

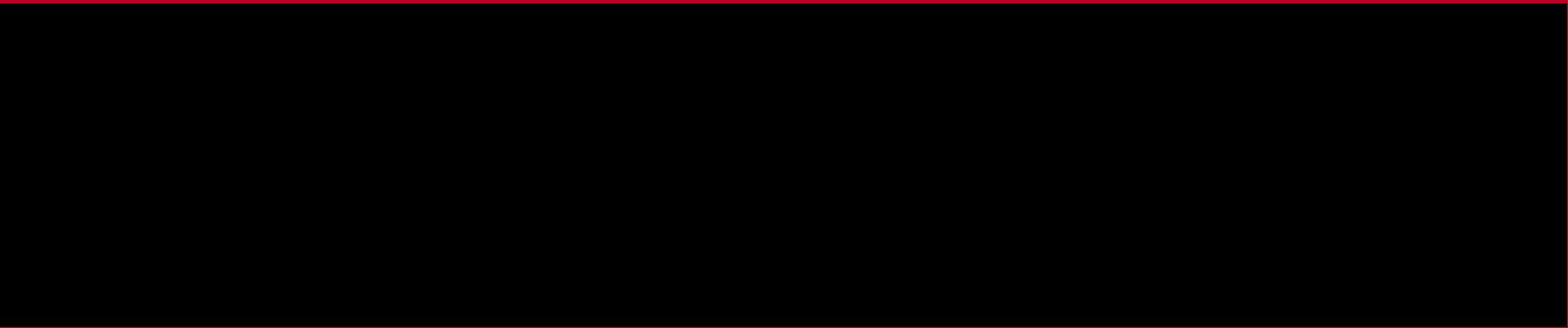
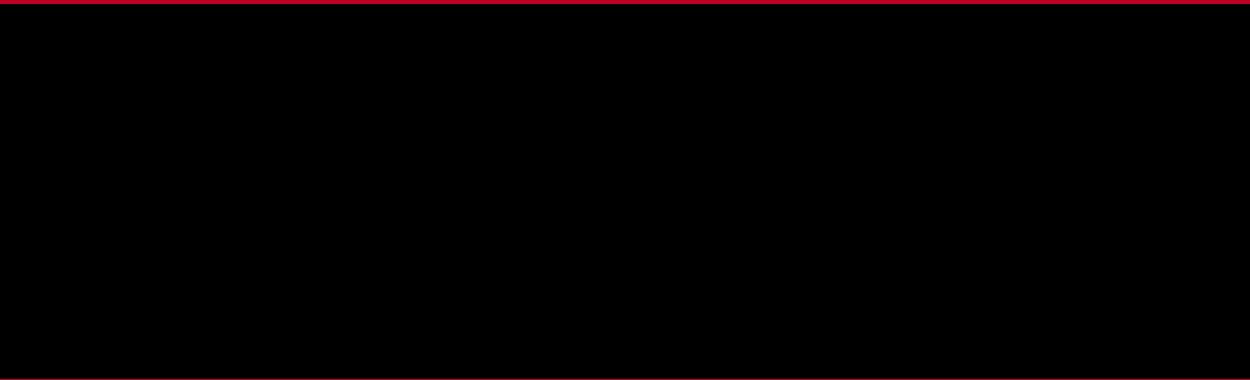
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**REAL  
LEATHER.  
STAY  
DIFFERENT.**

**REAL  
LEATHER.  
STAY  
DIFFERENT.**

2020/21  
**THE ANNUAL**  
STUDENT DESIGN COMPETITION





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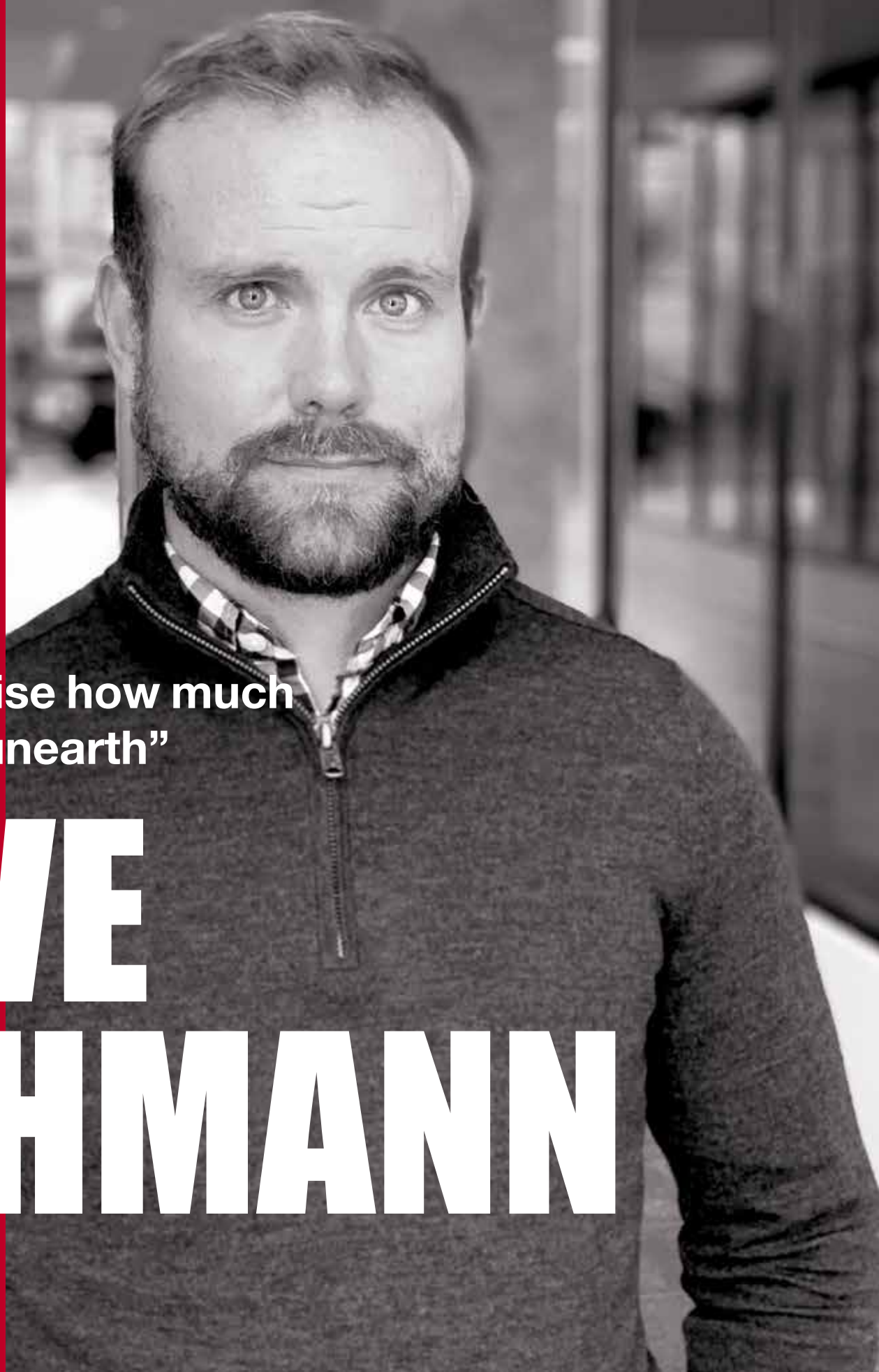
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## INTRODUCTION

