

### How the possum hair came to Germany as yarn

It all started in 2001 on a trip to New Zealand, where Marianne Birkenfeld wanted to reorganize her professional thoughts. For 20 years she ran a health food store in the county town Osterholz-Scharmbeck near Bremen. It was time for a new challenge in her professional life. As she strolled through the shops in Auckland on Queen Street, she came in contact with a piece of wool and possum hair. Possum hair, a yarn component she did not know until then. In her research on possum hair, she noted, that these are Pacific possums that threaten New Zealand's flora and fauna. The animal's population has been contained for decades by the country's environmental protection through controlled hunting. A task that serves the ecological balance of New Zealand. When she got home, she realized that she could not let go of this super light and soft material with its very special New Zealand background. The idea of distributing knitwear under the guiding principles of ecology, sustainability and fair trade was born.

In 2003, she founded the company pos.sei.mo to promote retailing of the still unknown and unique yarn blend of possum hair, merino wool and silk under the name pos.sei.mo New Zealand Knitwear. After more than a decade of importing and supplying retailers, she realized that the New Zealand fashion style does not always meet the taste of German knitwear lovers. What to do ... she asked herself and answered her question: "I have always had ideas in fashion design, why not become a designer and producer myself?" Her son Klaas Birkenfeld and her future daughter-in-law Nelly Peters, who always support the entrepreneur with constructive criticism, were immediately enthusiastic about this idea.

2015 was the year of change. She was looking for a knitting mill and found one in Thuringia at a centuries-old traditional textile industry location. She designed cuts, learned about knitting techniques and selected new colors. Nelly Peters took care of the editorial area and the conception of a new website. pos.sei.mo New Zealand Knitwear went into production as an independent fashion label in 2016 with the slogan "Sourced from New Zealand & Made in Germany". This bold move was rewarded with positive response from retailers. When in 2017 the Sustainable Textile School at the TU Chemnitz awarded the fashion label the "Environmental Innovation Prize", Marianne Birkenfeld realized that she had made the right decision. Second place in the categories innovative yarn, production quality and supply chain transparency inspired her to found a new fashion label. The same company philosophy with another innovative yarn mix - cashmere, possum hair and silk. The summit meeting of three luxury fibers. Thus, resulted the name for the fashion label Summit by pos.sei.mo. This yarn blend surpasses pos.sei.mo New Zealand Knitwear (possum hair, merino wool, silk) in its lightness and softness and, through its finer texture, expands the possibilities in knit design.

In recent years, pos.sei.mo has become more and more a small family business. The son supports the mother with technical questions. The future daughter-in-law, who also poses as model and took care of editorial things while studying, joined the company last year. With creative women's power, the two want to raise awareness of fair fashion and be a role model in the production of textiles. For them, there is only fashion made of materials from and for the environment. In doing so, they contribute to the ecological balance and assume responsibility for social sustainability.