

ITS Contest 2026: From 74 Countries to One City: Fashion's New Vanguard in Trieste. From 26 March, the work of this year's winners will go on show at ITS Arcademy – Museum of Art in Fashion, alongside designer garments and accessories worn by global stars.

- The final stage of the competition began on 8 March with a creative residency in Trieste and culminates today in the **official presentations to press and jury, followed by the announcement of the special prizes.** Each designer has already received the ITS Excellence Award 10×10×10: a €10,000 grant, a 10-day creative residency and the opportunity to exhibit their work for 10 months in the **Rise and Shine** exhibition at **ITS Arcademy – the first museum in Italy devoted to contemporary fashion.**
- **Ten designers, aged between 22 and 33,** were selected by an international jury of leading figures from fashion and design, members of the global press and digital creators. **The 2026 edition drew more than 700 applicants from 74 countries,** confirming the contest's position as one of the most established platforms for emerging talent worldwide.
- **ITS Contest 2026** is organised with the support of Regione Friuli Venezia Giulia and PromoTurismoFVG, alongside OTB, Swatch and Ray-Ban (part of EssilorLuxottica), long-standing partners in the project.
- **From 26 March,** ITS Arcademy – Museum of Art in Fashion will also present “EXPOSURE – The Power of Being Seen, from Harry Styles to Lady Gaga”, an exhibition dedicated to the role of styling in shaping contemporary imagination. The show is curated by Tom Eerebout, stylist and image-maker to some of the most iconic figures in international pop culture.

Trieste, 20 March 2026 – At a time when much of the world seems to be turning inward, shrinking the space for exchange and imagination, creativity, art and culture once again find themselves on shaky ground — a litmus test of whether a society can remain open, maintain a dialogue and continue to innovate. For that very reason, they are indispensable.

In Trieste — a frontier city historically defined by exchange — new visions converge and are presented each year. **Ten designers aged between 22 and 33,** selected from more than 700 applications from around the world, conclude their journey at ITS Contest today after presenting their collections to the international jury and the press.

They are:

Darius Betschart, France

Steven Chevallier, France

Yi Ding, China

Jamie O'Grady, United Kingdom

William Palmer, United Kingdom

Stan Peeters, Belgium

Chloë Reners, Belgium

Tidjane Tall, France

Anna Maria Vescovi, United States

Wenji Wu, China

The designers have just completed the **ITS Contest 2026 Residency**, a ten-day immersive programme hosted at ITS Arcademy – Museum of Art in Fashion. The residency combined individual and group mentoring, workshops and structured discussions, guiding participants towards a more conscious and rigorous development of their design vision. Key moments included a visit to the headquarters of the **OTB Group**, for direct interaction with the

Group's teams and insight into the processes that drive brand evolution; an in-depth session on research and development processes with the **Design & Trends** team at **EssilorLuxottica**; and an experimental workshop on the concept of time with **Swatch**. Participants also explored the dialogue between archive and contemporary design with **Fondazione Ferragamo**; took part in a technical focus on knitwear, including a visit to **Modateca Deanna**, one of the most significant historical knitwear archives in Europe; and met with **Pitti Immagine** for professional guidance. The programme featured the **Inside Out** experience in collaboration with **Fondazione Sozzani**, with contributions from **Orsola de Castro**, **Sara Sozzani Maino** and **Mattia Battagion**. The residency also included a focus on local artisanal knowledge, particularly the historic techniques behind the traditional Friulian **Scarpetti** footwear, developed in collaboration with the **Museo Carnico delle Arti Popolari Michele Gortani**. Team-building moments, supported by **Eataly**, rounded off the experience.

Now in its 24th edition, ITS Contest — from an idea by Barbara Franchin — has established itself as one of the leading international observatories devoted to emerging talent in fashion design. The theme of this year's edition, **Rise and Shine**, signals a clear stance: an invitation for designers to develop a conscious, structured approach to their work and to give their best at a time when the world seems to be turning inward, favouring conformity and the flattening of creative expression.

The contest does not only spotlight future creative leaders, presenting their work today in Trieste and, perhaps in some cases, going on to roles within major fashion houses, as has happened with their peers now at the helm of Chanel and Gucci. It also brings into focus artisans and innovators who rethink materials, processes and production cycles through a contemporary and sustainable lens, helping to reshape fashion's wider ecosystem. It is **this attention to a plurality of languages and trajectories that defines the identity of ITS Contest.**

As Barbara Franchin, founder of the project, notes: "The ITS Contest jury has always looked for a distinct point of view and, above all, a strong ability to tell stories. For the ten designers, the experience becomes a moment of clarity. The exchange brings them face to face with a simple truth: the stories they tell, in their own personal way, have value. It is not a promise of a glittering career in an industry still struggling to redefine itself, but a confirmation that their thinking deserves attention and can help shape what comes next. At a time like this, fashion — and society — need new voices. Creativity is not an optional extra. It is a necessity."

