THE LOOM

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THE LOOM

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IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE LOOM

In the darkness of a tiny mill on the banks of the Pele River in 1927, the beginning of everything was woven into the weft of a loom. On closer inspection, beyond its unstoppable noise, the loom proved to be the unexpected builder of worlds, stories and chimeras.

As a symbol of cosmic creation, ancient mythology saw the loom as the strange and wondrous structure where fate was woven. Here and there, they saw a fully realised future waiting for them from the perpetual beat of the loom. From the adventure of the thread on, the loom subtly emerges, as in a night sky, the constellation of potential tomorrows, hypothetical images and prophecies of the creator: the fabric.

The loom is seen, in this perspective, as the primary vehicle for the construction of cultures and identities. Naming a magazine “The Loom” therefore means assuming these heterodox features. It is not just a Riopele magazine, but a tool for a constructive dialogue between industry and fashion, consumption and lifestyles.

On the eve of its 95th anniversary, Riopele feels more motivated than ever to continue imagining the future and trying to design it.

Immersed in the complexity of the present time, let yourself be inspired and enjoy the articles of our Loom.

José Alexandre Oliveira

THE MOST COMPLETE FASHION CLUSTER IN EUROPE

More than 10,000 companies, employing over 150,000 people, located in northern Portugal, 50-km away from the city of Porto, make Portugal's fashion cluster a force to be reckoned with in Europe.

Every year, Portugal's exports amount to over 7 billion, regarding textiles and clothing, shoes and jewellery. "Portugal has the largest textile cluster in Europe," says Mário Jorge Machado, chairman of the ATP (Portuguese Textile and Clothing Association). "We are talking about an industry that has become one of the main exporters on a nationwide level," explained Machado, in a cluster that extends over municipalities such as Fafe, Guimarães, Barcelos, Santo Tirso, Trofa and Porto.

"We have managed to overcome several challenges to our competitiveness and came out more resilient, a trait that is so intrinsic to the DNA of national fashion", states César Araújo. According to the chairman of ANIVEC (National Association of Clothing and Apparel Industry), "the textile and clothing ecosystem in Portugal is unique: we are the epitome of local sourcing, from spinning to the distribution of the finished garment. When a brand comes to Portugal - he continued - we find solutions for all types of products, a wide range of raw materials, cutting-edge finishes and unique expertise in terms of quality, materials and the finished product".

César Araújo recalls, "alongside the solutions delivered by the national supply chain and the seal of quality recognised worldwide that it represents, there is a growing capacity regarding our infrastructure and technology, as well as investments in more sustainable solutions that allow our industries to be at the forefront of the market".

Furthermore, the chairman of ANIVEC believes that "Portugal no longer plays a secondary role, but plays a leading role in the evolution of the textile and clothing industry in Europe". In addition, " companies are investing heavily in its promotion as vehicles for the country's socio-economic development, with an impact on issues as fundamental as work ethics, the dignity of workers and the strong contribution to the development of certain regions of the country, levelling up the gap for less privileged generations, especially regarding gender equality, and thus paving the way for certain minorities, bringing about unique opportunities and dynamics".

Shoes are an example

Consisting of 1,500 companies, responsible for 40,000 thousand jobs, the footwear sector is also an example. “We export over 70 million pairs of shoes to 170 countries on five continents yearly”, says Luís Onofre. For the Chairman of APICCAPS (Portuguese Footwear, Components, Leather Goods Manufacturers’ Association), “the accumulated know-how over generations associated with large investments in the technological area, make Portugal a reference player at an international level. We produce excellent footwear, at a fair price”, he admits.

Over the next three years, the Portuguese footwear sector will invest 140 million euros. “We want to make Portuguese industry a leading name in the development of sustainable solutions at the international level”, stresses the chairman of APICCAPS, Luís Onofre.

Portuguese jewellery crossing oceans

“Our jewellery is the result of a centuries-old heritage of generations dedicated to the art of jewellery making and attention to detail”, reveals Fátima Santos. The Head Secretary of AORP (Portuguese Jewellery and Watchmaking Association) reminds that “Portuguese brands bring together the expertise and new contemporary design concepts, closer to new consumer and fashion standards - a crossroads between past and present in which the future lies. Technique as well as artistry is what makes it so unique”.

The sector is based in an “industry, which is oriented towards production for third parties, is now known for its quality, flexibility and reactivity”, combining “technology with innovation, bringing a very Portuguese character that makes us competitive at an international level: our responsiveness, our commitment to deadlines and our flexibility to adapt to smaller-scale and more exclusive productions, which is what international brands are currently looking for”. As for brands, “we have a new generation of designers and entrepreneurs who are inspired by our heritage and bring a new contemporary vision of the product, business and communication, opening up new avenues and new audiences on a global scale”.

TEXTILES AND CLOTHING "MADE IN PORTUGAL" HAVE THEIR BEST YEAR EVER

PHOTOGRAPHY MIGUEL FLOR

After two years of frustration due to the pandemic, the Portuguese textile and clothing sector reached an all-time high in international markets in 2021. In 2021, exports amounted to €5.4 billion, a figure that was 4% higher than in 2019.

Exports of knitwear and home textiles were crucial for this result. Knitwear exported €2.336 billion, up €193 million on 2019, equivalent to +9%. Home textiles exported €763 million, up €112 million on 2019, a growth of 17%. Fabric clothing has not yet recovered from the effects of the pandemic, exporting €796 million.

France strengthened its position as the second most important destination, having recorded the most significant increase in absolute terms, with a rise of €119 million (equivalent to +18%), now representing a 15% share of total textiles and clothing exports.

The United States was the fastest-growing non-EU destination, with an increase of €107 million (+31.5%), now accounting for 8% of total exports in the sector.

Spain, which remains as the top-scoring destination, is the country that has suffered the most significant drop: minus €220 million, or -14%. In 2019, it represented 31% of the total. In 2021, it represented 25%.

The sector's trade balance in 2021 showed a balance of €1.168 billion, with a coverage rate of 127%.

FROM FACTORY TO CATWALK

There is a lot of talent in Portuguese fashion — promising young people ready to venture into the universe of opportunities and who therefore deserve Riopele's support.

David Catalan

Hugo Costa

Pedro Pedro

PHOTOGRAPHY PORTUGAL FASHION

David Catalan

What is your favourite piece in this new collection (which incorporates Riopele fabrics)?

My favourite piece is the main suit with which I opened the fashion show. It's a classic suit, with sporting details and a summer lining. The classic grey stripes of the Riopele fabric is a perfect match for the silvery shirt.

What distinguishes Riopele fabrics in your opinion?

They're very well made. In the final piece, you can see the quality. They stand out for the body and character of the materials. From the shirt making through to the frosted wools, they are always a good choice for tailoring and more casual wear.

Could Portugal be a leading name in the field of sustainability?

For some years now, Portugal has been a reference for sustainability in using the most innovative fibres, such as recycled fibres made from marine residues, recycled polyesters and recycled fabrics, and also deadstock.

Hugo Costa

What is your favourite piece in this new collection (which incorporates Riopele fabrics)?

The trucker jacket. The colour, volume and detail! It was the one that captivated me the most.

What distinguishes Riopele fabrics in your opinion?

