

## **Talent Without Borders: ITS Contest 2025 Concludes as New Exhibitions Open at ITS Arcademy – Museum of Art in Fashion**

All ITS Contest 2025 designers have been awarded bursaries, training experiences and participation in the 'Borderless' exhibition coming up at ITS Arcademy - Museum of Art in Fashion on 27 March.

Special mention for Maximilian Raynor, who received the ITS Jury's Rewarding Honours, an award from the international jury of designers, creatives and industry experts. The ITS Fashion Film Award goes to Meret Olympia Salome Baer.

Exhibitions 'Fashionlands - Clothes Beyond Borders', curated by Olivier Saillard and Emanuele Coccia, and 'Borderless' inaugurated, with attendance by the Italian Undersecretary for Culture, Senator Lucia Borgonzoni, and the President of the Friuli Venezia Giulia Region, Massimiliano Fedriga.

Trieste, 21 March 2025 - The 2025 ITS Contest, the latest edition of the design talent scouting initiative set up by Barbara Franchin, which has been discovering and showcasing the most promising up-and-coming fashion and accessories designers from all over the world since 2002, has just ended in Trieste.

The final stage of the event saw an unprecedented group celebration of the talent of ten young designers from all over the world, whose works are to become part of the collection of **ITS Arcademy - Museum of Art in Fashion, the first contemporary fashion museum in Italy.**

The ten new design promises are:

**Cindy Zhaohan Li** - China  
**Gabrielle Szwarcenberg** - Belgium  
**Macy Grimshaw** - France  
**Maximilian Raynor** - United Kingdom  
**Mijoda Dajomi** - Germany  
**Naya El Ahdab** - France  
**Patrick Taylor** - United Kingdom  
**Qianhan Liu** - China  
**Yifan Yu** - China  
**Zhuen Cai** - China

On Thursday, the **ten designers**, awarded the **ITS Creative Excellence Award 10x10x10**, had the opportunity to present their collections to the press and an international jury made up of respected figures from the worlds of fashion, art and culture, including British punk icon **Dame Zandra Rhodes**, celebrity stylist **Tom Eerebout** and **Andrea Rosso**, sustainability ambassador for the OTB Group.

The special ITS Jury's Rewarding Honours was therefore awarded to **Maximilian Raynor**.

The ITS Jury's Rewarding Honours is a special recognition awarded to an ITS Contest 2025 designer, offering support that aligns with their unique needs and creative aspirations. It is a commitment by Fondazione ITS that goes beyond celebration, becoming a concrete, long-term investment in the designer's growth through mentorship, professional networking, and access to key industry opportunities.

"The Jury rewards the energy and will with which the designer wants to achieve his professional goals, declared with passion. The Jury believes that in Maximilian Raynor's research there are powerful historical traces and a conscious use of artistic codes that come from theater and music. Raynor's work is enriched by experimentation with materials and the logic of self-production."

**Meret Olympia Salome Baer** from the Royal College of Art in London was awarded the **ITS Fashion Film Award** for her fashion film 'Lactic Acid', selected by Lee Swillingham, founder of the London-based creative agency Suburbia.

## The ITS Contest 2025 Jury

A panel of **personalities from the worlds of fashion, art and culture** guided the designer selection process, carrying forward the vision that has made ITS Contest one of the **world's most prestigious design talent scouting platforms**. It is made up of:

**Andrea Rosso** OTB and Diesel Sustainability Ambassador

**Barbara Franchin** President, Fondazione ITS

**Carlo Giordanetti** CEO, Swatch Art Peace Hotel

**Emanuele Coccia** Philosopher

**Luca Rizzi** Pitti Immagine Tutoring & Consulting Director, e-P Summit Project Leader

**Marco Sammiceli** Curator of the Design, Fashion and Crafts section at Triennale Milano / Director of Museo del Design Italiano;

