

Andrea Rosso and Matteo Ward: two complementary perspectives, one shared vision for sustainability and fashion

Matteo Ward is CEO and co-founder of the clothing brand Wråd and CEO of Inside Out Fashion, Textiles & Home, a 'food hero' for the FAO, and author of the well-known 'Junk – Full Closets' (2023) and the book FUORIMODA! (De Agostini – Mondadori, 2024), translated into eight languages. Andrea Rosso, Renzo Rosso's son, has been the chief sustainability ambassador of the Only The Brave (OTB) Group since 2025. Both were present at the ITS 2026 competition in Trieste. This gave [FashionNetwork.com](https://fashionnetwork.com) a valuable opportunity to hear their views on sustainability.



FashionNetwork.com: Three years on, what has been the impact of 'Junk- Full Closets', which we believe should be shown in all schools?

Matteo Ward: Yes, it has been taken into schools, but only because Sky Italia and Will Media were willing, together with us, to go against the grain by making the series freely available to everyone on YouTube, rather than putting it behind a paywall or other barriers. That made it accessible to teachers in places we obviously couldn't reach. And it has had a huge impact, because in many civics and science classes it has already become teaching material.

FNW: As CEO of Wråd and Inside Out Fashion, Textiles & Home, and a member of the ITS jury, where do you think fashion stands on sustainability?

MW: I think a tremendous amount of work has been done over the past 15 years, with outstanding results in awareness and engagement. Today, it's hard to find a brand that hasn't at least tried to include terms like responsibility, ecology, traceability, and transparency on its website. Until 2013 this didn't exist. It's also hard to find countries around the world that don't take the issue to heart and, as in Europe's case, haven't even tried to regulate it, such as the European Commission's strategy for transparency and circularity in textiles. So yes, we're better off today than we were yesterday. At the same time, it's true that over the past decade, in response to the passionate and positive public reaction to this topic, many brands have begun to misuse these concepts.

FNW: Are you referring to greenwashing?

MW: Greenwashing became a 'pandemic,' roughly between Covid-19 and 2023, and that devalued the word, because when everything is sustainable, nothing is. Then a slew of scandals broke, and people quite rightly began to distance themselves from sustainability because they no longer knew what was true and what was false. This scepticism turns into alienation and, at a certain point, people revert to their initial habits. That's more or less where we are today: there's a reluctance to present oneself as sustainable, for fear of ending up accused of superficial greenwashing. In short, many treated green fashion as hype. Let me explain: is deforestation 'on trend'? Suddenly we have to create a capsule collection on deforestation, put trees on our T-shirts, and link T-shirt sales to some NGO that replants forests. That's what happened. The same thing for World Water Day, Earth Day, International Women's Day... Those were the months when we received the most requests for capsules, and at Wråd we said no to 99% of them.

FNW: But by now sustainability should be considered the norm...

MW: Certainly. We need to understand that sustainability is an attitude that must be normalised in every single decision; that when you design a garment (to stay with fashion) you need to be concerned about the health of the wearer and the health of the environment in which the garment will circulate. And to do this you don't necessarily need an in-house sustainability team ticking boxes for you; rather, you need to ensure that everything is done with greater awareness of the implications and consequences of your actions.

Some companies have done this work, and done it well; faced with the changed context, they have moved from communicating sustainability to turning it into an interface, a real infrastructure. Others have simply closed the chapter.

In this period of tension I see a major opportunity for a turning point, because I believe the companies that are embracing these themes and turning them into infrastructure are positioning themselves in the market with greater strength and resilience for the coming decades.

FNW: However, many companies that have tried to produce green raw materials have gone out of business or are struggling, and statistics say that 50% of Gen Z are very sceptical and focused on saving money. Is that the case?

MW: Absolutely. There's a war over materials. Innovative materials were- and for some still are- the fastest way to tap into the hype I mentioned earlier. You buy a cutting-edge green raw material, write a slick press release, add a social cause, and come off as cool.

It's not that a 'fairy dust' ingredient transforms your company; it's a cultural change that needs to be adopted. Sustainability is an attitude we've forgotten, but if we go back and reread the writings of great entrepreneurs, designers and thinkers such as Dieter Rams, they already regarded it in the 1970s as a normal consideration.