“Little did we realise how much talent we would unearth”

# STEVE SOTHMANN



## COMPETITION CHAIR AND PRESIDENT OF LEATHER & HIDE COUNCIL OF AMERICA

**Welcome to our celebration of a  
new generation of leather design**

It is my great pleasure to introduce this celebration of young talent. A celebration of a new generation of designers that has chosen to work with leather – the most beautiful, durable and adaptable by-product there is.

My organisation, the Leather and Hide Council of America, represents companies working in all aspects of the leather industry, and part funds Real Leather. Stay Different. – the website that hosts the Student Design Competitions.

When we first came up with the idea of a competition, our aims were to promote leather and educate people about it. We thought it would be a great way of engaging students, young designers and educators. Little did we realise how much talent we would unearth. Little did we anticipate the vision, ingenuity and creativity of the entrants.

My fellow judges and I had a taxing but rewarding task. The sheer volume and quality of the entrants took us by surprise. It was a difficult job but, as you will see, one that was well worthwhile.

You will get to know the winners and runners-up of our International competition and our

Regional competitions in China, Taiwan, Italy and the UK.

In addition to spotlighting our amazing winners, we are taking this opportunity to celebrate some of the pioneers in leather sustainability, show you a little bit about leather's use and, if you were in any doubt, remind you of its heritage and beauty with some amazing photography.

We must make use of our waste products to establish a more sustainable society and combat the effects of climate change. We must use cowhides, by-products of the meat and dairy industries, to avoid the waste of their disposal and to avoid the needless creation of oil-based, plastic alternatives. Hundreds of millions of cowhides are discarded – either burned or sent to landfill – each year. This is a criminal waste of a sustainable resource. We are at a crossroads right now, and how we act determines our future.

But, for now, this book is all about the extraordinary young talent that has announced itself. And judging by this generation of designers, the future's in great hands.

## INTRODUCTION

# 2021 CAMPAIGN SUMMARY

Real Leather. Stay Different. created the Student Design Competitions to promote the uses of leather and educate people on its sustainability, beauty and durability by engaging with the next generation of talent. The success of the competitions took us by surprise.

The number of countries and universities involved, the number of entries, the interest from the general public... Everything surpassed our expectations. Here's a look at the competition's success in cold, hard numbers.

**1 CAMPAIGN**

One global campaign that engages consumers through its digital platform and social channels to educate and inspire the next generation

**9 CHANNELS**

An expansive catch-all digital presence building a community of advocates, from Facebook to Instagram and Twitter to WeChat

**58 NATIONALITIES**

Engaging with students from across the globe

**200 UNIVERSITIES**

Partnering with top universities and colleges all over the world in locations including Italy, China, Taiwan and the UK

**2<sub>k</sub> STUDENT COMPETITION ENTRIES**

Educating students on the benefits of leather, inviting them to create and compete

**43<sub>k</sub> FOLLOWERS**

Attracting social media followers to its network, to feed information and news, now and in the future

**530<sub>k</sub> ENGAGEMENTS**

Stimulating activity, conversation, sharing of information – and in turn, brand loyalty. Likes to shares and everything in between

**322<sub>m</sub> IMPRESSIONS**

Spreading the word by being seen and recognized by the right people, at the right time. A combination of paid and organic activity.



# MEET THE JUDGES

Our panel of judges comes from the very cream of the fashion and design industries. Their influence defines the catwalk trends and sets the media agenda.



## MEET THE JUDGES

**“Form and function  
must come together  
seamlessly, beautifully  
and practically”**

# MILAN

## ART DIRECTOR OF ROLLACOASTER MAGAZINE

# MILADINOV

Milan worked his way up from intern to one of the best jobs in the media – Art Director of competition partner Rollacoaster Magazine.

### 1 — HE SAYS OF HIS BEGINNINGS

“Interning is hard, but it is the best way to learn your craft and develop your skills. This is how you forge friendships and relationships and build a professional network. I once worked on a project for Nike – and seeing the result of my labour fly-posted all around central London was one of my proudest moments. Working in the creative industry is all about opportunities – recognizing and seizing them when they happen. You need to keep your eyes open and your ear to the ground.”

### 2 — HIS DESIGN PHILOSOPHY IS

“This is actually quite an easy question. For me, good design must always be made as the answer to a problem, and must be answered in an aesthetically pleasing way. Both form and function must come together seamlessly, beautifully and practically. Too often, function is neglected to the benefit of the shape and form... Thing is, function is an integral part of the definition of an object or a piece of clothing. It is why it is so important that it is included in the overall design.”

### 3 — HIS TIPS ON SUCCEEDING IN THE FASHION INDUSTRY

“Passion is the number one quality to succeed in any chosen career, but I would say that it is especially true for the fashion industry. Passion for what you are doing, your own craft, passion for what you have become a part of and passion for the whole industry.”

## MEET THE JUDGES

“He told me to  
get lost at first”

CREATIVE DIRECTOR  
OF THE PENTLAND  
GROUP

KATIE  
GREENYER



Katie's persistence got her a work experience position with Wayne Hemingway's Red or Dead. She continued working for Wayne as she studied at the Liverpool School of Art and Design.

