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Clothing That Incorporates Light May Illuminate The Fashion Industry

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It's starting to get colder out, which means you might want to break out the light clothing.

No, you didn't read that wrong. It's just a reference to what may be the next big thing in fashion and the next big profit centre for clothes makers - apparel that lights up when you wear it.

It's called Lumalive and it was developed by an electronics firm. Dutch giant Philips created the fabric that contains light emitting diodes as part of a research project last year. But it's only now that they've decided it may have a commercial use.

Enter fashion designer Anke Loh, who believes there's lots of money to be brought to light from the idea. Her "Dressing Light" line of clothing is expected to hit stores in 2007.

"I had the idea of putting different lights into clothing and seeing what kind of moving images and atmosphere I could create," she explains.

The fabric can display text, graphics and even animation.

She showed off clothing featuring an elevated train moving through stations, a changing cartoon cityscape and people laughing. The wearables are powered by a small removable battery pack about the size of a cell phone.

"It's not just a dress, it's not just technology," she ventures. "Together they speak with one another."

But while some fashionistas see the idea as a chance to design new styles other companies see something else - and it seems inevitable: advertising.

The same material can be used to illuminate everything from office furniture to drapes, jackets, even couch cushions. And some firms are waiting to see if the idea catches on before using it to literally put their names up in lights.

"What Philips Research showed last year were research prototypes; this year the jackets and furniture represent versions that are ready to go into commercial production, and include integrated power sources and control electronics," notes the company's Bas Zeper.

And while no prices on all of this have been confirmed, about the only thing left to see now is whether this idea will light up the eyes of consumers and ultimately light-en up their wallets.

Photo courtesy: Philips

