

AWNING FABRICS BECOME SELF CLEANING

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Patrick Raguet



Today's awning fabrics are relatively easy care. A little soap, warm water and a soft bristle brush can remove most stains. If the fabrics are either the Sunbrella® or Dickson® brand, you can even add bleach to the cleaning mix for really tough stains.

But, what if an awning could be even easier to clean? What if awning fabrics could, in fact, be self-cleaning?

Dickson-Constant has recently raised the bar for awning fabric maintenance with a new line of self-cleaning awning fabrics; dirt slides off with water. Permaclean® treatment incorporated into Orchestra Max is the basis for its state-of-the-art self-cleaning characteristics. Nanoparticles applied on the fabric assemble to form an extremely dense protective layer that keeps dirt on the surface where it can be easily rinsed off.

Dickson-Constant, however, did not stop at self-cleaning with its new fabric. In addition to self-cleaning qualities, Orchestra Max is waterproof. Waterproofing is achieved through the addition of an anti-fungal, UV-resistant acrylic resin.

“The combination of ease of maintenance and waterproofing makes Orchestra Max unique in the awning marketplace,” said Patrick Raguet, director of marketing for Dickson-Constant.

“Orchestra Max is particularly well suited for permanent installations with high exposure to climate changes and pollution,” he said. “It is designed primarily for retail, hotels and other commercial applications. It is also a state-of-the-art solution for particularly demanding homeowners.”

Orchestra Max will gradually replace Dickson-Constant's Orchestra TT collection, which had been its professional grade awning fabric line. Raguet provided more details on its breakthrough development:

Q. What led Dickson to develop Orchestra Max?

A. The awning fabric market is mature in Europe and as a leader we must bring innovation to the market to help our customers differentiate themselves from the competition. Awning fabric maintenance is an important issue, especially for fixed or permanent installations such as shops, hotels,

bars and restaurants that are exposed to sun, pollution and stains. All of our customers have been looking for a self-cleaning fabric for many years.

Q. Orchestra Max includes numerous technologies. Which of these is new and which were existing?

A. Self-cleaning technology is not really new. It already exists on glazing for instance. But as far as acrylic fabrics are concerned, it is a new technology. Orchestra Max offers two major benefits for users: ease of maintenance – rain or simple rinsing with water is sufficient to rid the fabric of dirt. Second, the fabric's waterproof qualities allow you to enjoy a terrace in all kinds of weather.

Q. Describe the nanotechnology behind the product.

A. Nanotechnology is the engineering of functional systems at the molecular level. A self-cleaning treatment produces what is called the “Lotus effect,” which is a physical phenomenon resulting in a super-hydrophobic (water resistant) surface such as found on the Lotus plant. Observed in nature for decades and now duplicated in a number of products, any debris on the Lotus plant remains on the surface of super-hydrophobic leaves to be washed away with water.

Q. What will be the leading types of installations for Orchestra Max?

A. Fixed or permanent installations for shops, hotels, bars and restaurants are ideal for Orchestra Max – anywhere you find high exposure to UV, rain, pollution and stains.

Q. What is the current offering? Number of solids and patterns?

A. There are 32 styles – 21 solids and 11 fancy stripes.

Q. Where will this fabric be available?

A. During the introduction stage this fabric will be available only in Europe.

ABOVE The latest awning fabrics from Dickson-Constant feature nanotechnology that makes the fabrics self cleaning. Patrick Raguet, marketing director, reviews development samples.