**Maria Sole Ferragamo** Designer

**Mark C. O'Flaherty** Interiors & Portrait Photographer and Author

**Massimo Nicosia** Creative Director, Ready-To-Wear Sport Performance Hub, EssilorLuxottica

**Matteo Ward** CEO of Inside Out Fashion, Textiles & Home

**Orsola de Castro** Co-founder, Fashion Revolution and Estethica

**Sara Sozzani Maino** Creative Director, Fondazione Sozzani

**Serge Carreira** Director of Emerging Brands Initiative, Fédération de la Haute Couture et de la Mode

**Sonia Veroni** CEO Modateca Deanna and Director, Master in Creative Knitwear Design - Accademia Costume & Moda

**Stefania Ricci** Direttrice, Museo Salvatore Ferragamo and Fondazione Ferragamo

**Stefano Gallici** Creative Director, Ann Demeulemeester

**Tom Eerebout** Stylist & Fashion Consultant

**Valentina Maggi** Director of Creative Practice, Floriane de St. Pierre & Associés

**Dame Zandra Rhodes** Fashion and Textile Designer and Founder of the Fashion and Textile Museum

## An edition that overturns the concept of competition

Over the past twenty years, **ITS Contest** has established itself as a springboard for talents destined to measure up against one of the most competitive sectors ever, with **frequent changes in creative direction** and a **relentless pace of innovation**. Among the designers picked out by the Trieste contest, two now guide the stylistic vision of legendary brands Chanel and Gucci and yet many more work in front of and behind the scenes or choose more personal development models.

Right from the start of this edition, **ITS Contest 2025** has chosen to focus on a **collaborative** model, giving awards to all the designers already selected as winners. No longer just a competition, but a shared growth experience.

*"Today, more than ever, fashion needs creative talent, but for many young people the path to take is strewn with almost insurmountable obstacles, especially when they cannot count on adequate resources and networks. Offering all designers the opportunity to grow together is a new answer to the global and ethical challenges of our time. Focusing on collaboration instead of competition was the most responsible choice in order to enhance the potential of this new generation of designers",* said **Barbara Franchin**, President of Fondazione ITS and founder of ITS Contest.

ITS Contest is an integral part of a unique ecosystem, complemented by ITS Academy - Museum of Art in Fashion, the first contemporary fashion museum in Italy.

*"In a region such as Friuli Venezia Giulia, renowned for its international outlook, emerging talent in fashion design comes together, fostering a vibrant mix of cultures and creativity. Trieste offers a valuable opportunity for young creators to showcase their artistic skills and connect with a global audience through the universal language of fashion" said Lucia Borgonzoni, Undersecretary of State to the Ministry of Culture. She also mentioned that "the Ministry is closely following the activities of the Fondazione ITS, as its mission aligns with the Ministry's commitment to supporting the new generation of talent. The Foundation has a long history in this field, and from September it will be sharing its expertise with students taking part in a training course aimed at developing new professionals for craft workshops specialising in the production of tailoring and accessories for film and other industries. The initiative is funded by the Pnrr MiC-Cinecittà programme".*

Fondazione ITS is part of an ecosystem that embraces the entire territory, as confirmed by the President of the Friuli Venezia Giulia Region:

*"For more than 20 years, **the Fondazione ITS** has had the distinction of bringing the best up-and-coming talents in fashion, accessories and jewellery from all over the world to our region, showcasing their extraordinary creativity. The choice of the 'Borderless' theme for this year, in conjunction with **GO! 2025**, underlines our commitment to overcoming physical and cultural barriers, promoting borderless creativi-*

ty. We are thrilled to welcome the ten international finalists and to introduce them to the artistic attractions of our region, an initiative that reinforces **Friuli Venezia Giulia's** position as a crossroads of innovation and intercultural dialogue", **Massimiliano Fedriga** - President of the Friuli Venezia Giulia Region.

## **ITS Rewarding Honours: customised experiences and scholarships**

The designers continue on their Italian adventure, which began with a creative residency in Trieste and Villa Manin, the pride of Friuli Venezia Giulia, with a series of Rewarding Honours, i.e. experiences offered by the partners of ITS Contest 2025 to enrich their cultural and professional resources and accompany their first steps in the world of fashion..