I always look for very specific references in Riopele fabrics. I like thicker fabrics, such as Dup, which, in addition to excellent quality and comfort, give the pieces volume and structures, helping us build a brand identity. Classic tartans are as well strongly valid options.

Could Portugal be a leading name in the field of sustainability?

We have discussed this issue many times. I believe so, if we adapt ourselves to producing small quantities and not putting production volume above all else. Flexibility creates added value, and sustainability requires flexible companies and, in that way, the added value is clear. But, it's not enough to evolve in the materials, it's also necessary to adapt the process, from prototype development (with the introduction of 3D systems that reduce waste in the sample) to logistics and the use of green fuel.

PHOTOGRAPHY PORTUGAL FASHION

PHOTOGRAPHY PORTUGAL FASHION

Pedro Pedro

What is your favourite piece in this new collection (which incorporates Riopele fabrics)?

A neon green man's suit.

What distinguishes Riopele fabrics in your opinion?

The cutting-edge finishes and the mix of new fibres materials. The polished and neat appearance of the fabrics that gives them quality is the current performance and the careful selection of colours.

Could Portugal be a leading name in the field of sustainability?

Yes, without a doubt. I think that Riopele's R&D has exciting and suitable proposals to meet the growing demand.

THE DNA OF PORTUGUESE FASHION:

FASHION AND TEXTILE MUSEUM AT WORLD OF WINE

Overlooking Oporto, right in the historical centre of Vila Nova de Gaia, the new Fashion and Textile museum has already opened its doors, with the support of Riopele. The new space presents "Fashion & Design", a collection that will "sew" an area of about two thousand square meters, organised on two floors.

On the first floor, it is possible to find an insight into the textile industry in Portugal, where visitors can learn about the importance of that sector in the development of the Northern region of Portugal, as well as in the national economy. There, visitors will be able to appreciate iconic pieces of Portuguese designers, from the 80s of the last century to the present day. There is a space dedicated to Portuguese pioneer designers in current fashion, where visitors can see works by Eduarda Abbondanza and Mário Matos Ribeiro, Ana Salazar, José António Tenente, João Tomé, Francisco Pontes and Manuela Gonçalves.

Then there is a room dedicated to Portuguese fashion designers, both nationally and internationally acclaimed, where visitors can appreciate the work of designers such as Miguel Vieira, Luís Buchinho, Nuno Baltazar, Fátima Lopes, Maria Gambina, Filipe Faísca, Luís Carvalho, Anabela Baldaque, Diogo Miranda, Hugo Costa, Alexandra Moura, Ricardo Preto and Carlos Gil, among many others.

Riopele, one of the oldest Portuguese companies in the fashion area, is also highlighted in the new museum, with various materials and equipment, with emphasis on one of the first looms of the company.

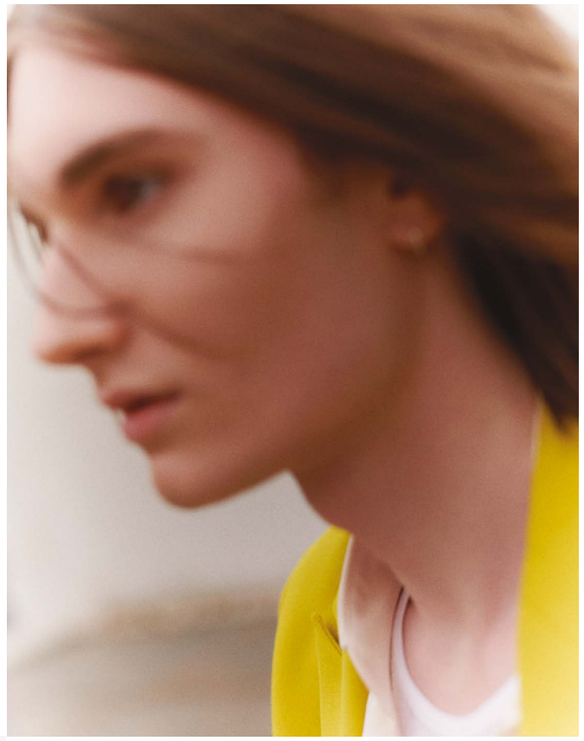
Sustainability and recycling in the world of fashion and textiles were also a subject of reflection in that new museum, because it is necessary to "train new generations to be careful when buying items", and in the way they "consume fashion". The Fashion and Textile Museum, as well as the other museums of the World of Wine, are establishing protocols with schools in the region with the purpose of "promoting knowledge" and "bringing visitors to the museums".

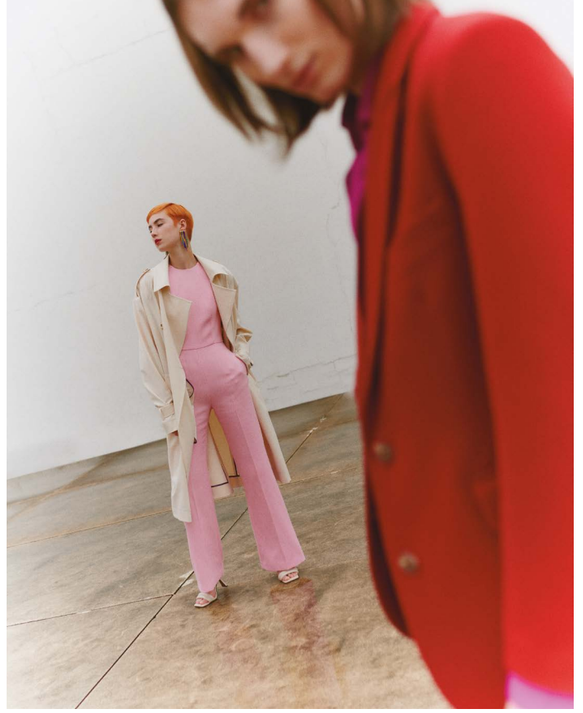
The Fashion and Textile Museum is included in a larger itinerary, composed of five other museums - Wine Museum, Museum about the Oporto Region, Cork Museum, Chocolate Museum and the Museum about the ritual of drinking.