### 1 — SHE SAYS OF HER BEGINNINGS

“I started stalking Wayne Hemingway, waiting for him outside his office in London. I approached him as he was coming out and told him I wanted to work for him. He told me to get lost at first, but then reconsidered and said that he would possibly consider hiring me if I could come up with designs with the title MAD IN ENGLAND? Feeling a little dejected, I left and headed to Oxford Street to look at the shops. As I was coming out of the tube station, there was a man with a placard saying: ‘Less passion from less protein: Less Fish, Meat, Bird, Cheese, Eggs, Peas, Beans, Nuts and sitting.’

“I thought he was a little mad. So I asked for his name, bought his 12p booklet and took some pictures of him and his placard. I found a Boots, got the photos developed in the one-hour speedy service and returned to the Red or Dead offices. I asked for Wayne, showed him my pictures and the booklet. He told me I'd better come in.”

### 2 — HER DESIGN PHILOSOPHY IS

“In my opinion, an outstanding design needs to be original and authentic but, more importantly, it needs to show potential commerciality.”

### 3 — HER TIPS ON SUCCEEDING IN THE FASHION INDUSTRY

“I only have a few words of advice for those who not only want to make it into the fashion industry but also succeed: persist and persevere. Persistence is the key to lasting a long time in this industry.”



MEET THE JUDGES

Mike started as a model and got his break when he filled in for a stylist who fell ill.

1 — HE SAYS OF HIS BEGINNINGS

“Right place, right time! After a short stint modeling in my home city of Perth, Australia, a fashion week designer that I had walked the runway for allowed me to assist on a female -led shoot. The stylist fell ill, so I volunteered to take on the role and, as luck would have it, an editor walking by loved the shoot and offered me further work. You depend on people. It’s these people and collaborations that have seen my work featured among their famous exhibitions and books. It’s awe-inspiring and humbling.”

2 — HIS DESIGN PHILOSOPHY IS

“I am very classic and traditional - I like practical. A great design has to translate onto the body and make sure it serves its intended purpose. I look at fabric, texture, silhouette, color and overall craftsmanship. Even if it’s

inexpensive, it must be executed well. I am very particular when making an expensive purchase — either for myself or for a client. It has to be something I love absolutely - liking it is just not enough - in order to responsibly justify the price tag.”

3 — HIS TIPS ON SUCCEEDING IN THE FASHION INDUSTRY

“You need a relentless respect for the role and the responsibility of managing garments and money. It’s an ongoing challenge to respect what we really do at the end of the day and how we strive for its success. Taking the extra time to do it right within a fast-paced industry and as a team takes focus, planning and patience.”

WORLD-RENOWNED FASHION STYLIST  
AND CONTRIBUTING EDITOR OF  
REAL LEATHER. STAY DIFFERENT.



MIKE ADLER

# HERE COMES THE JUDGE! ON THE ROAD WITH MIKE ADLER

In a 20-year career covering catwalk, red carpet, editorial and haute couture styling, Mike Adler, Real Leather. Stay Different. contributing editor, has worked with talents including Glenn Close, Elizabeth Hurley, Monica Bellucci, Maisie Williams, Natalie Dormer, Josh O'Connor, Emma Corrin, Emerald Fennell, Brandon Thomas Lee and Sergei Polunin.





# “I CONTINUE TO BE AMAZED AT COUTURE WHEN IT COMES TO LEATHER”

**Things worked differently for most people last year. We had to find new ways of working, and travelling became difficult. So how did Mike get on?**

“I've done a lot, actually. I've managed to abide by the Covid rules and still travel Europe. I was doing work in Rome and Milan, I've been in Paris and the south of France numerous times. I recently came back from America - I was in Central America, New York, San Francisco and LA. The only place I haven't really been able to go to is my home, which is Australia, but everywhere else, I've been able to move around. I've literally not stopped.”

What has impressed you in the world of leather this year? “I continue to be amazed at couture when it comes to leather and brands like Schiaparelli. I did a piece on it recently, on the RLSD website, where I highlighted some of their pieces, but Daniel Roseberry and his leather work, crosses the boundary of couture. I've just found it to be completely incredible, because when we think of couture, a lot of the time we think about

silks and intricate, delicate ways of building garments, especially when we're talking Dior and Chanel Haute Couture. They've always worked with the finer fabrics. And yet Dior, Chanel and brands like Schiaparelli have been working with leather and laser-cut leather. Leather panelled shoulders, belts and opera gloves (at Valentino Couture), shoes of course and then full head-to-toe leather runway looks. So, in addition to the accessories and the bags that I think would normally accessorise looks, leather has now become a central fabric, which is amazing.”

How about sustainability? Is the message getting across? “Yes, absolutely. I choose to not eat red meat, but I know leather is a by-product and it needs to be used. If you're not thinking about sustainability, then you're not relevant. It's definitely in design. Our industry is so full of new ideas and new brands and talents... It's not only about the established brands but also about what's happening next, the new innovation so, with the message that's coming through from the younger generation, obviously when we look around at what's happening in the industry — it's really fuelled by the younger generation — when it comes to the colleges and universities, that sort of push is hard to ignore, and that's amazing.”



Sure, which brings us very nicely on to the design competition. What was your overall impression of being a judge? “It's amazing. It's actually quite surprising, not in a shocking way, but it really made me think more about whether or not I'm even relevant, because I think there's something really nice about coming with experience to the party, but then it's even more shocking in such a good way to be able to have your mind blown by the pure talent and the innovation of these young designers who just have such incredible ideas.

“So, as somebody in an industry, as a mentor to assistants that work for me or younger people in the industry, as I had been mentored, it's quite amazing to continue to be educated as well. My job is to edit, so it's almost like you see the presentation of these amazing students, and I can very quickly edit through the parts that are sensational versus the parts that maybe need improvement.”

Do you look at entries as if you are styling a shoot and pull things together in that way? “No, no, I don't think I do. We talk about experiences, about how we apply things. I don't think it's really about styling. I think it's more about production, manufacturing, clients, purchasing, the retail space, the runway. I think it's across the board - that's the great thing about this competition, to be honest with you, that it covers so many different parts of the industry. You don't have to be a runway designer to take part in it - you can work with accessories, you can work with jewellery, you can work with shoes.

