



PVC-FREE SHADECLOTHS

“As explained by McDonough, the question we need to start our design process is: ‘How do we love all the children, of all species, for all time?’ My perception of Cradle to Cradle Certified protocol now, in light of that question, can be likened to this analogy. Throughout the 1960s, buildings burned their electric lights all night, to keep them warm. Today, this seems ludicrous. I believe that in the future, providing products of use

or consumption that are not healthful—and instead negatively impact the environment—will be just as ludicrous.”

– Jan Berman, CEO, MechoSystems

When our MechoShade® and ElectroShade® roller-shade systems originated in the early 1970s, we were facing energy embargoes and an energy crisis. The

building and design industry was in need of products that could reduce a building’s day-to-day operational energy consumption. We were heavily influenced by this need as we developed our products. We aimed to promote this and other healthful benefits, such as a view to the outdoors and the use of natural lighting. What we weren’t doing at that time was considering the components going into our products. Nor did we think ahead, to the ends of their useful lives, to consider what would happen to them. That is, not until people began to ask, “What goes into your product?”

I first heard William McDonough at EnvironDesign in 1996 and learned about Climatex® by Designtex®. Its development as a biological nutrient became part of the initial Cradle to Cradle Certified protocol. At the same conference, designer Penny Bonda caught my attention in her lecture by saying something along the lines of, “We love MechoShades, but could you offer us a PVC-free shade cloth?”

I soon realized my obligation, and that of MechoSystems as a manufacturing company, to know what materials are going into our products, and how to manage these products at the ends of their lifecycles.

At the appropriate time, I coordinated Twitchell’s new management to have them hear Bill deliver a keynote speech. As intended, it encouraged them to invest in this new direction. In 2004, EcoVeil—our very first Cradle to Cradle Certified product—was released.

The first system, our manual Mecho®/5 with EcoVeil, features heavy-duty hardware, a patented clutch design, and a 25-year non-depreciating warranty. The second system is our competitively priced Manual UrbanShade® with EcoVeil. There are hundreds—if not thousands—of product configurations possible between the potential combinations of our two C2C Certified hardware systems and EcoVeil shade cloths.

The Cradle to Cradle Certification story at

MechoSystems is one of great innovation, perseverance, and—ultimately—success. Twitchell, in support of our shared vision, became a fabulous partner. Together we pioneered the replacement of a PVC-coated, polyester yarn, with a technical yarn. EcoVeil uses a TPO (thermoplastic olefin) extrusion over a polyolefin core yarn (replacing the polyester core yarn). There were many challenges along the way. With our combined efforts, we eventually reached the ideal hand (softness) of the

These products have changed our industry.

shade cloth, tested its flame retardancy, and manipulated its color fastness and its ability to weld into a shade cloth, and to then hang flat. Each one of these issues required revolutionary work. In the end, we succeeded and were awarded a Cradle to Cradle Certification, now certified Silver. The flame-retardant chemistry remains a challenge to further improve EcoVeil. But the concept made it possible to have a PVC-free coated yarn that minimizes yellow and red chemicals, and can be recycled.

EcoVeil, Mecho/5, and UrbanShade are the first Cradle to Cradle Certified window-covering products on the market. MechoSystems is the first and only window-covering manufacturer to have an entire window-shading system—including both the hardware and the shade cloth—Cradle to Cradle Certified. We have optimized our chemistry to provide the ability for these products to be disassembled and brought back into industrial waste streams. It is MechoSystems’ policy to take these products back, when sent to our factory, for proper reuse of all components or for turning them back into industrial raw materials.