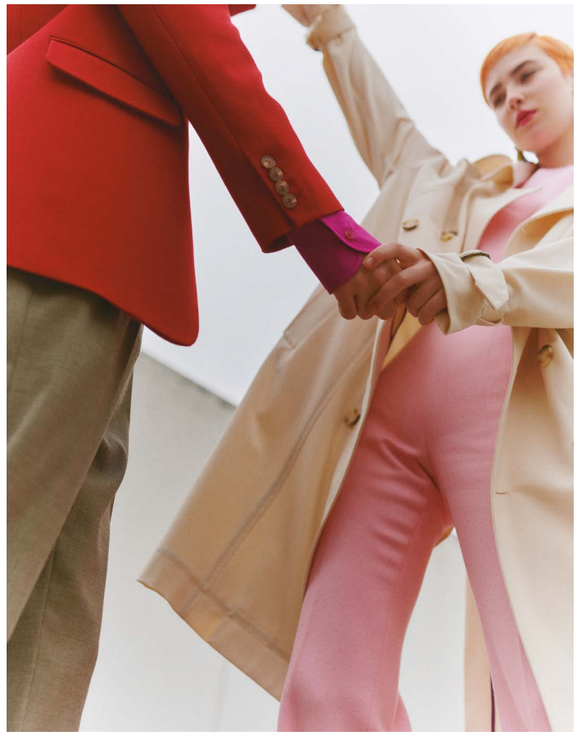
NEW NOW

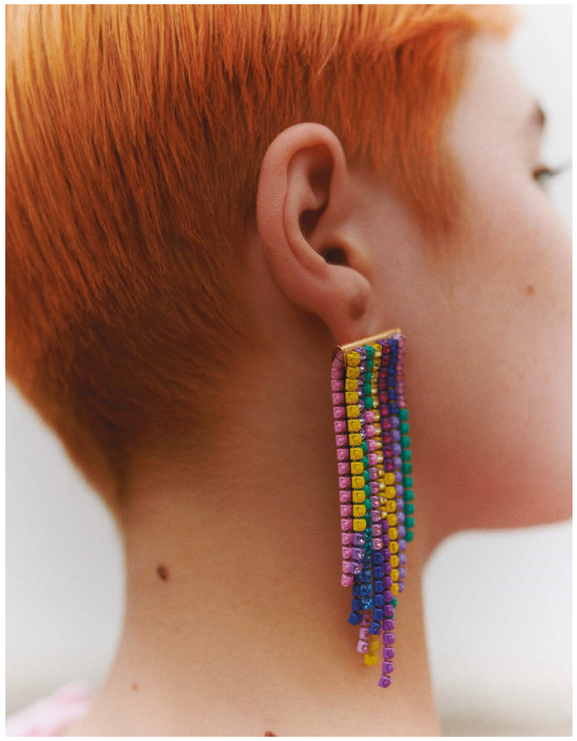
NEXT

2022
PHOTOGRAPHER PEDRO AFONSO **STYLIST** FERNANDO BASTOS PEREIRA
ASSISTED BY NELSON LIMA **HAIR** MIGUEL MACHADO **MAKE UP** ANA RAQUEL RIBEIRO
MODELS DIANA PERDIGÃO - L' AGENCE / KACPER - CENTRAL MODELS