This sentiment is echoed by the Secretary of State at the Italian Ministry of Culture, Sen. **Lucia Borgonzoni**: "The commitment of Fondazione ITS is a shining example of how creativity can be supported and nurtured as a driving force for cultural and economic growth. Initiatives such as ITS Contest and ITS Arcademy confirm Italy's pivotal role on the international fashion and design scene, offering young talents real opportunities to express themselves and to innovate. Continued support of processes that can foster dialogue between education, research and business is essential, encouraging the development of new creative energies. Because it is precisely from creativity that the future comes into being."

ITS Contest is supported by **Regione Friuli Venezia Giulia** and **PromoTurismoFVG**, alongside a network of brands and companies that share its approach and vision. Together, they form a partnership ecosystem that recognises creativity as a concrete tool for strengthening dialogue between culture, the territory and industry:

"ITS Arcademy is an extraordinary example of the capacity of Fondazione ITS for interpreting and anticipating the cutting edge of fashion and contemporary design. Projects such as the "Exposure – the Power of Being Seen" exhibition demonstrate how creativity can become a tool for interpreting and narrating today's society. At the same time, ITS plays a part in bringing Trieste into a fully international dimension, turning the city into a meeting place for talents, cultures and creative languages from all over the world. A result made possible thanks to the vision and work of President Barbara Franchin and the quality of the exhibition project curated by Tom Eerebout, to whom

the Region extends its thanks for their commitment in strengthening Trieste's role as a cultural and creative workshop on a global scale". — **Massimiliano Fedriga**, President of the Friuli Venezia Giulia Autonomous Region

"Creativity is this industry's strength, our weapon for building its future. Young designers must bring new ideas and the courage to break the mould, with sustainability as the focus, which for them is a natural value. For many years, ITS has been an important platform for those showing a distinctive vision and with something new to say. I wish this year's winners every success in investing in their talent, in what sets them apart from others, and in making it shine by transforming it into something unique and recognisable. This is how fashion continues to evolve."

— **Renzo Rosso**, Presidente e fondatore del Gruppo OTB.

"It is both a joy and an endless source of creative energy to continue supporting ITS and ITS Arcademy. Each year, the thrill of discovering new talent, the excitement of sharing in the dreams of young creatives and the curiosity of seeing new languages through their eyes give us renewed drive. They push us to look further, inspire hope and keep our hearts racing. Swatch and ITS — a love story that keeps ticking."

— **Carlo Giordanetti** - CEO Swatch Art Peace Hotel

"The creative thinking of the new generations lights up the future as a space of possibility. With EssilorLuxottica and ITS Contest, we aim to nurture that energy — where curiosity, experimentation and vision become tools for positive change. This is where the future of design begins: with those who dare to imagine it differently."

— **Matteo Battiston**, Chief Design Officer at EssilorLuxottica

The Jury

The designers were evaluated by a jury of figures from fashion, culture and the media, charged with recognising talent through the distinctive perspective that has established ITS Contest as an international benchmark for discovery:

Andrea Rosso, OTB Sustainability Ambassador

Barbara Franchin, President, Fondazione ITS, Founder ITS Contest

Carlo Capasa, Chairman of Camera Nazionale della Moda Italiana

Carlo Giordanetti, CEO Swatch Art Peace Hotel

Dana Thomas, Author

Deanna Ferretti, Founder Miss Deanna and Co-Founder Modateca Deanna

Emanuele Coccia, Philosopher

Francesca Tacconi, Pitti Immagine Guest Designers Curator

Hanan Besovic, ideservecouture - Fashion Commentator

Karen Binns, Global Fashion Director, 10 Magazine & 10 Men

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

Matteo Battiston, Chief Design Officer at EssilorLuxottica

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

Maximilian Raynor, Designer

Odunayo Ojo, You Tuber, Fashion Journalist

Orsola de Castro, Author, Activist, Creative Director at Estethica

Sara Sozzani Maino, Creative Director Fondazione Sozzani

Stefania Ricci, Director of Museo Salvatore Ferragamo and Fondazione Ferragamo

Sonia Veroni, CEO Modateca Deanna / Director of Master in Creative Knitwear Design di Accademia Costume & Moda

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

Takeharu Hirakawa, Fashion Critic and Consultant

Tom Eerebout, Stylist & Fashion Consultant

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

ITS Contest 2026 Awards

I:C 10 x 10 x 10 AWARD

The ten selected designers receive the I:C 10 x 10 x 10 Award, which includes:

- participation in a ten-day creative residency in Trieste, working alongside tutors and industry professionals;
- the opportunity to exhibit their work for ten months in the exhibition Rise and Shine, hosted at ITS Arcademy – Museum of Art in Fashion;
- a €10,000 grant.

