

Deeply moved: Momoka Sato wins grand prize at ITS Contest 2023

By Caitlyn Terra
Mar 25, 2024



A visibly shaken Momoka Sato receives the ITS Arcademy Award. Credits: Caitlyn Terra / FashionUnited

The winners of the ITS (International Talent Support) Contest 2023 have been announced. While Japanese designer Momoka Sato went home with the grand prize ITS Arcademy Award, this year's Jury Special Award was divided between two finalists: Ju Bao and Richard Fairbey. A total of 13 awards were distributed throughout the event in Trieste, Italy, which took place over the weekend.

Sato's work is not only technically stunning, the story behind it is deeply moving, as was the opinion of the ITS Contest jury. The 'Utopia on the Mountain Top' collection honoured Sato's grandmother in every detail, while celebrating the craft of traditional arts of Japan, such as Cha no yu (the tea ceremony), Ikebana (flower arranging) and Sumi-e (ink painting) and her wisdom. The collection itself is delicate but not lavish despite all the details, with looks that tell the story of the Buddhist belief in which the soul of the deceased takes a journey in 49 days that seals their fate in the afterlife. Each garment describes a different step of the main character towards Utopia.

Sato was visibly shaken when she heard her name. She was welcomed by ITS Contest founder Barbara Franchin and took a few minutes to catch her breath, during which time the audience cheered even louder to show their support. The designer not only took home a physical award, but also 15,000 euros.

Momoka Sato, Ju Bao and Richard Farbey big winners ITS Contest

The diversity of finalists undoubtedly did not make things easy for the judges. Consequently, this year's ITS Jury Special Award went to not one but two designers. The first recipient was fashion designer Ju Bao who presented his collection 'Annihilation', while the second winner was accessories designer Richard Farbey. Both went home with a cash prize of 5,000 euros and, of course, a physical award.

Bao was praised by the jury for his innovative work with denim and the hybrid designs presented. Farbey, with his 'The worshipful company of computer-aided-designers', demonstrated the possibilities for the jewellery sector. The collection focuses in on the relationship between machine- and man-made items, which was reflected in particular humorous details in the jewellery. For example, the inside of a large ring features a small man.

ALLE WINNAARS VAN ITS CONTEST 2023:

- **ITS Arcademy Award 2023:** Momoka Sato
- **ITS Jury Special Award:** Ju Bao en Richard Farbey
- **ITS Fashion Film Award:** Amina Galal
- **ITS Digital Fashion Award:** Yu Chen en Fanrui Sun
- **GO!25 Borderless Award powered by Regione FVG:** Tomohiro Shibuki
- **ITS Artwork Award powered by Swatch Art Peace Hotel:** Chelsea Jean Lamm en Ivan Delogu
- **ITS Special Mention powered by Vogue Eyewear part of Essilor-Luxottica:** Xiaoyue Liu
- **ITS Sportswear Award powered by Lotto Sport:** Clementine Baldo
- **ITS Challenge The Status Quo Award powered by WRÂD:** Tomohiro Shibuki
- **ITS Responsible Creativity Award powered by CNMI:** Ivan Delogu
- **ITS Accessories Award powered by Fondazione Ferragamo:** Yuxi Sun
- **ITS Special Mention powered by PITTI Immagine Tutoring & Consulting:** Marcel Sommer
- **ITS Special Mention powered by Fondazione Sozzani:** Wanqi Huang



The ITS Jury Special Award has two winners: Ju Bao (left) and Richard Farbey. Credits: Caitlyn Terra / FashionUnited

Surprises and emotions at ITS Contest 2023

The award ceremony had several surprises in store for attendees and finalists. As mentioned earlier, sometimes two designers went home with the same prize, but winners also often received an extra prize. Each award consists of either cash or a valuable experience. For Chelsea Jean Lamm, it not only meant a cash prize of 10,000 euros, but she was also invited to a residency at Swatch for one to three months together with her sister (with whom she works for the brand).

However, one prize was not yet awarded, the community award. In fact, the work of the finalists will be displayed at the relatively new ITS Arcademy museum and visitors will be given a vote to cast for their favourite designer. When the exhibition ends in January 2025, the winner will be announced based on the public votes.

ITS Contest 2023 debuts new format

ITS Contest itself also continues to develop. For just over a year now, International Talent Support has found a physical base in Trieste, in a home called ITS Arcademy, which is not only a museum focusing on contemporary fashion, but also the home of the ITS Contest. "Thanks to this home, it is possible to develop a new format," Franchin indicated at the award ceremony. The contest's new format now includes a residency where finalists gain valuable contacts with industry professionals, as well as collaborate on special projects.

ITS was founded in 2002 by Barbara Franchin. Former winners include Balenciaga creative director Demna and former finalists include Matthieu Blazy of Bottega Veneta.

This article originally appeared on FashionUnited.NL. Translation and edit by: Rachel Douglass.