- **Cindy Zhaohan Li, Gabrielle Szwarcenberg, Maximilian Raynor, Mijoda Dajomi, Naya El Ahdab, Patrick Taylor, Qianhan Liu, Yifan Yu, Zhuen Cai, Macy Grimshaw**  
**Rewarding Honours Powered by OTB**  
The OTB Group offers a training day visit of the headquarters of OTB and Staff International to the young designers who will be able to see first-hand the production stages of the garments and accessories of the Group's brands.
- **Macy Grimshaw**  
**Rewarding Honours Powered by Swatch**  
**Swatch** offers a unique experience in Venice. The programme for the selected designer will begin with an exclusive workshop at the historic Palazzo Mocenigo, home to the Museum of Textiles, Costume and Perfume, with privileged access to the palace's invaluable archives. Swatch will then take the designer on an exclusive journey through Venice's artistic heritage across the centuries—from the glass mosaics of the Orsoni Furnace to the luxury fabrics of the Rubelli Foundation, and the passion for modern art at the Peggy Guggenheim Collection, with the rare opportunity to meet key figures from each institution. The experience will end with an immersive visit to the history and beauty of San Giorgio Maggiore. Accommodation costs will be fully covered.
- **Gabrielle Szwarcenberg**  
**Rewarding Honours Powered by Vogue Eyewear parte di EssilorLuxottica**  
It will include: a full day at the prestigious EssilorLuxottica Tortona Experience Center. The selected designer will present the project to an internal audience and engage with attendees during a dedicated networking session. Additionally, the selected designer will be immersed in the operational dynamics of the EssilorLuxottica Design Team, experiencing the creative and design process of the eyewear category.
- **Zhuen Cai**  
**Rewarding Honours Powered by Camera Nazionale Della Moda Italiana**  
**Camera Nazionale della Moda Italiana** offers a scholarship worth €5,000 awarded based on the designer's creativity with particular attention to the theme of sustainability, in its broadest meanings of product sustainability, respect for the environment and social sustainability.

- **Yifan Yu**  
***Rewarding Honours Powered by Fondazione Ferragamo***  
Fondazione Ferragamo is offering €7,000 to a designer to be invested on his activity. The choice will be made based on the knowledge of materials and innovation.
- **Macy Grimshaw**  
***Rewarding Honours Powered by Fondazione Sozzani***  
Fondazione Sozzani offers one designer the opportunity to present their work in its spaces during 2025. The designer will be hosted free of charge, and the Fondazione will provide support for the exhibition setup and communication activities. Accommodation expenses will be fully covered.
- **Patrick Taylor**  
***Rewarding Honours Powered by Modateca Deanna***  
Modateca Deanna offers an exclusive one-week experience at Modateca Deanna, where the designer will have the opportunity to conduct research at the Modateca's archives and delve deeper into knitwear techniques. The designer will also have the chance to visit some of the leading yarn mills, knitting factories, and workshops in the area, exploring all the key stages involved in bringing a creative idea to life. Modateca Deanna will cover travel and accommodation and company visits costs.
- **Patrick Taylor**  
***Rewarding Honours Powered by Pitti Tutoring & Consulting***  
The Pitti Tutoring & Consulting Special Experience includes a 6-months mentorship program of Tutoring & Consulting activities, such as support in defining and establishing one's brand and/or identifying and analyzing the most suitable career path for the winning designer. Meetings (via video call or in-person) will take place every two weeks to assess progress and equip the designer with valuable experience, enabling them to approach their career in the best possible way.
- **Naya El Ahdab**  
***Rewarding Honours Powered By WRÅD***  
WRÅD will give a designer the chance to take part of a 2-day tour of innovative textile enterprises in Italy, the products and processes of which can provide further guidance and inspiration.

## **ITS Contest and ITS Arcademy - Museum of Art in Fashion**

The works of the finalists of the 2025 edition are to be added to the collection of **ITS Arcademy - Museum of Art in Fashion, the first museum of contemporary fashion in Italy**, an exhibition space of international scope at the intersection of fashion, art and culture. A dynamic cultural hub, it alternates major exhibitions devised by internationally renowned curators with a calendar of courses and creative workshops dedicated to design students, schools of all levels, and the local, national and international public.

### **'Borderless' Exhibition and Public award**

Through the vision of **Barbara Franchin**, who has created a **unique archive of more than 15,000 objects**, a symbol of the creativity of new designers and **safeguarded thanks to the contribution by Generali**, **ITS Contest** is not just an industry event, but the start of a journey of fashion discovery for a public of all ages.

The **Borderless** exhibition, hosted by the **ITS Arcademy - Museum of Art in Fashion** and inaugurated with attendance by the **undersecretary for culture Senator Lucia Borgonzoni** and the President of the Friuli Venezia Giulia Region **Massimiliano Fedriga**, brings together the works of the ten designers selected by **ITS Contest 2025** and awarded the **10x10x10 ITS Creative Excellence Award**. A key element of this recognition is in fact the exhibition of their work for ten months starting in March 2025, a unique opportunity to showcase themselves before an international audience, ready to appreciate the artistic value of their work, which transcends geographical, cultural and genre boundaries.

