ITS 2019: Daoyuan Ding wins emerging designer award in Trieste

By Dominique Muret - 16 July 2019

The 17th edition of the International Talent Support (ITS) emerging designer competition was characterised by the extremely high quality of its entries, with a strong Asian presence (15 out of 26 finalists were from Asia) and a major focus on environmental protection. The young designer competition founded in 2002 by Barbara Franchin staged its 2019 edition in Trieste, Italy, on Friday July 12.

Daoyuan Ding, from China, won the ITS Award sponsored by Allianz, worth €15,000 in prize money and a partnership with Pitti Immagine, as well as the Tomorrow Entrepreneurial Creativity Award.

Ding, 28, hails from the city of Zhoushan, in the province of Zhejiang, south of Shanghai. He won over the jury with a collection that was well-designed both in terms of cuts and construction and of materials research. Ding cleverly reinterpreted the classic men’s wardrobe, featuring generously cut, sophisticated suits and a series of dual-purpose items such as the overcoat-suit or the bag-suit.

Wearing gloves and broad-brimmed hats, the faces partly covered by scarves, Ding’s models are clad in sombre suits decorated with abstract printed motifs. Classic houndstooth patterns are replicated ad infinitum, enlarged and broken up as though shredded by an explosion, sketching weirdly cartographic designs on the clothes, in a mix of digital printing and jacquard patterns.

Each look features clothes and accessories in the same pattern and tone-on-tone hue, giving it a mysteriously hazy allure, “a blurred landscape created with familiar elements,” said Ding, adding, “I’m chiefly inspired by cinema, and this collection references David Lynch and Hitchcock in particular.”

The Chinese designer also told FashionNetwork.com he is keen to launch his own label “within five years.” After a degree from Donghua University and a one-year course at IED in Milan, Ding worked as designer at Uniqlo.
degree from Donghua University and a one-year course at IED in Milan, Ding worked as designer at Uniqlo in Tokyo for two years. He then moved to London, where he specialised in menswear at the London College of Fashion.

Young Australian designer Annaliese Griffith-Jones won the OTB Prize, endowed with a €10,000 purse and giving her the chance of an internship at one of the labels of Renzo Rosso’s fashion group OTB. Like Ding, she showed top-notch creativity and technical skills, using silicone to obtain cheerful motifs and colourful patterns inspired by 1960s and 70s aesthetics, especially those of wallpaper design.

Rosso has been a loyal supporter of ITS since its inception, and his group also sponsored the Diesel Prize, worth €10,000 and a paid internship at the denim label, which went to Swiss designer Rafael Kouto, the son of a Swiss Italian mother and Togolese father. Kouto worked at Alexander McQueen, Maison Margiela and Carven before launching his own label, which combines traditional African weaving with contemporary streetwear, with a focus on crocheting techniques. He only uses fabrics and materials discarded by manufacturers, from which he upcycles fabric cuts for his clothes. Kouto also won the Lotto Sport Award.

Also worth mentioning is the innovative work by British designer Moon Hussain, winner of the €5,000 prize awarded by the Camera Nazionale della Moda Italiana and the Coin Excelsior Award. Hussain used industrial vinyl that was discarded as damaged, transforming it via a high-temperature process into an innovative textile fabric, at once flexible and crinkly, from which she fashioned her clothes.
Sustainability was high on the agenda for many ITS 2019 finalists. This year, the competition introduced a new prize for sustainable development, the ITS Sustainability Award, with a €3,000 purse. The award went to US jewellery designer Corrina Goutos, also the winner of the Special Mention by Vogue Talents. Born in Albany, in the state of New York, Goutos is a graduate of the Savannah College of Art & Design. In 2013, she moved to Germany to launch her own brand, based first in Berlin then in Hamburg, developing an original idea centred on recycled waste materials blended with organic components.

She produces hybrid brooches made of cigarette lighters, shells, plastic tubes and jettisoned computer hardware, fused together into weird magmatic objects. “They are the fossils of the future, perhaps foreshadowing new forms of life. I love this juxtaposition between industrial detritus and organic materials. I’m fascinated by the way in which nature manages to retain the upper hand, repairing the damage caused by mankind. We must remain positive,” said Goutos to FashionNetwork.com. She considers herself an artist, showing her creations chiefly in art galleries.

“[Goutos’s] concept offers a beautifully innovative artistic perspective,” said ITS jury member Marie-Claire Daveu, chief sustainability officer and head of international institutional affairs for Kering.

“I was very excited by the large number of projects linked to environmental protection, an issue that is becoming an integral part of the fashion world. Genuine change is happening. Many finalists from Asia highlighted this issue from a political standpoint,” said Daveu.