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Talking Fabrics
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Nov. 13, 2006 issue - Here's a bright new idea for textiles: fabric that displays glowing, moving color images and text. Dutch tech firm Philips Research has developed Lumalive fabric, which is embedded with light-emitting diodes powered by a battery pack the size of a deck of cards and weighing 3.5 ounces. The company has sewn them into shirts and jackets that can be laundered; unwashable parts, like the battery pack, detach. The diodes don't show up until they're lit up, says Philips, and then anything is possible: advertising displays on clothes, sports scores on couch cushions, recipes on kitchen curtains, weather reports on hotel drapes. Not to mention the fashion potential.

Philips has yet to reveal pricing, but it's talking to possible commercial distributors of the luminous fabric. Lumalive has been featured in European technology trade shows and was on fashion runways earlier this fall when German designer Anke Loh featured it in her "dressing light" collection. Her models wore black dresses with Lumalive panels on their chests displaying cartoon images. Can a new generation of Christmas sweaters be far behind?

—L.S.

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