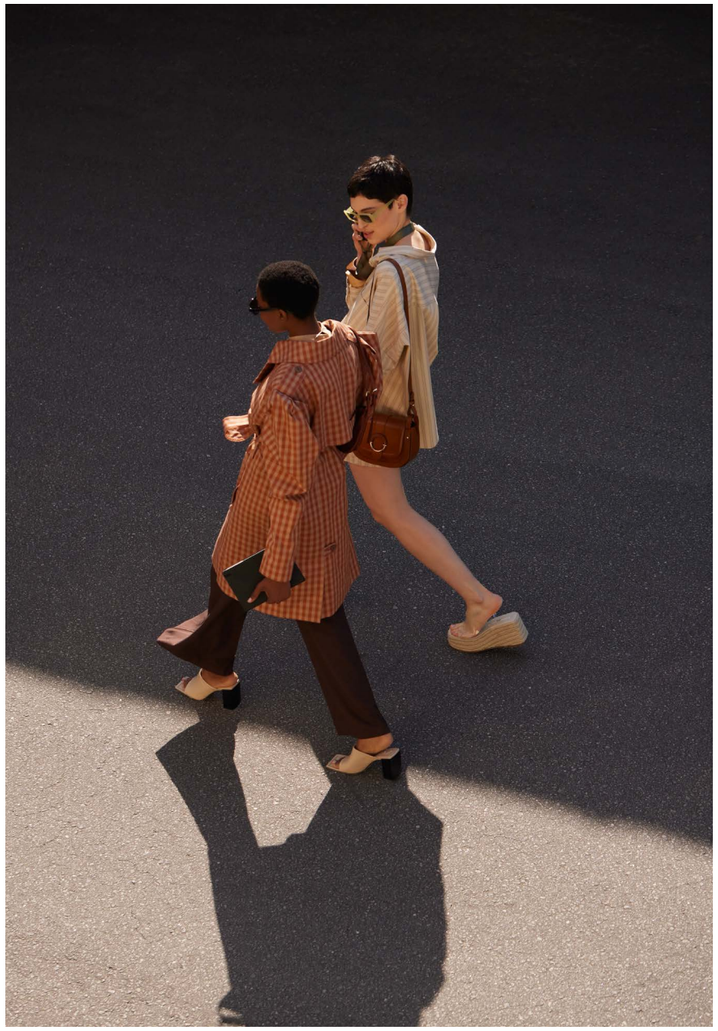


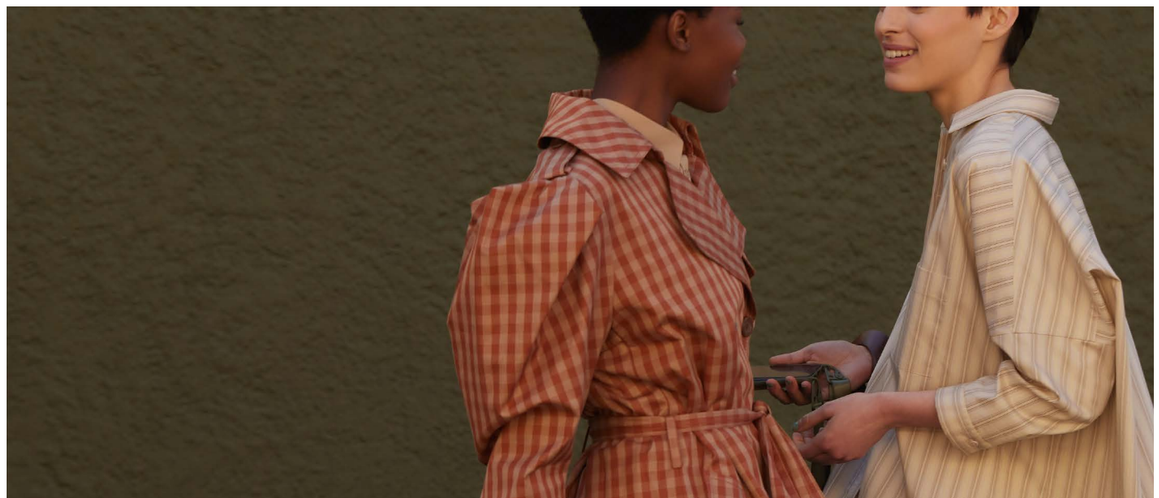


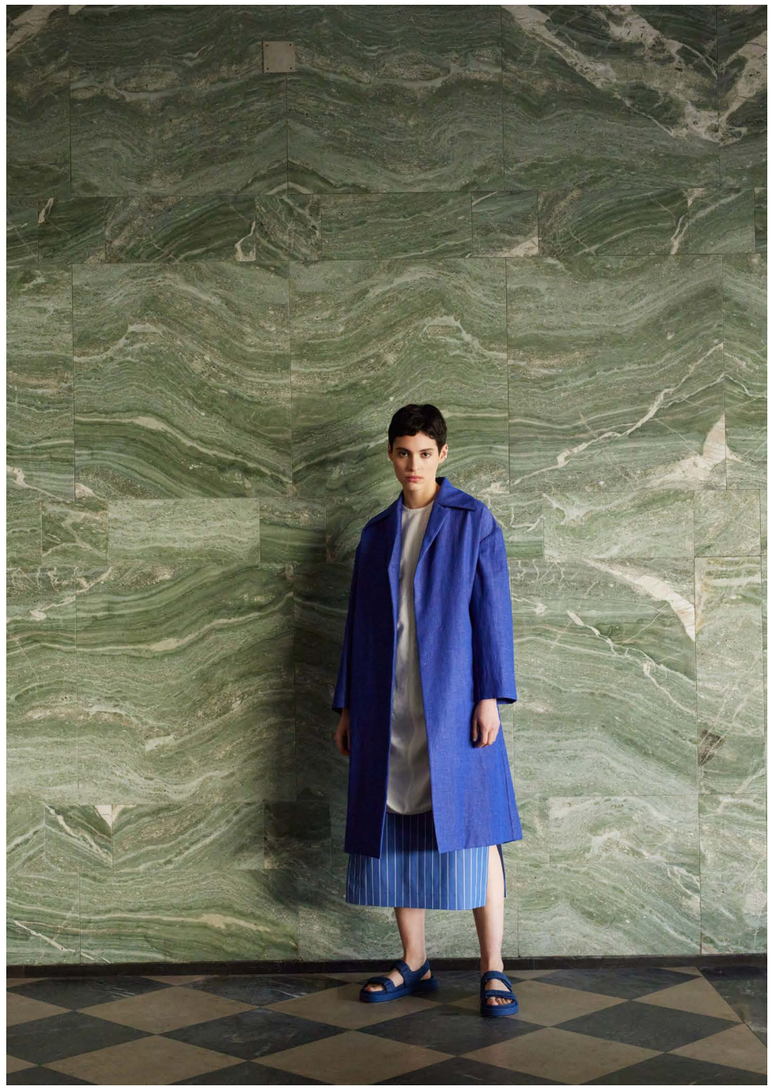
FIRST TIME AT

RIOPELE

SNOWBERRY 2021
PHOTOGRAPHER JOEL BESSA **STYLIST** CLAUDIA BARROS
MODELS FELMANHA CORREIA L' AGENCE / ISABELLA - CENTRAL MODELS







RIOPELE:

FACTS & NUMBERS

One of Europe's leading textile companies. After a two-year pandemic, which had a strong impact on the international fashion industry, find out how Riopele evolved:

1927

The year Riopele was founded. In 1927, Riopele was established in Vila Nova de Famalicão, a town in northern Portugal. With a long-standing history among textile companies in Portugal, it is specialised in the design and production of fabrics for the fashion and clothing industry. Its investment in the mobility sector is more recent, but is already beginning to bear fruit.

95%

Riopele exports over 95% of its production worldwide. Consolidating its position in the most demanding European markets and increasing its presence in high-potential markets such as the US, Canada, and Japan is a goal for the next decade. The company currently has over 750 active customers in over 30 markets.

1083

This is the number of Riopele employees. An increase of over 20% in the last decade. At the end of 2021, 63% of our employees were men, 37% women. The average age of our employees is 41, and women hold 42% of leadership positions. On average, Riopele staff remain with the company for 15 years. Currently, 237 employees (22% of the total) are under the age of 30.

120

R&D is a critical area for Riopele. Hence, this is one of our most relevant departments. Currently, 120 professionals invest in the development of innovative solutions for the most demanding customers on an international scale.

80%

The company has a long-standing commitment to sustainability. Investments are recurrent. Our goals are ambitious: 80% of Riopele products will be sustainably based by 2025. Local production, energy efficiency, water consumption reduction and fighting waste are not a fad. At Riopele, we usually say, "sustainability is not a trend, but our way of living from day one".

35 MILLION

Riopele aims to be one of the leading European companies in the textile sector, especially in the field of sustainability. Thus, it has already invested EUR 35 million since 2012, not only in cutting-edge technology, but also in the automation and efficiency of new equipment. Some examples are the creation of a B2B digital platform, a monitoring system for the production areas, an AI machine vision system in the weaving area, and optimising processes and strengthening internal skills. Investments in sustainability (energy efficiency, water saving, fighting waste, etc.) are staples.

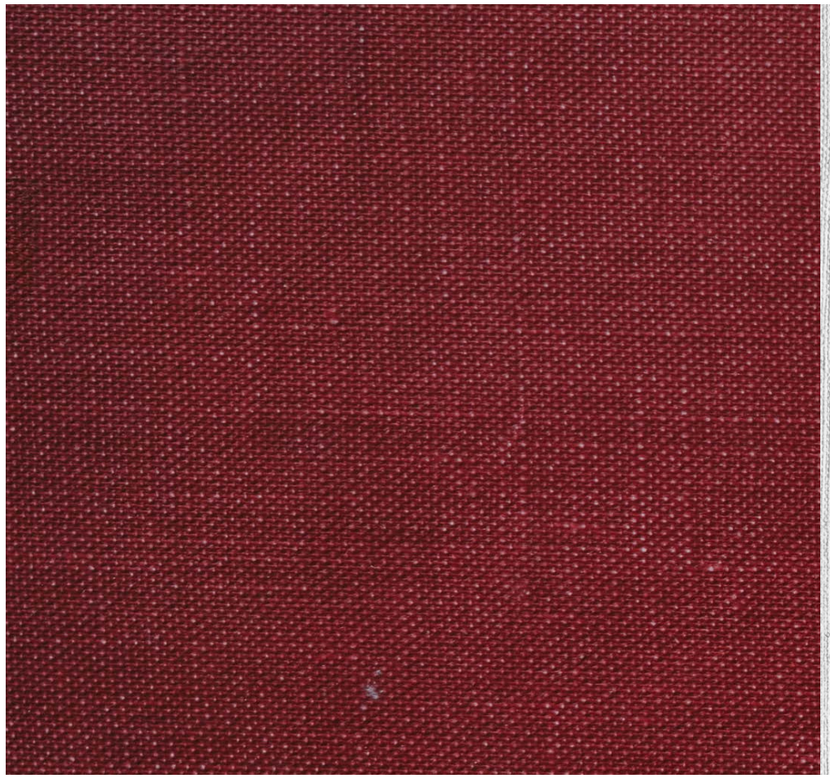
HELLO QATAR!

