, transparent bone-like structures produced with Mammoth Stereolithography. Thanks to 3D printing the dresses are seamless and made to measure. It is exciting working with Iris van Herpen to bring her complex geometrical designs to life, 3D printing does what no other form of clothing manufacture can do when complex shapes need to be created quickly and as one piece."

The design was first created on a computer in collaboration with Isaie Bloch, a Belgian architect and CG artist, before being optimised for 3D printing using Materialise software. At this point flaws or obstacles were fixed before work continued and the design was sent to the printer. The design was then brought to life using Mammoth Stereolithography, an additive manufacturing technique which creates objects layer

by layer. UV lasers scan the design into a liquid resin that hardens wherever the laser hits and the 3D object gradually comes to life.

Materialise originated as a university project focused on rapid prototyping applications. As the company evolved, it began providing surgeons with highly accurate models of their patients' anatomy after performing CT or MR scans and transforming that information into printable models. They have also been used as masters for surgical implants or prostheses.

Through ongoing research and a strong focus on innovation supported by the European Union, the applications of the technology continued to evolve and diversify and are today accessible to the medical, automotive, design and consumer market segments. The company is now a technological leader in 3D printing, employing almost 900, boosting European industry and creating jobs.

Michael Jennings, European Commission spokesman responsible for research, innovation and science, said: "The cultural and creative industries now benefiting from this technology account for 3.3 per cent of Europe's economy and employ 6.7 million people. So we now have a successful manufacturing process developed in Europe supporting one of our key export industries."

In 2014 the EU will launch a new, seven-year research and innovation funding programme called Horizon 2020.

Since 2007 the EU has already invested nearly €50 billion in research and innovation projects to support Europe's economic competitiveness and extend the frontiers of human knowledge.