I:C JURY SPECIAL MENTION

The I:C Jury Special Mention is a special recognition awarded to an ITS Contest 2026 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. Rooted in genuine listening and deep understanding, this mention serves as a springboard for the future, empowering emerging talent and helping to shape the next steps of their creative journey. In addition, the designer will return the following year as a jury member, joining a unique ITS network which includes some of the most renowned fashion insiders, and providing guidance to the next generation of emerging talents.

I:C OTB AWARD

The OTB Group will host a dedicated training day at its headquarters, offering the selected designers a first-hand insight into the development processes behind the Group's garments and accessories. The programme will also include a mentoring and coaching session on sustainability best practice, led by OTB's in-house experts.

I:C RAY-BAN PART OF ESSILORLUXOTTICA AWARD

The award includes a dedicated day at the prestigious EssilorLuxottica Experience Center (Via Tortona 35, Milan). The selected finalist will present their project to an internal audience and take part in a networking session, with the opportunity for direct exchange. The programme also offers an immersive introduction to the workings of EssilorLuxottica's Design Team. The finalist will work alongside the Style Office, gaining a first-hand insight into the creative and product development processes within the eyewear industry.

I:C CAMERA NAZIONALE DELLA MODA ITALIANA AWARD

Camera Nazionale della Moda Italiana will award a €5,000 scholarship, granted on the basis of the designer's creativity, with special focus on sustainability in its broadest sense — including product sustainability, environmental responsibility and social impact.

I:C FONDAZIONE FERRAGAMO AWARD

Fondazione Ferragamo will offer a residency in Florence to one designer, chosen for their knowledge of materials and capacity for innovation. The experience includes an immersive introduction to the Ferragamo world and to the places that inspired the work of Salvatore Ferragamo.

I:C FONDAZIONE SOZZANI AWARD

Fondazione Sozzani will offer the selected designer a dedicated presentation of their collection in its Milan spaces during 2026. The designer will be supported through curatorial guidance, exhibition setup, and communication activities aimed at enhancing the project and amplifying its visibility among a qualified audience within the fashion and contemporary culture sectors.

I:C MODATECA DEANNA AWARD

Modateca Deanna will host the finalists of ITS Contest for a special visit of its headquarters, where they will also develop a specific knitwear workshop. The designers will have the opportunity to visit Modateca Deanna's historical archives, the technical and research archive, the library, and the vintage collections. The day together could ideally begin around 11:00 a.m., allowing all participants to arrive, and end around 6:00 p.m., thus allowing for departure from the nearest airports. Possibly, the Modateca visit would be organised after the residency.

I:C PITTI IMMAGINE AWARD

An exclusive invitation to attend Pitti Uomo, offering the winning designer a unique opportunity to immerse themselves in one of the most influential international fashion events. During the event, the winner will be guided by a dedicated member of the Pitti team, gaining firsthand insight into the dynamics of the fair, meeting key industry professionals across all sectors—including exhibitors, buyers, and press—and attending selected fashion shows. The experience will be further amplified through dedicated communication, including official mentions in Pitti's press releases.

I:C WRÅD AWARD

WRÅD offers an exclusive three-day immersion in the Italian fashion supply chain, starting from its headquarters in Rome. The programme is tailored to the designer's specific needs and ambitions, with the opportunity to meet leading Italian manufacturers and brands relevant to their development and to present their work directly to them. The selected designer will also gain access to the teams and resources of WRÅD and Inside Out Fashion Textiles & Home for mentorship, consultancy and ongoing support. All travel expenses will be covered by WRÅD.

Additional Awards

ITS PUBLIC'S CHOICE AWARD

Worth €5,000, the award will be presented in January 2027 to the designer selected by visitors to the exhibition Rise and Shine.

ITS Arcademy - Museum of Art in Fashion's Forthcoming Exhibitions

The works of the ten designers will be included in the collection of **ITS Arcademy – Museum of Art in Fashion**, which comprises more than 15,000 design objects gathered across the various editions of **ITS Contest** — from visionary creative projects to garments, accessories, jewellery and photography. The collection holds significant historical value, tracing the evolution of creativity in its most radical, artistic and experimental forms.