“So, there are no real rules to this competition, and I think that was really nice to observe. You had some designers who were really focused in one particular area and then others that were looking even scientifically for inspiration. I think Emily, who actually won the competition, gained inspiration from her brother's science project, so that actually had really nothing to do with, I guess, what other brands may look

towards in their research. So, I think that's the most exciting thing, that it could literally be for anyone with a design interest.”

Was that your standout piece? “One of them. I had probably three or four, to be honest, that I thought were really incredible. Some that didn't make the top four. There were a couple of guys who I thought had some really, really strong menswear design elements, but, for sure, when it came down to Emily, that jacket was incredible. You could just see it on anyone, you could see it in a store, you could see it in a photo shoot, you could pretty much picture it in any sort of situation. I could see a client wanting to buy it, I could see myself wanting to wear it, you could see it in endless colors, you could see it in endless constructions. I think it was very, very smart. Very technical.”

And what are your hopes for next year? “I think it would be really cool to see more people involved now that we've seen how successful it is. I think the one space that is hugely important to me is not only when they're submitting their documents and their sketch works, but something that I think could be really valuable for a judge would be the video entry. It would be nice to see more of the work and actually make more of it. Some of our video entries were fantastic, they took you inside the showroom or took you into the making. So I think that's something that I would highly recommend because it gives us a really good insight into the production side of things and the knowledge behind it.

“Also, there were definitely some entries that were brilliant on paper, but technically there were questions over whether they could actually be produced. So I would highly recommend that people produce samples.

“But really, the competitions were a wild success this year. And we're definitely looking forward to even bigger and even better next year.”

**“IT’S SHOCKING IN SUCH A GOOD WAY TO HAVE YOUR MIND BLOWN AWAY BY THE PURE TALENT”**

**Follow Mike on Instagram  
@stylistmikeadler**





# SUSTAINABLE?



THE FASHION INDUSTRY PRODUCES  
**144 BILLION**  
ITEMS OF CLOTHING EVERY YEAR



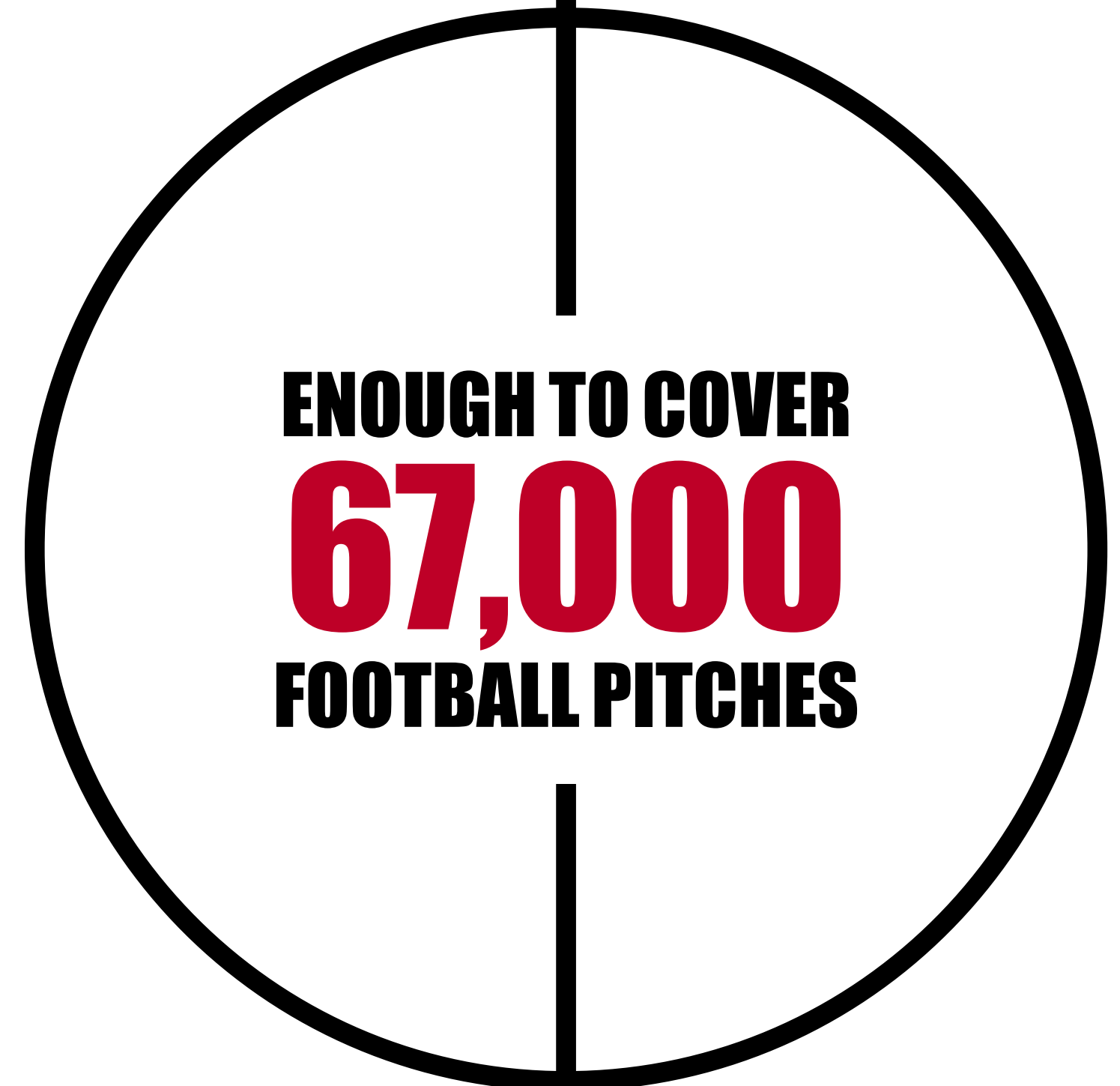
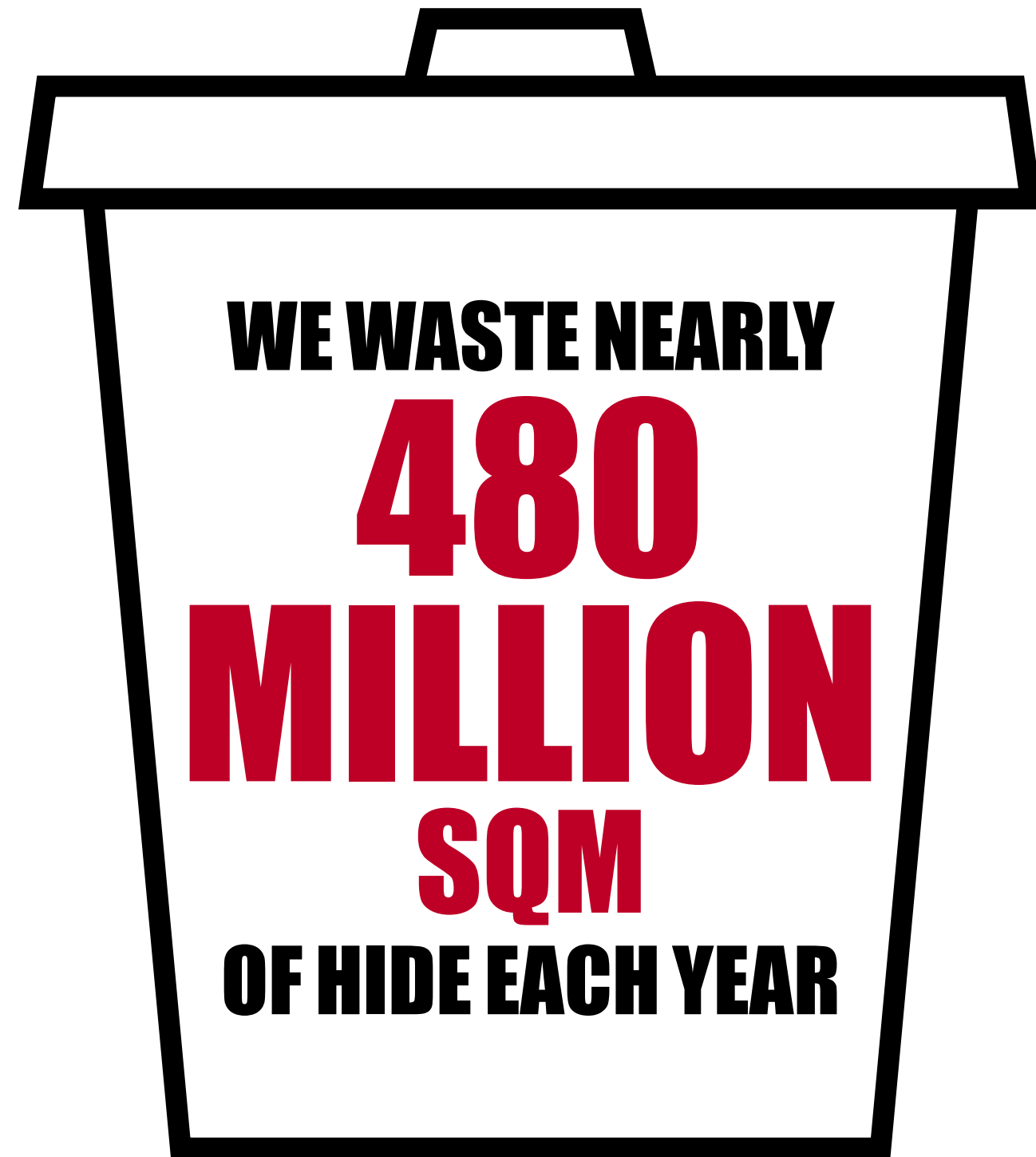
WE NEED  
**7.5M ACRES**  
OF FOREST