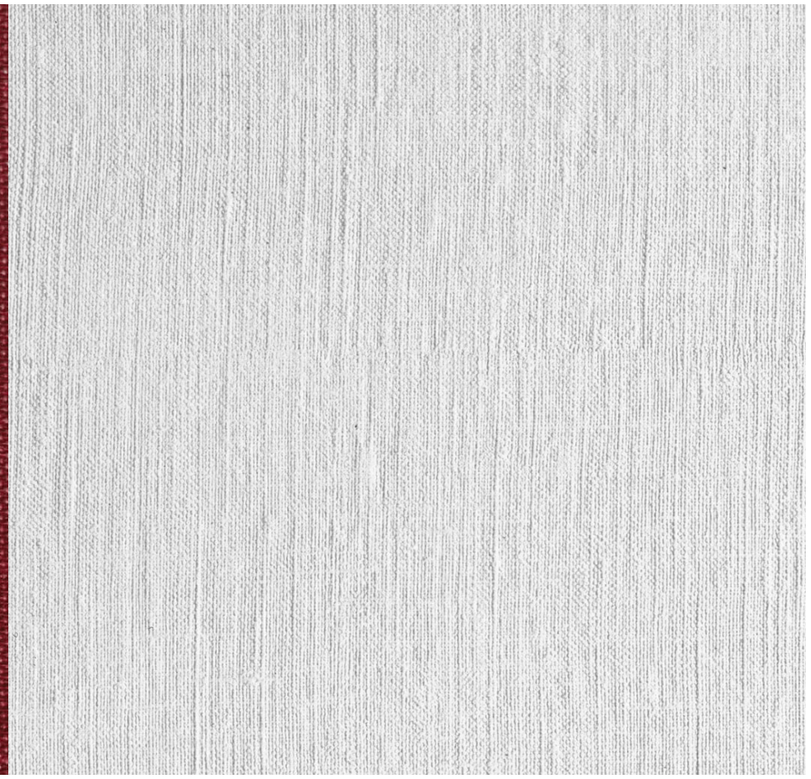
Qatar, the small country situated in the Arabian peninsula, with approximately three million inhabitants, is Riopele's latest destination market. Welcome to the family Qatar.

For a company that exports over 95% of its production, conquering new markets is always critical. In Riopele's case, thirty-six countries make up the company's day-to-day operations on all continents.

"Based on a partnership relationship with the customer and a focus on creating innovative products, our R&D department creates and develops diversified fabric collections for customers from practically all over the world," assures José Alexandre Oliveira, Riopele Chairman. The company currently has more than 750 active customers.

Although the European market is particularly relevant for a company based precisely on the Old Continent, Riopele has strengthened its commitment to foreign markets, particularly those outside the European Union. The opening of an office and showroom in the United States is a recent example of this continued effort. Saudi Arabia, Argentina, Australia, Canada and China are other markets where Riopele has reinforced its presence.





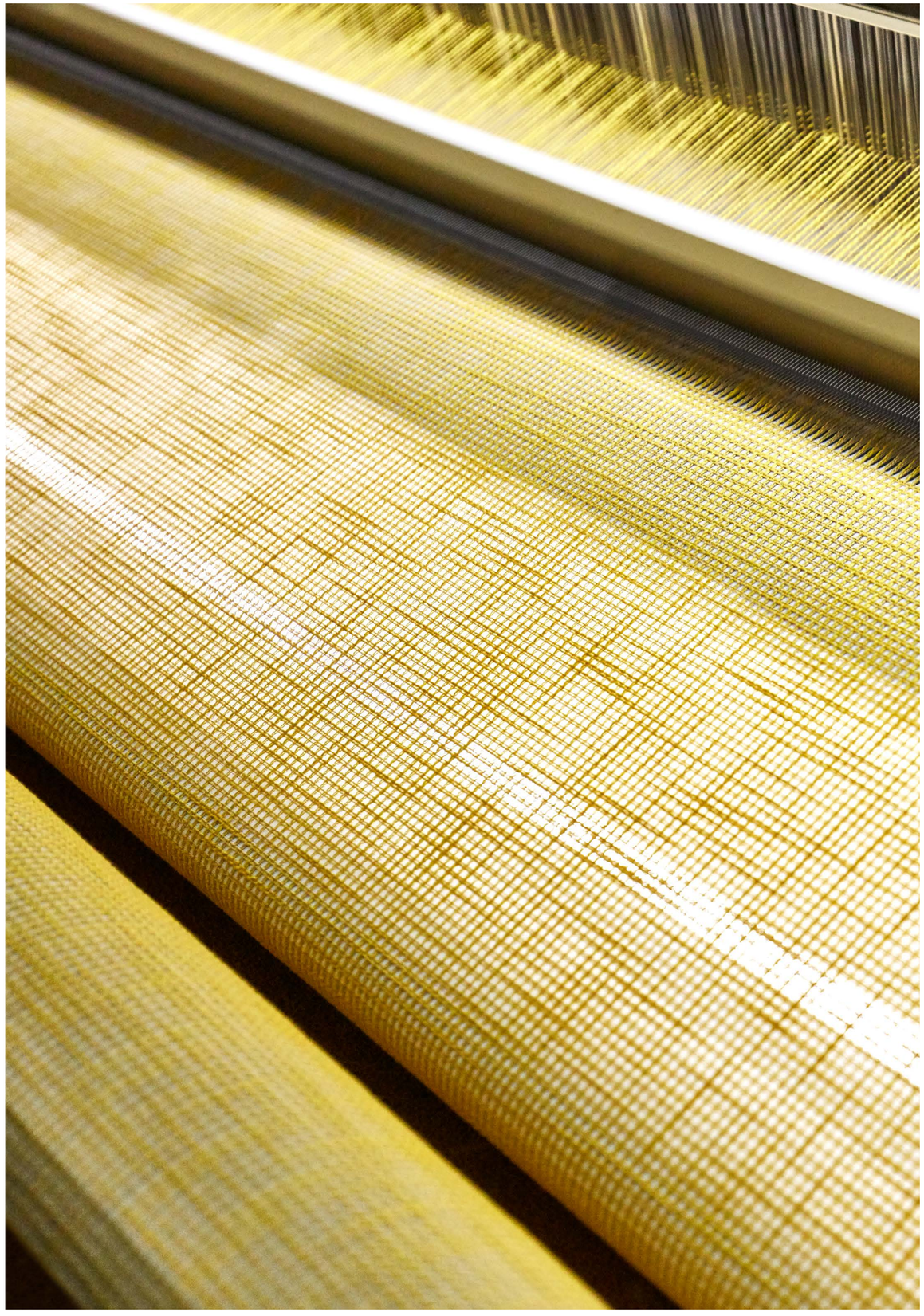
RIOPELE INVESTS 35 MILLION TO BE THE MOST MODERN FACTORY IN EUROPE

Riopele's 35 million investment plan is in its final stages, in particular in the areas of digital transition and sustainability. The aim is to transform the company, based in Vila Nova de Famalicão, into the most modern factory in Europe.

"We have positioned ourselves to become the main reference in Europe. We're investing in cutting-edge technology like the automation and efficiency of new equipment, creating a digital platform, monitoring the factory floor, and implementing an artificial vision system in the weaving area. We're also optimising processes and strengthening internal skills," argues José Alexandre Oliveira, Chairman of Riopele.

In the last decade, the number of company employees has increased 23% to 1083 (by the end of 2021). In the technical, research and development, sales, information systems and sustainability areas, Riopele already employs over 150 employees, around 18% of the company's total (growth of over 20% since 2010). The number of professionals with university degrees has risen to 118 - an increase of 46% since 2010 - representing more than 10% of the staff.

Founded in 1927, Riopele is one of the oldest Portuguese textile companies and an international reference in creating and producing fabrics for fashion and clothing collections for some of the most prestigious international brands. After eight years of growth, Riopele is investing in other complementary business areas such as the automotive industry and strengthening its position in the professional and military segments.