From 26 March 2026 to 3 January 2027, ITS Arcademy inaugurates a new season with two new exhibitions:

RISE AND SHINE - The 10 Designers of ITS Contest 2026

The showcase presenting the projects of the ITS Contest talents, selected from hundreds of applications worldwide, has become a regular fixture in the museum's programme. Each edition renews the dialogue between emerging creatives and visitors through the Public's Choice Award, which invites the public to vote for the project they find most compelling. A simple act of participation that turns the visit into a shared experience — a direct encounter between those who create and those who observe.

EXPOSURE – The Power of Being Seen, from Harry Styles to Lady Gaga

Curated by stylist **Tom Eerebout**, the exhibition traces the process of image-making — from styling and staging to the backstage work that precedes the moment a look becomes part of the collective imagination. It explores how the public image of contemporary icons is constructed and how fashion becomes a powerful tool in shaping identity.

tity, symbolic authority and pop-cultural narrative. Through garments and accessories worn by **Lady Gaga, Harry Styles, Beyoncé, Madonna, Björk, Charli XCX, Gwyneth Paltrow, Damiano David, Kylie Jenner, Jenna Ortega** and **Chappell Roan**, among others, EXPOSURE maps a range of styles and visual languages, alongside the work of numerous designers and fashion houses that have shaped the aesthetics of our time — including former ITS Contest participants and finalists, whose early works now form part of the museum's collection.

Tom Eerebout, has made his name as one of the most recognisable voices in contemporary celebrity styling. Over the course of his career, he has worked with leading figures in music, film and performance, including **Lady Gaga, Kylie Minogue, Banks, Austin Butler, Rebecca Ferguson** and **Sylvie Kreusch**. Over more than a decade, Eerebout has styled international tours, music videos, red carpet appearances, editorial projects and fashion campaigns. He served as Fashion Director for Lady Gaga's Las Vegas residencies Enigma and Jazz & Piano, as well as for The Chromatica Ball, in collaboration with Sandra Amador. Defined by precision, versatility and a strong visual intelligence, his work approaches fashion as a tool for narrative construction and identity-making. Through his images and projects, Eerebout continues to question the role of dress in shaping visibility and public perception.

Outside the museum, a series of large-scale images extends the exhibition into the urban fabric. The dialogue between performance icons and designer garments invites us to reflect on image culture and on the role of creativity in constructing it.

The exhibitions at ITS Arcademy – Museum of Art in Fashion are held under the patronage of the **Italian Ministry of Culture** and **RAI FVG**. They are supported by **Regione Friuli Venezia Giulia** and **PromoTurismoFVG**, and co-organised with the **Comune di Trieste**.

“ITS Arcademy represents the culmination of a project that began more than twenty years ago and has since opened itself to the fabric of the city, offering a unique opportunity: the chance for anyone, regardless of background, to engage with creativity. ITS has not only created something unique in our city, something the world looks to with admiration, it allows us to create ourselves. The heritage of ITS Arcademy, with its internationally oriented exhibitions, embodies the spirit of Trieste: a border city, open and dynamic, where cultures meet and new ideas emerge. It is a source of pride for all of us.”

— **Roberto Dipiazza**, Mayor of Trieste

ITS Contest Partners

Io Sono FVG (I am Friuli Venezia Giulia)

ITS Contest 2026 is proud of its roots in the Friuli Venezia Giulia region and of its role in helping to shape the territory's cultural future. Embracing the spirit of exchange that defines this border region, the contest acts as both a gathering point and a generator of new perspectives.

ITS Contest 2026 is supported by Regione Friuli Venezia Giulia and PromoTurismoFVG.

OTB Group is the international fashion group behind the iconic brands Diesel, Jil Sander, Maison Margiela, Marni and Viktor&Rolf. The group also controls Staff International and Brave Kid, and holds a stake in the American brand Amiri. An acronym for “Only The Brave”, OTB is driven by the belief in pushing beyond the boundaries of fashion and style, supporting international creative talent and expressing the innovative spirit and uncompromising vision of its founder and chairman, Renzo Rosso. With more than 7,000 employees worldwide, the Group is

built on a digitally led, consumer-focused approach, a long-term commitment to sustainable and technology-driven business practices, and strong social engagement through OTB Foundation.

