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### Erin Cho: Hong Kong Is Uniquely Positioned to Bring Change in Fashion Supply Chain

The dean of the School of Fashion and Textiles at Hong Kong Polytechnic University believes technical innovations from the academy offer solid actions around sustainable practices.

By **TIANWEI ZHANG**  
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The Materials synthesis laboratory at the School of Fashion and Textiles at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University. COURTESY OF THE SCHOOL OF FASHION AND TEXTILES AT THE HONG KONG POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY



Erin Cho, dean of the School of Fashion and Textiles at **Hong Kong** Polytechnic University, believes **Hong Kong** is in a unique position to bring positive change to the fashion supply chain.

A South Korean transplant via New York, where she worked as the dean of the School for Undergraduate Studies at The New School, Cho sees huge potential in the technological advancements that researchers at Hong Kong Polytechnic University have developed hand in hand with real-life demands from Chinese factories.

“The fashion program here is huge. When I was at Parsons [at The New School], it was just the design. Here, I have a huge operation covering materials, production, fiber science, textiles, manufacturing, supply chain, logistics, retailing, digital space, pricing, marketing, as well as design,” she said.

In the eyes of Cho, sustainable practices are one area the university can contribute to the most.

“The United States and Europe gave up fiber science and supply chain a long time ago; they moved on to something more sexy. That creates a situation that when they talk about **sustainability**, it’s just talk.

“But here, we can make things different with innovations in sustainable fibers, sustainable materials and wearable technology to reduce waste in the manufacturing process. Just look around your apartment. It is not just garments. Carpet, cushions, curtains and all the things that go inside your building are made of fiber, which is one of the biggest pollutants damaging the planet,” she added.

Upcycling textile waste into functional materials has been a key focus at the School of Fashion and Textiles. Cho said this research, which was led by Prof. Shou Dahua, has resulted in the development of materials that are not only highly durable and lightweight but also exhibit flame-resistant properties.

Shou also has made significant contributions in the field of fiber science and materials engineering with the development of the world’s first sweatable textile fabric — “Sweatextile” — which enables fast, one-way liquid flow through spatially

distributed channels that act like sweating glands while repelling external liquid contaminants.



Erin Cho, dean of the School of Fashion and Textiles at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University COURTESY OF THE SCHOOL OF FASHION AND TEXTILES AT THE HONG KONG POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY

Working with Uniqlo, the School of Fashion and Textiles has also launched two surveys investigating consumer awareness around sustainable fashion.

With innovations like these, together with China's significant manufacturing capability, Cho thinks it will take decades for fashion academics in Europe or North America to catch up.

And by further leveraging the school's innovations, Cho said she can help "elevate Hong Kong as the place where all these amazing innovations happen with **sustainability**, making tangible changes and, through that, contribute to society in a meaningful way."

With more than 65 years of history at The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, the School of Fashion and Textiles was established as an independent school in 2022. With a team of 50 faculty members, it serves both the local and regional industries.

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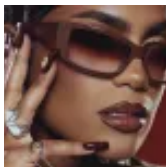
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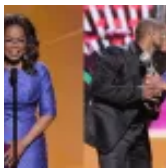
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