NEW APP FOR PROFESSIONAL CUSTOMERS

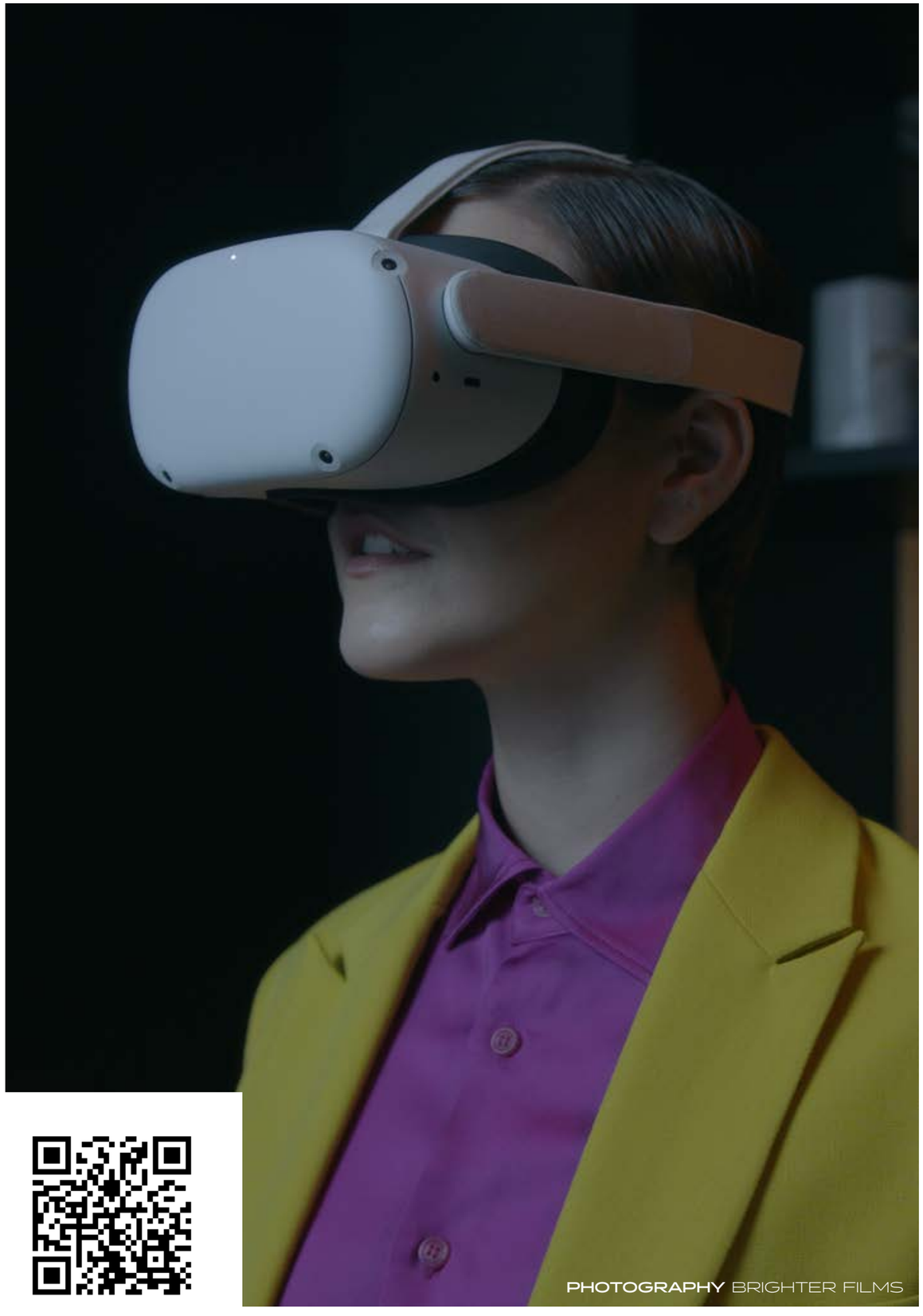
Although it exports 95% of its production to over 30 countries, Riopele is committed to strengthening “a close and regular relationship”, as Bernardino Carneiro put it, “with its current portfolio of over 750 customers”.

For the company’s Board Member, “the development of an e-commerce platform exclusively directed at professionals in the sector was perceived as a priority, and it also allows, to reinforce the approach to new clients”. “It enables our ambitious goal of positioning ourselves directly and permanently, in our customers’ sourcing platform, thus boosting sales growth”, highlighted Bernardino Carneiro.

The dissemination of the Covid-19 coronavirus forced Riopele to rethink the company’s traditional commercial strategy, speeding up the development of digital tools to “ensure proximity and permanent contact with the client, improve service levels and simplify interim processes”.

The creation of this e-commerce platform for professionals is part of the “Riopele Digital” programme, that started in 2016, within the scope of the Digitalisation/Industry 4.0 drivers. Namely, at “investing in transformative applications that improve productivity, ensure speed, agility, and reliability to handle processes, lowering administrative costs and freeing resources for critical business development activities”.

This communication tool, “highly intuitive and which allows all users to navigate with ease”, features the presentation of new products with a reinforced cadence and the possibility to analyse, in detail, all the fabrics developed by Riopele, as well as technical features. “It is a source of detailed information, in real-time, that allows us, if necessary, optimise the relationship with our clients and react attentively to market requests”, he concluded.



PHOTOGRAPHY BRIGHTER FILMS

SUSTAINABILITY:

AMBITIOUS TARGET

In its third generation, Riopele, a family company, has just celebrated its 95th anniversary and set an ambitious target for sustainability: 80% of its products will have a sustainable origin by 2025.

Based in Vila Nova de Famalicão in the North of Portugal, the company more than 750 active customers in more than 30 countries. According to José Alexandre Oliveira, "sustainability is not a trend at Riopele", but rather "the way we have been in business since our foundation in 1927". For this reason, over the last decade, the company has reinforced its investments in critical areas such as energy efficiency, recycling and water reuse.

Having posted global positive results in the last decade, the company is concluding an investment plan of around 35 million euros, aiming to make "Riopele the Factory of Europe". The company has been creating the conditions to definitively affirm itself as a reference in the sector, reinforcing internal competencies. The number of employees has grown 23% in the last decade. Another highlight is the investment in young people: the average age is now 41.

"We are acting in various areas simultaneously. We always look at the issue of sustainability from a comprehensive perspective", emphasises the Chairman of the Company's Board of Directors. From a 13% reduction in CO2 emissions or a 16% reduction in energy consumption to water recycling - 55% at this time - "the commitment is integral".

"Our greatest commitment - continued José Alexandre Oliveira - is to the community. We are proudly a Portuguese company, which supports local production, with a network of stable suppliers and all together, we comply with European standards, whether in terms of the environment or social responsibility." "It would be good if our competitors obeyed the same standards and complied with the same rules," he concluded.

Additionally, by 2027, Riopele believes it can meet the conditions so that "all the electrical energy used in the production process comes from renewable sources".

Regarding raw materials, Riopele has been increasing its focus on producing fabrics made from recycled polyester, "a sustainable raw material, which ensures huge water savings and doesn't generate waste". It also maintains excellent fabric performance, "preserving the colour and guaranteeing exceptional durability".

TIMELESS

HERITAGE

IN MOOD PRODUCTIONS 2022
PHOTOGRAPHER CARLOS TEIXEIRA ASSISTED BY TIAGO MULHMANN AND LUCAS GÓMEZ
STYLIST TÂNIA DIOESPIRRO ASSISTED BY SARA MIRO **HAIR & MAKE UP** XANA LOPES
MODEL ALEX SZWALEK - JUST MODELS

ALL YEAR--ROUND

It makes no sense to launch only two collections a year when we supply customers with quite different characteristics all over the world." The statement is from José Alexandre Oliveira, Riopele Chairman, summarising Riopele's strategic option of developing new products to address a growing number of markets.