For further information: OTB Corporate Communication
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SWATCH

Conceived from the outset as a democratic and universal object, Swatch is rooted in diversity, multiplicity, dynamism, inclusion and the exchange of positive energies that intersect and reinforce one another. Since 2011, this philosophy has taken tangible form in the Swatch Art Peace Hotel in Shanghai. Located in the heart of one of China's most dynamic and fast-evolving metropolises, the Art Peace Hotel is a unique artist residency in scale and scope. It welcomes creatives from every country, discipline and generation, offering them a temporary home for several months to develop their work, connect with fellow artists and engage with the local cultural community. To date, the residency has hosted more than 600 artists from 60 countries. Among them, 10 were recipients of the ITS/Swatch Art Peace Hotel Award in previous editions of ITS Contest.

RAY-BAN PART OF ESSILORLUXOTTICA

Ray-Ban is a global icon in eyewear, synonymous with timeless style, authentic craftsmanship and a pioneering spirit. Founded in 1937 and now part of the EssilorLuxottica portfolio, the brand has inspired generations with its legendary Aviator and Wayfarer frames, while continuing to evolve through innovative collections such as Ray-Ban Meta — where signature design meets advanced artificial intelligence technology. From music and cinema to fashion and art, Ray-Ban has long stood for individuality and cultural expression. Its frames move beyond seasonal trends, encouraging wearers to express themselves through style and personal perspective. Built on a legacy of authenticity and innovation, Ray-Ban remains a leading force in contemporary eyewear — where heritage meets the future.

More about Ray-Ban: Website: [ray-ban.com](https://www.ray-ban.com) - Instagram: @rayban - YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/@Ray-BanFilms> - TikTok: <https://www.tiktok.com/@rayban>

Patronage

ITS Contest 2026 is organised by Fondazione ITS under the patronage of **Camera Nazionale della Moda Italiana, Fondazione Ferragamo, Fondazione Sozzani, Miss Deanna, Pitti Immagine** and **Inside Out Fashion Textiles & Home**.

Camera Nazionale della Moda Italiana is the non-profit association that regulates, coordinates and promotes the development of Italian fashion. It represents the highest cultural values of the sector and works to safeguard, strengthen and enhance its image, both in Italy and internationally.

Fondazione Ferragamo was established in 2013 to share with new generations the values of craftsmanship and Made in Italy that defined the work of Salvatore Ferragamo. Its primary aim is to inspire young talents to pursue their creative ambitions.

Fondazione Sozzani is a cultural institution established in Milan by Carla Sozzani in 2016 to promote photography, culture, fashion and the arts. The Foundation oversees the Galleria Carla Sozzani, continuing the important public role the gallery has played since 1990. Sara Sozzani Maino curates and coordinates projects dedicated to education, responsibility and new-generation creatives.

Modateca Deanna, the International Fashion Documentation Centre, preserves and promotes the identity of the knitwear company Miss Deanna, founded by Deanna Ferretti in the late 1950s. Today, as a research and creative hub led by Sonia Veroni, Modateca Deanna plays a significant role in promoting Italian knitwear.

Pitti Immagine, a future-forward concept curating the top products and stylistic evolutions through international fairs, events and cultural initiatives.

Inside Out Fashion, Textiles & Home (IO FTH) is one of six divisions within Inside Out, a holding founded by Suzy Amis Cameron with the mission of developing innovative and responsible solutions to address urgent global challenges. Inside Out operates through a systemic approach across six areas — Science Research & Technology, Fashion Textiles & Home, Food, Education, Media and Wellness — bringing together creativity, research and technology to generate economic, environmental and social value. The activities and ventures within IO FTH form a structured ecosystem for sustainability, articulated across four complementary areas: **Education, Media, Brands and Consultancy**. All departments are supported by the wider Inside Out divisions and by investment in scientific research and innovation, in collaboration with institutions including the **Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Texas Tech and Georgia Tech**.

TECH SUPPORTER

Domnia is the technology partner for the integrated management of bookings, ticketing and access passes. It provides advanced digital solutions for the cultural, tourism and trade fair sectors, streamlining entry processes and optimising operational flows for organisers and visitors alike.

PHARMA SUPPORTER

Eurospital, founded in Trieste in 1948, is an international scientific company operating across three business areas in the healthcare sector. It develops and markets pharmaceutical products, diagnostic devices and specialist nutritional foods, including protein-free and gluten-free products.

TRAVEL SUPPORTER

Trieste Airport offers flights to domestic and European destinations. Thanks to its strategic location, it serves as a gateway to Friuli Venezia Giulia and Veneto, as well as to Slovenia, Croatia and Austria. Connectivity is further enhanced by the airport's intermodal hub, which integrates a railway station, bus terminal and passenger terminal within a single infrastructure.

Fondazione ITS also works with **Urban Scents** 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 of 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 Pergamon Museum in Berlin, the Museum of Palazzo Poggi in Bologna or the Burgtheater in Vienna.

[Download the images here](#)

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