Taking a further step back: around 1920 the Futurists wrote the Manifesto of the Futurist Anti-Neutral Dress, which speaks of hygienic garments that are healthy for skin and mind.

[Salvatore Ferragamo](#) in the early 20th century also reflected on these issues. He used to say: the secret of my success lies in the fact that I let Nature- with a capital N- perform.

So sustainability in fashion isn't a glitch in the system; it's the system which, from the second half of the last century, reached such levels of breadth, speed, quantity and volume that in the early 2000s we said, 'Hold on, what's going on!' It's not that there was no awareness before of the damage to the ecosystem, but we were taught it was better not to ask that question because it would slow down certain processes, when the goal was to accelerate them. Today, by contrast, we recognise that having time for ourselves, and being able to manage it, is healthy and important. That is responsibility: allowing yourself the time to understand the implications of a situation. If you don't give yourself that time, mistakes happen.

FNW: The importance of ITS for the fashion industry?

MW: What [Barbara Franchin](#) does very well is precisely to allow the finalists to take their time. The residency is a huge investment: weeks in which the students step away from the daily influence of school and work and focus on study, research, asking questions, seeking answers, and connecting with people. Barbara also approaches the subject with a holistic vision and enables and facilitates the study of topics such as sustainability- by which I mean the impact of textiles on physical health. In schools and fashion houses this subject isn't discussed; creative directors, for example, are never in contact with a dermatology institute that analyses the impact of certain textile choices on physical health.

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FNW: Dermatology aside, isn't awareness of eco-responsible and sustainable issues taught in fashion schools?

MW: Yes and no. It's in the curricula now, but it's very focused on environmental impact and therefore limited to explaining which materials are best, certifications, processes, social responsibility. All of that is correct, but the central point is somewhat missing: a rethinking of the business model. If you study architecture, they teach you that certain materials should not be used, like asbestos, because they cause cancer- and they teach you that if you design a house badly, it will probably collapse. Why isn't the same taught to fashion designers?

FNW: How did Diesel decide to be part of this competition and to sponsor one of the awards?

Andrea Rosso: Barbara had a brilliant vision. My father has always backed the crazies- the talented ones, though- and that's why he achieved great success. And he knew how to invest well, to the point that we too have had several designers from this competition who designed for our brands. It would be great to stage an exhibition to show where the many successful designers who passed through this contest started.

FNW: OK, it pays to have a creative vision. And where are we headed with sustainability?

AR: In my view, we're in a rather odd moment. It seemed that everything was moving towards improving the sustainability of global fashion production. And yet something seems to have stalled.

Speaking of mindset and education, if someone buys a T-shirt on Shein or Vinted for 9 euros, they do so because they have limited means, but also due to a lack of knowledge. A high-quality, eco-friendly garment will probably last longer. That doesn't mean you have to pay 1,000 euros for a T-shirt. I find that absurd too. But you do need to be careful about how and why you buy that 9-euro T-shirt.

Where sustainability is going is hard to say, because innovation- which is what we may all have rewarded in the past- has not really translated into scalable solutions. Instead, the innovation that matters to me is applied to carryover products, where you need to invest in making them with more responsible ingredients.

FNW: How is OTB approaching this area?

AR: Within OTB we have an in-house kindergarten where we teach children what fabric is. In the future, we probably won't even need to talk about sustainability. I'm convinced of that. For me, the roles of sustainability executives within a company should all disappear, because this concept and its practices should already be fundamentally embedded across every department of a business. Sustainability should exist by default. Education- in the sense of a corporate mindset whereby a brand educates its internal staff, retailers and stakeholders on the principles of circularity- will be fundamental to this.

I had always focused on adults; I like upcycling, I like to use pre-worn garments, such as decommissioned military pieces that I recover for my brand MYAR and give a second life for civilian use. I work exclusively with deadstock, turning it all into children's clothing.

However, I had hoped that more ITS 2026 students would embrace this upcycling approach in their proposals. I would also like Barbara Franchin to consider other editions of ITS outside Trieste.