In addition to the two traditional collections during the year, Spring/Summer and Autumn/Winter, Riopele develops different capsule and trans-seasonal collections over the year. "We have endeavoured to meet market demands as well as the requirements of our customers," emphasises Riopele Chairman.

In the past decade, Riopele has addressed particularly distinct market segments to meet new and emerging trends in the fashion industry. To this end, the company leverages the fact that it vertically integrates the R&D, spinning, dyeing, twisting, weaving and finishing depts., offering a vertical textile production service.

By adopting a differential and sustainable product development strategy, Riopele launches fabric collections for any season of the year, focusing on quality and durability. This enables the company to present the customer with novelties at different times, reducing redundant textile production according to demand. Currently, Riopele has over 750 active customers, operating on different continents and seasons, exporting 95% of its production. For José Alexandre Oliveira, "given our huge international customer base, the seasonal approach is no longer a priority, which also means transcending the traditional fashion consumption cycle".

RIOPELE:

FEMALE LEADERSHIP

What do Riopele's R&D, Human Resources, and Sustainability departments have in common? All of them are led by women, without exception. The female leadership is just one of the curiosities of a company that has recorded a 23% growth in the total number of staff members over the last decade, meaning the hiring of 193 employees to a staff consisting of 1083 professionals.

PHOTOGRAPHY MIGUEL FLOR

Currently, the average age of employees is 41 years old. Forty-two percent (42%) of women hold leadership positions in a company where most employees are men (63%).

Riopele is looking for increasingly skilled staff in the market. The number of employees with a bachelor's degree is 94 (18% increase in the last decade), and 24 of them hold a Master's degree. The technical departments of R&D, Sustainability, IT Systems, Sales, Financial, Human Resources, Quality, Health and Safety, for example, are responsible (181 in total) for around 19% of the company's employees.

The importance of the "Horizontes Programme"

Established in 1927, Riopele is one of the most resilient Portuguese textile companies and a leading company in the international scenario regarding the creation and production of fabrics for fashion and clothing collections. It vertically integrates R&D, Spinning, Dyeing, Twisting, Weaving and Finishing, and Quality Control by offering a vertical textile production service capable of meeting the current fast pace of the fashion industry. To ensure the continuous training of employees, the company created the Horizontes Programme in 2012.

"We want to value the role of each person, regardless of their function, for the final result of the company. This naturally goes through the contribution of each worker in the development of fabrics of excellence", Bernardino Carneiro stressed.

According to Riopele's Board Director, through the "Horizontes Programme", "we provide all employees with the opportunity to participate in external training sessions, conferences and other initiatives, as well as internal training sessions". We highlight themed workshops such as the "Product, Process and Control", which creates the conditions "to foster individual interests and skills of each worker and empower them with a global knowledge of the business, by boosting teamwork and the company's results", and has already involved more than 1,000 company employees.

RLIVE

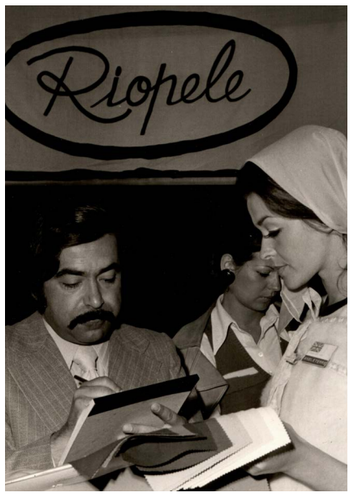
This year, Riopele celebrates its 95th anniversary. Born from a mix of a dream, audacity and entrepreneurial vision, the stories written throughout these decades are lessons of success, significant risks and facing up to challenges.

Miss Europe 1972 contestants “walk the runway” at Riopele

In June 1972, Riopele received a visit from the Miss Europe 1972 contestants. The 35th beauty pageant was held at the Casino Estoril, Portugal, with a programme that included visits to several emblematic regions of the country.

The 22 contestants travelled to the north of Portugal, where they stayed for four days. During the trip, they visited Riopele on a tour where they discovered the latest trends, fabrics, and all the production process phases. The Illustrated London News wrote at the time: “Riopele, one of the most modern textile companies in Europe.”

Back in Lisbon for the fashion show, the German contestant Monika Sarp was crowned Miss Europe 1972. In addition to the prize of 54 contos (270 euros), she won a month’s holiday in Portugal for two people.



Cycling at Riopele

In search of a sport that could make a positive and far-reaching impact on its brands, Riopele decided to form a cycling team with Porto Football Club in 1967.

During the four years of its existence, the Porto-Riopele--Texlene team won the main races on the cycling calendar, achieving its greatest success with a collective victory in the 1969 Volta a Portugal tour.

The success of the Porto-Riopele-Texlene team in the various cycling events led to the success of the Texlene brand, proving in practice its ability to be a “tireless fabric”, withstanding the most difficult stages.

In the field of cycling, Riopele’s commitment is also reflected in the organisation of the Riopele Cycling Grand Prix, which was held four times between 1969 and 1972, making it a vehicle for publicity and social responsibility. The first Grand Prix was won by the late Joaquim Agostinho, considered the greatest Portuguese cyclist of all time.

Riopele Workers refuse to go on strike

By the mid-1970s, the textile industry had established itself as an essential activity of the Portuguese economy. When the political situation changed with the revolution of 25 April 1974, Riopele directly employed almost 4,000 workers, presenting itself as one of the most progressive factories in the industrial sector.

Labour disputes and union unrest that engulfed so many Portuguese companies during the “ongoing revolutionary process” were seldom felt at Riopele. The vast majority of workers supported the Board of Directors in times of conflict.

Riopele made the headlines because the vast majority of workers refused to accept the idea of a strike and demonstrations in support of the company’s management were massive, with most workers carrying placards with slogans such as “no strike”, “we don’t want or need a strike” or “on with production and quality”.

Grupo Desportivo Riopele: The «Tiki Taka» of playing football on a dusty field

Founded on 2 June 1958, by the senior management and a group of Riopele workers, Grupo Desportivo Riopele, a factory club, gained prominence with the participation in the FNAT amateur championships. They wore green and white and were the first Portuguese club to have advertising on their equipment: the Riopele brand.

Registered in the Braga Football Association, the team gradually climbed the ranks, until reaching the first national division in the 1976-1977 season. The 1977-1978 season was a special moment, when the big teams of the Portuguese league passed through the José Dias de Oliveira Stadium, in Pousada de Saramagos, with a team that played football on a dusty field in “Barcelona tiki-taka style”, and where names like Jorge Jesus, Piruta and Vital stood out.

Alongside the club’s success in the main ranks, we cannot forget its social role as a school for players, nurturing youth and junior teams and being traditionally known and unanimously recognised as a club that not only trained athletes, but above all humans for life. Although disbanded in 1984, Grupo Desportivo Riopele remains an icon of Portuguese football.