JUST TO  
RECAPTURE  
THE CARBON  
THIS CREATES

One of the reasons we are so passionate about leather is the twin sustainable benefits of its use. Not only does using leather save hides from destruction by incineration or landfill, it also takes the place of other materials, often synthetic and produced from fossil fuels.

Every time a cowhide is used for leather, the carbon that would be released by its destruction is saved. As is the carbon that would be emitted during the manufacture of an alternative. Our competition winners can tell you – using real leather is the true definition of a 'win-win situation'.





# APPAREL GLOBAL

The International and Regional competitions attracted thousands of entries from students based all over the world.

INTERNATIONAL  
COMPETITION  
WINNER

USA

The International competition received 362 entries from...

Argentina	Germany	Portugal
Australia	Hungary	Romania
Austria	India	Slovenia
Belgium	Iran	South Africa
Brazil	Ireland	South Korea
Canada	Israel	Spain
China	Italy	Sri Lanka
Denmark	Jordan	Switzerland
Ecuador	Malaysia	Taiwan
Estonia	Mexico	UK
Finland	Netherlands	USA
France	Poland	Vietnam

REGIONAL COMPETITIONS

UK

22 Entries  
5 Universities

ITALY

80 Entries  
3 Universities

CHINA

800 Entries  
23 Universities

TAIWAN

540 Entries  
33 Universities



## WINNER PROFILES

# CHINA WINNERS

**The Chinese Real Leather. Stay Different. Student Design Competition, held in partnership with the China Leather Industry Association (CLIA), culminated in a fantastic awards ceremony in Xinji, China's leather capital, despite the disruption caused by the pandemic. The competition attracted more than 800 entries from 23 universities.**

Attended by more than 300 guests, including representatives from local government, the tanning and leather industries, the fashion industry and the media, as well as students and educators from participating schools, the ceremony celebrated winners from both the 2020 and 2021 competitions.

Here's our selection of winners.



## WINNER PROFILES



### CHINA GOLD APPAREL WINNER

# LUO JINGTIAN & CAO LIWEI

Luo Jingtian and Cao Liwei of the Northeast Electric Power University designed a clothing creation called Fantasy Diary 1. They took inspiration from the paintings of Li Bai and words written by the ancients.

#### THEY SAID

"Leather fabric is very warm and lightweight. It has good breathability and very strong flexibility, making people feel comfortable. The surface lines are natural, smooth and delicate. Leather feels good and is very strong. Leather holds good color."



### 2021 SILVER APPAREL WINNER

Jiang Yinzhu & Hua Yangyang



CHINA  
GOLD FOOTWEAR WINNER

# WANG ZHEN

Wang Zheng is studying at the Beijing Institute of Fashion Technology. His design, called Octopus, combines 3D printing, bionic design, modular design and traditional leather sculpting techniques. The shape of each leather carving is movable and can be freely arranged and distributed like an octopus sucker.