Confirming the open and inclusive nature of the 2025 edition, the **ITS Public's Choice Award** was once again handed out, a cash prize whose winner will be decided by the public visiting the exhibition when it closes next January.

## **Fashionlands, curated by Olivier Saillard and Emanuele Coccia**

At the same time, the second ITS Arcademy exhibition was inaugurated: **Fashionlands - Clothes Beyond Borders**, curated by **Olivier Saillard** (one of the leading fashion experts) and **Emanuele Coccia** (philosopher and author).

The exhibition, sponsored by the **Ministry of Culture** and with the support of the **City of Trieste**, explores the changing boundaries of fashion and its role in contemporary society, offering a comparison between experimental creations and the symbolic value of everyday clothing.

In the exhibition space, the **works of 23 designers** from the permanent collection of **ITS Arcademy** express the **creative freedom** of clothes and accessories capable of redefining the very concept of dressing. In parallel, Gabriele Rosati's photographs tell the essential but no less eloquent message of functional and timeless garments such as white shirts and jeans.

Picking up on the themes of **GO! 2025 - Nova Gorica and Gorizia European Capital of Cross-Border Culture**, the exhibition invites the public to ask themselves the question on how fashion, although born to differentiate, is a true supercontinent, a space that transcends geographical and cultural boundaries, defining shared styles in a universal language, deeply rooted in everyday life yet constantly evolving.

**Rai FVG** is the media partner of the two exhibitions.

Also inspired by the theme of borderless creativity is the installation of images by Massimo Gardone dedicated to the talents awarded the **GO! 2025 Borderless Award**, which comes to life in the space in front of the museum. The exhibition, set up by **Fondazione ITS** with the **support of the Friuli Venezia Giulia**

Region, and co-organised with the **City of Trieste**, invites the public to **reflect deeply on the concept of border**, not as a barrier, but as a **point of meeting and exchange**.

## ITS Contest Partners

Io Sono FVG: I am Friuli Venezia Giulia. ITS Contest 2025 is proud of its roots in the **Friuli Venezia Giulia region** and its role in shaping the cultural future of the territory. Embracing the spirit of cultural exchange that defines this region, ITS Contest serves as both a collector and creator of new perspectives. ITS Contest 2025 is supported by the **Friuli Venezia Giulia Region** and **Promoturismo FVG**. **#iosonofvg**

**OTB** – is an international fashion group comprising brands Diesel, Jil Sander, Maison Margiela, Marni and Viktor&Rolf. It also controls the Staff International and Brave Kid companies and holds a stake in American brand Amiri. OTB – short for "Only The Brave" – believes in the possibility of pushing beyond the frontiers of fashion and style, expressing the innovative spirit and uncompromising courage of its Founder and Chairman, Renzo Rosso. With around 7,000 employees worldwide, the Group is founded on a digital approach centered on the consumer, a concrete long-term commitment to the creation of a sustainable, technologically driven business, and close attention to social issues through the OTB Foundation.

Since the first edition, OTB and Renzo Rosso have chosen to support the international ITS Contest, confirming their mission to support emerging designers from all over the world, encouraging their creativity and talent and promoting their growth and training in direct contact with professionals of the sector.

**Swatch** – Since its creation, conceived as a universal, democratic object, Swatch has been thriving on diversity, multiplicity, dynamism, inclusion and positive energies that intertwine, feed on each other and multiply. In this vein, in 2011 the Swatch Art Peace Hotel opened in Shanghai: a remarkable position, in the heart of the most dynamic and vibrant of Chinese metropolises, a unique space in terms of dimensions, style and capacity, expressly conceived for artists of all generations, from all countries and all disciplines, that will make here their 'home' for a few months and have the chance to carry out their work and express their talent, meet other artists and interact with the local art community. Since its opening, the Swatch Art Peace Hotel has been hosting more than 540 artists from 58 countries. Ten of them were recipients of the ITS/Swatch Art Peace Hotel award in previous editions of the contest.