PORTO,
AN ESSENTIAL GUIDE

PHOTOGRAPHY JOÃO SARAMAGO

Dear reader,
We could make a city guide for Porto, with tips on what to visit and eat or where to sleep. However, we must tell you that one of the best features of this city, along the river or at the seaside, is that it is worth "getting lost" in its streets and alleys, with historical buildings, sidewalks paved with legends and places that take culture to a completely new level! You will end up finding by chance, all the wonders we could mention our city has whilst on your tour.

If you are pressed for time and do not want to "get lost", you can start in Vila Nova de Gaia, which is - literally - the best place to see the Douro river. Cross the Dom Luís I bridge on foot along with one of its walkaways... it all depends on how much you love or fear heights. On the lower walkaway, if the sun comes out and the weather is warm, you can see the famous river boys jumping into the Douro. If you toss them a coin... you will be in for a surprise. On the upper deck, you can feel the its structure shake when the tram crosses the bridge, then you can walk straight into Porto, the Invicta city, which was once a walled city. The adventure really begins on the other side of the river.

Your tour should start at Porto Cathedral. The building, which dates back to the 12th century, is one of the most emblematic buildings of the city. From Porto Cathedral, you can also have a breath-taking view of Vila Nova de Gaia. Just below, you will find the São Bento train station, designed by architect Marques da Silva, whose construction began in 1900, where once was a... convent. On its magnificent walls, you can see 20,000 tiles painted by Jorge Colaço, which depict important scenes of the history of Portugal.

A few yards on, the quintessential Avenida dos Aliados (Aliados Avenue), with Porto's City Hall standing in the background. We can rightfully say that this is the very heart of the city. Walk up the street to the city's highest point, the Clérigos Tower. The Tower has over 350 steps... but the reward is at the end. An amazing panoramic view of the city.

To regain your energy, a trip to Base can make all the difference. Overlooking Clérigos, it is the ideal place to rest and feel the energy of the Invicta city. You should definitely stop at Praça dos Leões (Leões Square) and Edifício da Reitoria (Rectorate Building).

This tour must also include a visit to the most beautiful bookshop in the world. If you need more energy and comfort food... how about a bean cake at Padaria Ribeiro? It does not get more iconic than that.

For a traditional dinner, Café Santiago will be happy to offer you an unforgettable experience with the traditional Francesinha. Shortly afterwards, you can stroll along Rua Santa Catarina and stop at the century-old Café Majestic, which will become an imaginative journey into the last century.

When it comes to sleeping, the Douro River can be a faithful companion. So, why not head to Vila Nova de Gaia and enjoy the Vinha Boutique Hotel, a charming new hotel on the banks of the Douro, offering tranquillity and rest. Because the next day... Porto is still waiting.

Why not start the day with the fresh air that comes from the river? The best part is that you can take a trip on foot or even by boat. Porto's waterfront is a must-see, not only to feel the city vibe but also to discover its traditional shops and iconic restaurants. If you go further up, you can visit the Palácio da Bolsa (Stock Exchange Palace) and its unmissable Pátio das Nações. However, you cannot leave Palácio without visiting the mysterious Salão Árabe (Arab Hall), a real hidden treasure inside the big building.

You can then take the tram to Foz do Douro, where the magic happens again and the river meets the sea, which resembles an actual oil painting, with picturesque fishing boats quietly afloat on the river.

How about returning to Baixa? There is still so much to see and explore... from the former Crystal Palace, with its eye-catching gardens to the awe-inspiring Teatro Nacional São João (São João's National Theatre).

If you fancy lunch, walk along Rua das Flores and stop at number 32. Cantina 32 can take you on a new journey of flavours and delights, which should end with the best chocolate cake you have ever tasted. You can end your tour at one of the 'few secret' viewpoints of the city. However, our advice is to let yourself be mesmerized by the Virtudes garden, right in the heart of the city.

We finish this small guide as we started it. The best thing to do is being charmed by this city because coming back will be your next decision.

The not-so-secret spots

If the above suggestions are not enough to make your day, we have more tips for you. We hope you will appreciate them:

Lello Bookshop

Visiting the most beautiful bookshop in the world is a must-see. The century-old Lello Bookshop will transport you into a parallel universe where books, mystery, and magic are the protagonists. By climbing the curved red staircase (which can sometimes change colour), you will reach the Gemma Room, a sort of golden vault containing some of the most impressive literary works of all time. On the second floor, closer to its wonderful stained-glass, you are even closer to the centuries-old works that fill the bookshop's walls. This is a precious place where time seems to stand still... it will be difficult to return to Rua das Carmelitas and continue your journey. There is still a lot to discover.

Serralves Foundation

If you walk down Avenida da Boavista towards the sea, hold your breath and enter the Serralves Foundation. Whether it is the museum, residence or park. Any of these buildings will transport you to a space where art and mystery perfectly blends with a carefully maintained environment. The Foundation hosts 4,300 works of art in total, including contemporary art produced from the 1960s to present.

Casa da Música

Moving from literature to music seems an unusual step, but you will want to discover another landmark of our city. A space designed specifically for music. Designed by Rem Koolhaals in 2001, Casa da Música was not completed until 2005. Its architectural design has drawn a lot of criticism worldwide, because of its innovative and unusual features. However, it is something we take pride in, at least, for its superb details. A well-kept secret is the tiles room... with a privileged view of the Boavista roundabout, you can learn more about the stories enshrined in white and blue tiles... in what is another symbol of Portuguese tradition.

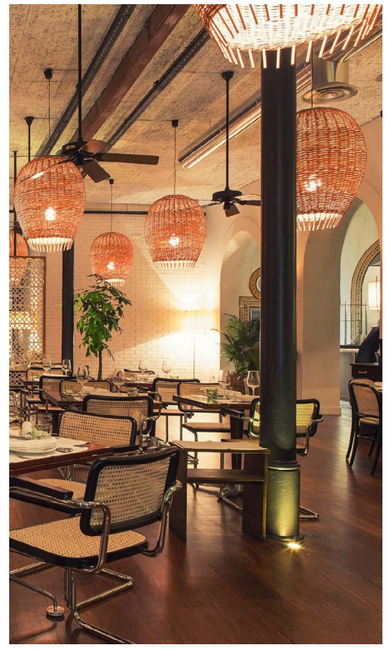
Traditional Cuisine

If the above suggestions are not enough to make your day, we have more tips for you. We hope you will appreciate them:

Adega de São Nicolau

Near the Ribeira do Porto, in a small street, where the “elixir of the gods” is especially served to you, that is, excellent Portuguese food. We are talking about Adega de São Nicolau, a place where the smells of paradise tempt you as soon as you step in.

Flow



If you are actually looking for a fine dining experience, you should head to downtown Porto and stop at Flow. The atmosphere is influenced by the magnificent neo-Arabic building, which has been renovated and retained its arches, balusters, pillars and external tiles, making it an exceptional place where gastronomy takes centre stage.

Casa de Chá da Boa-Nova

If all you want is to enjoy your meal with the sea in the background, Casa de Chá da Boa-Nova is the place to be. Designed by Siza Vieira, this teahouse is a little paradise carved between the rocks. Chef Rui Paula is the master who carefully creates dishes whilst the sea awakens our senses. We promise you that this will be an unforgettable experience and that you will be coming back for more.

Riopele
SINCE 1927