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## ITS 19 Awards: Sustaining Fashion through Transformation

By Rebecca Voight

Garbage, "armchair nostalgia," and migration are some of the inspirations of the winners of the ITS (International Talent Support) fashion and accessories awards held on July 12. The annual one-day event, launched in 2002 by **Barbara Franchin**, attracts top style talent to Trieste, which is situated on the Adriatic, a whipped cream dream of Austro-Hungarian history on Italy's far eastern border. This year's 22 finalists competed for 10 awards with grants, internships, mentoring, and showcases from **Pitti Immagine**, **OTB/Diesel**, **Tomorrow showroom**, **Lotto sport**, **Ily coffee**, **Allianz insurance**, and others.



The 10 winners from the 2019 ITS awards. Photo: Courtesy of ITS Awards.

**Daoyuan Ding** (28) – from Zhoushan island near Shanghai, China, with an MA from UAL London College of Fashion – took home the ITS Award, a 15,000€ grant with mentoring and showcases at Pitti Uomo 97 in Florence and Tomorrow's Le Palais Paris showroom for Fall/Winter 20/21.



Daoyuan Ding's collection presented at the 2019 ITS awards. Photo: Courtesy of ITS Awards.

Daoyuan's "disordered" houndstooth required eight months of fabric development. "I'm passionate about things that look familiar and unfamiliar," said the designer who was inspired by René Magritte's "Empire of Light," a nocturnal street scene set against a cloudy blue sky. His "Migratory Vagueness" collection put traditional menswear through a positive/negative kaleidoscope for slightly distorted tailoring topped with bucket hats that evoke a shadowy army. Daoyuan plans to launch his own brand and believes that fashion sustainability begins with quality over quantity.



Corrina Goutos' collection presented at the 2019 ITS awards. Photos: Courtesy of ITS Awards.

**Corrina Goutos**, 28, American, won ITS' Sustainability Award of 3000€ and a feature on Italian Vogue's Talents website for her "semi-slug" jewelry that combines shells, wood, and stone with "non-functional" bits of lighters, headphones, and "luxury" items like car rims. Goutos transforms her natural/manmade assemblages with lapidary techniques, aluminum castings, and electroforming which dissolves scrap metal and reforms it on objects giving them an ancient look. After collecting shells as a child, she began making jewelry from soda cans at age 14 and perfected her technique at the Savannah College of Art and Design before moving to a 400-year-old farmhouse near Hamburg where she launched her eponymous brand for one-of-a-kind pieces in 2015.

"I've always been attracted to organic forms, the negative effects of the 'throw-away' era, and I have an obsession with shipwrecks," says Goutos. "With few exceptions, 'sustainability' feels more like a publicity stunt than a solution to me, but the amazing thing is that for makers of my generation it's now a given, not an option."



Annaliese Griffith-Jones' collection presented at the 2019 ITS awards. Photo: Courtesy of ITS Awards.

The ITS OTB Award of 10,000€ with the possibility of an internship with one of Only the Brave group's brands (**Marni**, **Maison Margiela**, **Viktor&Rolf**...) went to Australia's **Annaliese Griffith-Jones**, 26, from New York's Parsons School of Design. The floral tiles in her grandparents' 1970s home and Arjun Appadurai's theory of universal nostalgia for an unknown past led her to work in liquid silicone, a jelly-like fabric for which she developed a reverse hand-printing process. "I would love to focus on textile design and fabrication for **Marni**, **Prada**, **Dries Van Noten**, or **Simone Rocha** before I start my own brand," said Griffith-Jones whose cartoon-like layered patterns project a larger-than-life "taux reality."



Rafaeel Kouto's collection presented at the 2019 ITS awards. Photos: Courtesy of ITS Awards.

After applying to ITS five times, **Rafaeel Kouto's** "Suspended Bodies" collection made the finalist cut this year with his "escapist" notion of humans, waste and clothing suspended in space "like bodies that won't fall." Kouto, 29 – whose own upcycling brand produced in Switzerland uses materials like mosaic pieces made from old tires for tunics and mixes traditional African craftsmanship with sport and military staples – won ITS' Diesel award with a six month internship at the brand's headquarters in Italy's Veneto.

For jury member **Valentina Maggi**, Director of Design Practice at Floriane de Saint Pierre et Associés, ITS is the chance for an early look at designers whose careers will be built by working from one post to the next throughout the fashion industry. "All the brands we work with want to inject innovation and creativity. We're looking for freshness and energy in terms of product, image, and visual identity," said Maggi who has attended ITS for the past 16 years and cites as a case in point **Felipe Oliveira Baptista**, 44, who was first recruited as Creative Director of **Lacoste** in 2010 and recently moved to **Kenzo**.

Not everyone at ITS wants to work for a big brand. **Stefano Martinetto**, CEO of Tomorrow London Holdings Ltd, styles his company as a "business incubator" helping new independent brands source production and develop sales through showrooms in Paris and Milan, New York and Hong Kong. Tomorrow invested recently in the young French brand **Coperni**. On the ITS jury, he says he's looking for designers with "curatorial skills" who can combine pop-ups, direct-to-consumer marketing, and selling to the best stores in the world (increasingly overlooked by the big brands), which he says is essential for young brands to grow today.



Yukika Saito's collection presented at the 2019 ITS awards. Photos: Courtesy of ITS Awards.

The one thing that everyone seemed to agree about at ITS 19 is that sustainability remains the great unresolved question at the heart of fashion. "What can we do?" asks founder Barbara Franchin, who admits she teared up when she saw Japanese finalist **Yukika Saito's** collection "Rubbish Planet" made from materials floating in the river near her home. One response to this question is the creation of the ITS Academy (archive and academy), a new space in Trieste set to open in 2021 for ITS' 20th anniversary as an expanded platform for the ITS archive of applicant dossiers and finalist prototypes, as well as a center for workshops by ITS designers.