## HE SAID

"A good leather product can be used for a lifetime, to eliminate waste in order to practice the most efficient concept of sustainable development. As designers, we should try our best to give full play to our creative ideas and bring the advantages of leather to the foreground. Let people feel the beautiful experience and artistic value of leather products."







## CHINA GOLD ACCESSORIES WINNER

# YANG SHANSHAN

Yang Shanshan studies at the Beijing Institute of Fashion Technology. Her design combines gloves and vest and is called Warmth of Hugging. She was inspired by her little sister, who sought her hugs every night before bed.



### SHE SAID

“The gesture of hugging yourself means warmth. The user of my design could easily get a feeling of ‘embracing themselves’ and hugging the bag by running their hands through the sleeve openings on both sides to the gloves. If you zip up both the bottom and a small portion in the middle, the sleeves turn into hand straps and the gloves and vest become a container.”

## WINNER PROFILES

# TAIWAN WINNERS

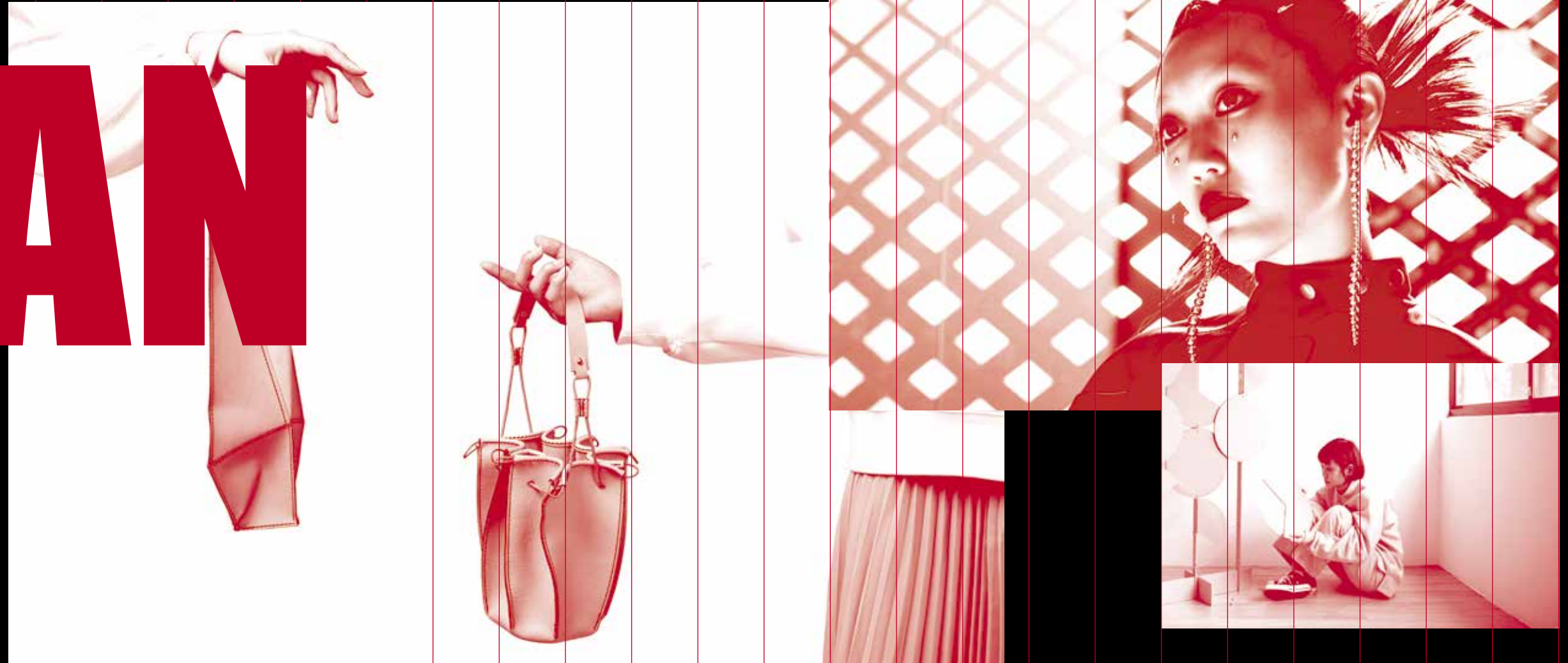
**Taiwan Region design winners pay tribute to feminist campaigners, seek to find privacy in shared spaces and inspiration in plant life – and motocross.**

The competition, held in association with the Taiwan International Leather Association (TILA), attracted more than 540 entries from students at 34 participating universities. It featured three categories: accessories, apparel and design.

The winners were celebrated at a glittering awards ceremony which took place at the historic Red House Theatre, Taipei.

Representatives attended from the tanning, leather and fashion industries, local brands retailers, media, and government as well as students and educators from participating schools. The awards ceremony featured a catwalk show organised by participating students and featuring their designs.