## Vogue Eyewear by Essilor Luxottica

**Vogue Eyewear** - [www.vogue-eyewear.com](http://www.vogue-eyewear.com)

**EssilorLuxottica** – A global leader in the design, manufacture and distribution of ophthalmic lenses, frames and sunglasses. With over 190,000 employees across 150 countries, 650 operations facilities and 18,000 stores, its mission is to help people around the world to see more and be more by addressing their evolving vision needs and personal style aspirations. EssilorLuxottica is home to the most advanced lens technologies including Varilux, Stellest and Transitions, the most iconic eyewear brands including Ray-Ban and Oakley, the most desired luxury licensed brands and world-class retailers including LensCrafters and Sunglass Hut. The company's OneSight EssilorLuxottica Foundation has given access to sustain-

nable vision care to more than 760 million people in underserved communities.

## Patrons

**ITS Contest 2025** is organised by **Fondazione ITS** with the patronage of **Camera Nazionale della Moda Italiana**, **Fondazione Ferragamo**, **Fondazione Sozzani**, **Miss Deanna**, **Pitti Immagine** and **WRÅD**.

**Camera Nazionale della Moda Italiana** – is the non-profit association that disciplines, coordinates and promotes the development of Italian fashion. It represents the highest cultural values of Italian fashion and aims to protect, coordinate and enhance its image, both in Italy and abroad.

**Fondazione Ferragamo** – Established in 2013 with the aim of making the new generations aware of the values of craftsmanship and Made in Italy according to Salvatore Ferragamo's work. The main purpose is to inspire young talents to pursue their creative dream.

**Fondazione Sozzani** – is dedicated to the promotion of culture through photography, fashion, the fine arts, and applied arts. Since 2021, under the creative direction of Sara Sozzani Maino, the Fondazione curates projects dedicated to education, responsibility and awareness and supports the next generation of creatives.

**Modateca Deanna** – International Centre for Fashion Documentation, gathers and promotes the identity of the knitwear factory Miss Deanna, founded by Deanna Ferretti back in 1950. Modateca, research and creativity hub, under the leadership of Sonia Veroni, promotes the Italian Knitwear.

**Direzione Tutoring & Consulting di Pitti Immagine** – supports designers and brands in their professional and creative development with orientation and consultancy activities.

**WRÅD** – is a design studio for the sustainable evolution of the fashion industry. The collaboration with ITS supports the creativity of those who act for the realization of better systems - ethical and responsible.

## Supporters

**Tech supporter: The Develon Group**, digital partner of ITS 2025 Borderless, provides the platform for managing the international selection of ITS Contest. For over twenty years, Develon has supported companies in their digital innovation journey, developing tailor-made solutions for different sectors, including hospitality with Hbenchmark.com and the ticketing and booking experience with Mydomnia.com.

**Pharma supporter:** Founded in Trieste in 1948, **Eurospital** is an international healthcare company operating across 3 Business Areas that develops and markets pharmaceutical products, diagnostic devices and special diet food - gluten free and low-protein.



**Travel supporter: Trieste Airport Friuli Venezia Giulia** offers air services to domestic and European destinations. Thanks to its strategic location, this airport is the ideal gateway to the Friuli Venezia Giulia and Veneto regions as well as to Slovenia, Croatia and Austria. Trieste Airport is an integrated multi-modal hub, for air-rail-road interchange, enhancing accessibility and connectivity.

**Urban Scents** works with Fondazione ITS on the creation of unique and engaging olfactory experiences and processes which create a discourse between the arts of fashion and perfumery. Born in Versailles and based in Trieste, Marie Urban Le Febvre is one of few hundred noses in the world and a member of the International Association of Perfumer-Creators in Paris. Her experience includes collaborations with prestigious cultural institutions such as the Louvre Abu Dhabi.

## The Collection

**A unique design heritage, the ITS Academy Collection** consists of 15,000 objects including visionary creative projects, clothing, accessories, jewellery and photographs. A collection of extraordinary historical relevance, chronicling the evolution of creativity in its most radical, artistic and experimental expressions.

### **Generali ensures the Future of the Collection**

**Generali** is the first private partner of ITS Academy, to support and protect the innovative projects of young talents who, with their creativity, do business. At its heart, ITS Academy has the Collection: the precious custodian of the ideas and projects of young talents, accessible to the public, an element of growth and innovation for the community.

**ITS Academy** brings public and private sectors together, helping to restore Trieste to its historical vocation as the centre of Europe, a crucial junction between East and West. **The Friuli-Venezia Giulia Region with PromoTurismo FVG, the City of Trieste and Fondazione CRTrieste** confirm their fundamental support to make Trieste a city of creativity and ITS Academy an international magnet for the entire regional area.

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