**“The winners were celebrated at a glittering awards ceremony”**





TAIWAN  
GOLD APPAREL WINNER

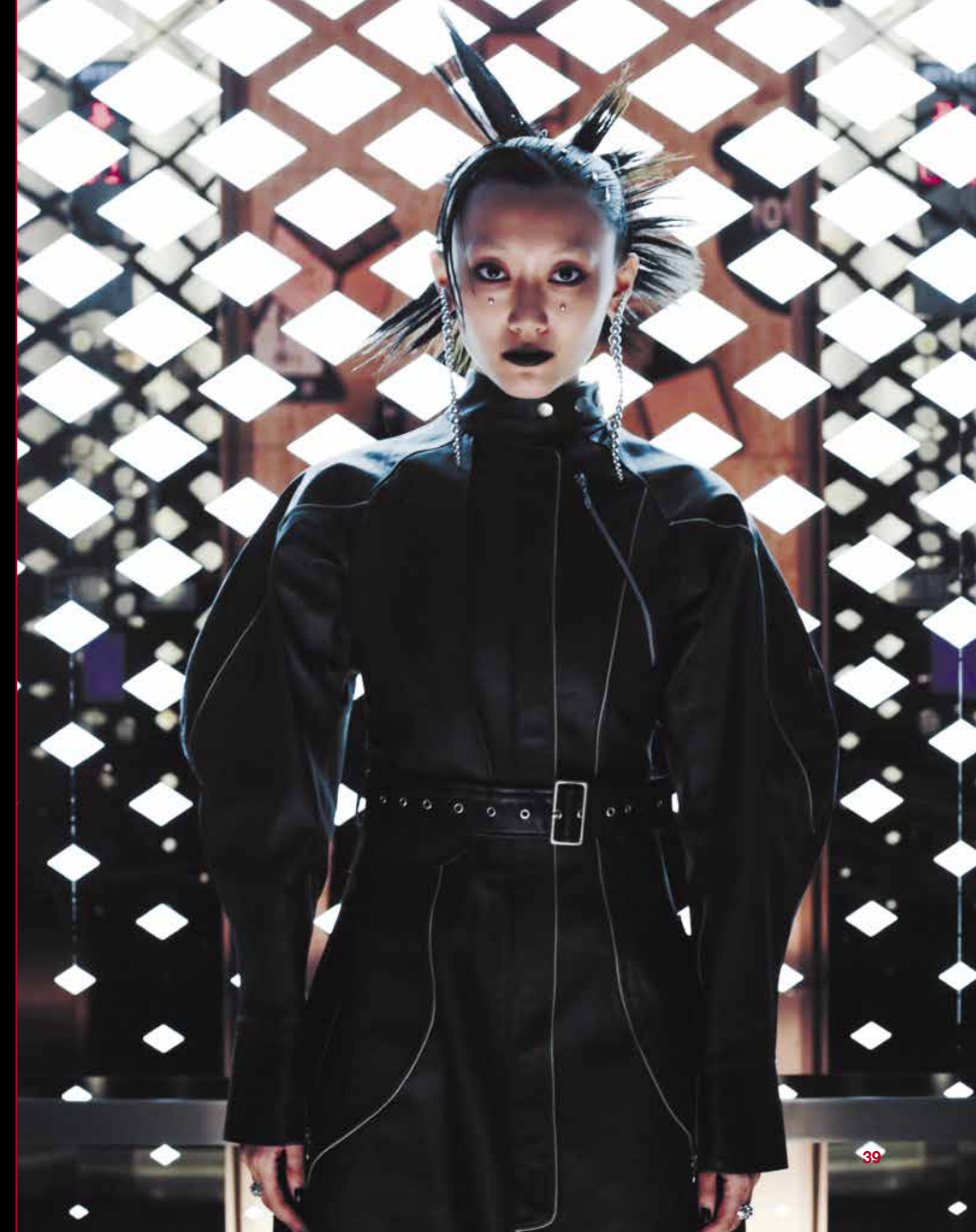


# LAI TSUI-YU

Lai Tsui-Yu majored in fashion design in Shih-Chien University. Her jacket design was inspired by the Riot Grrrl 1990s feminist punk movement. She uses the colors black for punk and green because it was used by the Suffragettes to signify hope. The car silhouette is intended to flip a masculine stereotype.

SHE SAID

Leather is a material that I really like. I think, as time passes, the leather products resonate with the users. This is the first time I used real leather to create a project, and it's more difficult with more processes compared to other fabrics, but it was very satisfying. The Riot Grrrl proposition of women's rights is: women can express their sexual desire, they can wear what they want, do what they want, be fearless and face the challenge of paternalism."







**TAIWAN  
GOLD DESIGN WINNER**

# HSIAO YI-TZU

Hsiao Yi-Tzu studied Industrial Design at the National Yang Ming Chiao Tung University. She designed a furniture collection with the concept of finding privacy in shared spaces. She chooses leather because it is “a unique material that creates more emotional connection with users. They always tend to keep it longer than other materials.”

## SHE SAID

“Design is a way of expressing my thoughts through logical approaches with an emotional touch. I consider myself a sensitive person who has a strong empathetic connection to the world. I desire to trigger people’s deeper feelings in life through shapes, colors, and materials, and bring them a little bit better life. In an environment with frequent movement and blurred boundaries with others, the divide between what is public and private, the control of space and sense of belonging are all subject to greater challenges.”



TAIWAN  
GOLD ACCESSORIES WINNER

LIN  
TING-YU



Lin Ting-Yu graduated from the Department of Industrial Design in Shih Chien University. Her bag designs were inspired by plants including the poppy, pimpernel and desert unicorn-plant – particularly how the flowers opened.

SHE SAID

“The vegetable-tanned leather and metal parts are used to imitate the original appearance, structure and opening. Poppy corresponds to a bucket bag with a drawstring effect. Pimpernel corresponds to a frame bag. Desert unicorn-plant corresponds to a long bag. Leather is a medium that can be very original and can show a modern feel after processing and dyeing. Also, it is sustainable. Leather is a great creative medium that everyone should try and understand.”

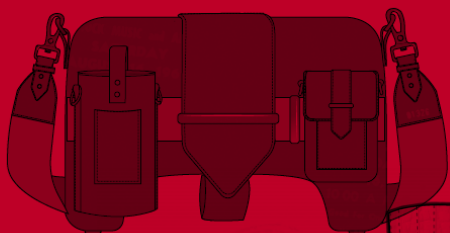
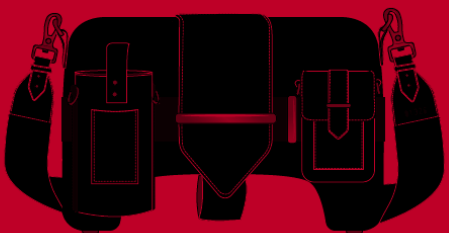
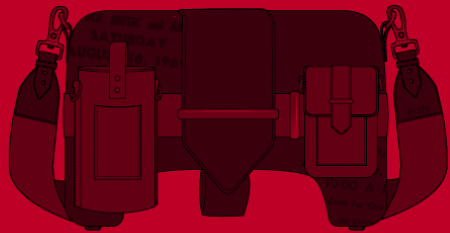
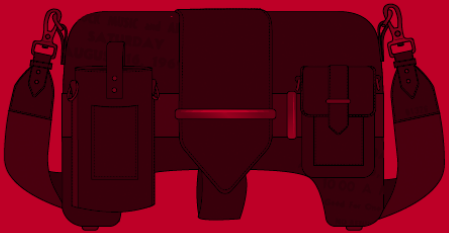




# THE UK WINNERS

The UK Real Leather. Stay Different. Student Design Competition was held in partnership with Leather UK. Winners drew on a huge range of influences for groundbreaking designs with sustainability at the forefront.

COLOUR WAYS

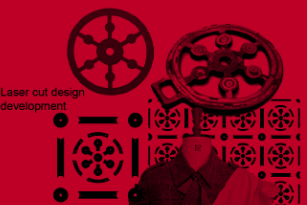


Gathering Samples

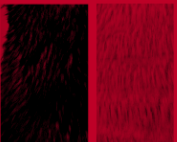


Pocket Sample

Design Details



Laser cut design development



Faux Fur - colour options

“I became more aware of fashion’s devastating impact on the environment and started searching for more sustainable solutions to become less impactful”



THE UK  
GOLD ACCESSORIES WINNER

# CELINA SMITH

Celina Smith is a fashion design student at the University of South Wales. Her bag was inspired by festivals, particularly their future, and how the impact of the pandemic has shifted our mindsets towards sustainability and the environment.



**SHE SAID**

“The idea came from researching into sustainability and waste. Today, we live in a society where fashion has become disposable because of many factors: low quality, trends and just the sheer amount of clothing produced every season. I wanted to create a product that was not based on trend - it would be made from high-quality materials that will last. My focus for the bag was to make it functional and stylish, and utilise existing resources we have today, such as leather.”

## WINNER PROFILES

### THE UK GOLD FOOTWEAR WINNER



# JEAEUN YOU

Jeaeun You is studying at De Montfort University Leicester. She was inspired by the movement of people – their walks, habits and actions which led her to base her design on performance art.

#### SHE SAID

“When a person moves, they can see their movements more closely by taking continuous shots or videos. Even if it is not a repetitive action, all movements are connected. My point is to express the long -connected behaviour through the pleat pattern with the strap and combined oversized unit. The shoes are made of top -quality leather materials, and the unit is also made of rubber and leather.”





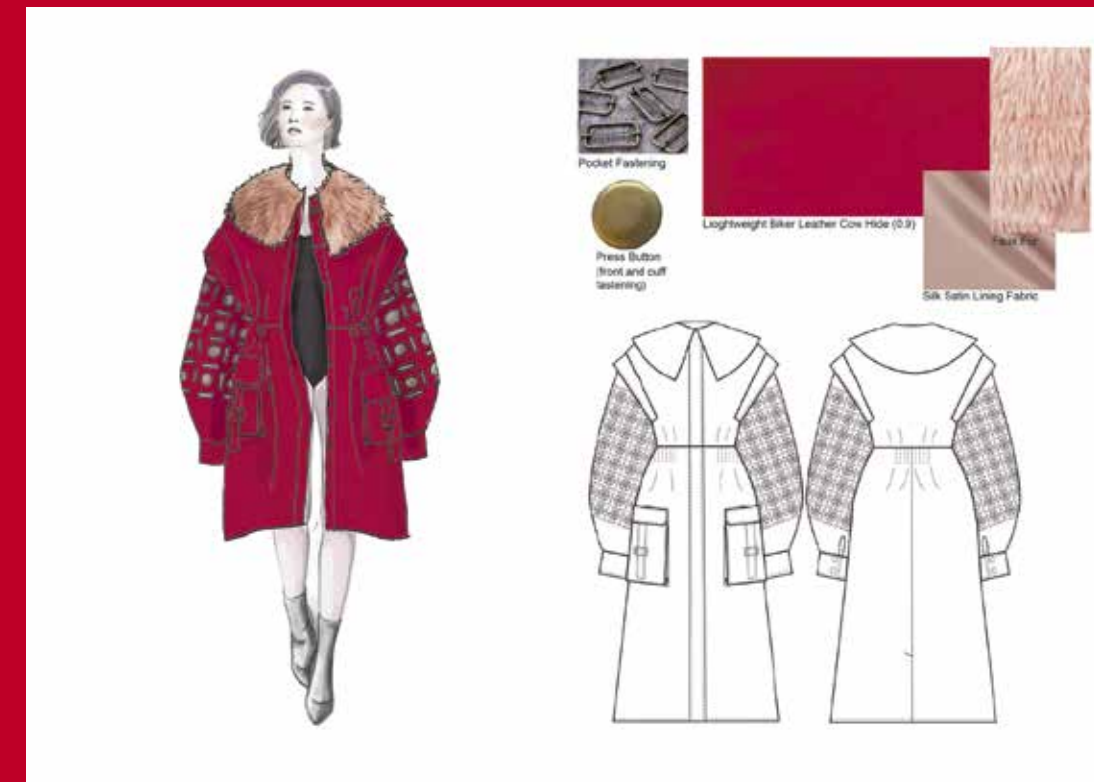
## WINNER PROFILES

### THE UK GOLD APPAREL WINNER

# ANETA MILASZEWICZ

We're delighted to introduce the winner of the apparel category, Aneta Milaszewicz. She is a 2021 graduate from Manchester Metropolitan University with a BA in Fashion. Originally from Poland, Anita has been living in the UK for many years.

@a.m.e.s.\_design



#### 1 ——— TELL US ABOUT THE INSPIRATION BEHIND YOUR DESIGNS

My interest in indigenous tribes led me to discover a nomadic tribe from Siberia called Nenets. It is fascinating how they continue to lead a simple life in harmony with nature. Reindeers are very important in Nenets' lives, and they are treated in a special way. Their meat is the main source of food, and their hide is used for clothing and to build tents. Unfortunately, global warming creates a real threat to reindeer populations, as well as to the Nenets tribe.

Throughout my project, I was inspired by the silhouette of Nenets' traditional outfits, but also by the way they decorate their clothes.

Another source of inspiration was the World War II military uniform, as I found a connection between Siberia and my family history during the war.

#### 2 ——— HOW WAS YOUR EXPERIENCE WORKING WITH LEATHER?

The way I work and create has changed during my time on the BA Fashion programme. I became more aware of fashion's devastating impact on the environment and started searching for more sustainable solutions to become less impactful. An investigation of the latest facts led me to conclude that using leather is sustainable as long as the meat industry exists. If we stop using this material, it will generate more unnecessary waste. Another reason to use leather is its longevity.

I love the physical attributes of this material, like the smell. I also find its structure and the way it gathers and drapes very inspiring. I experiment with laser cutting, and leather is the most suitable material to achieve the most successful outcomes.

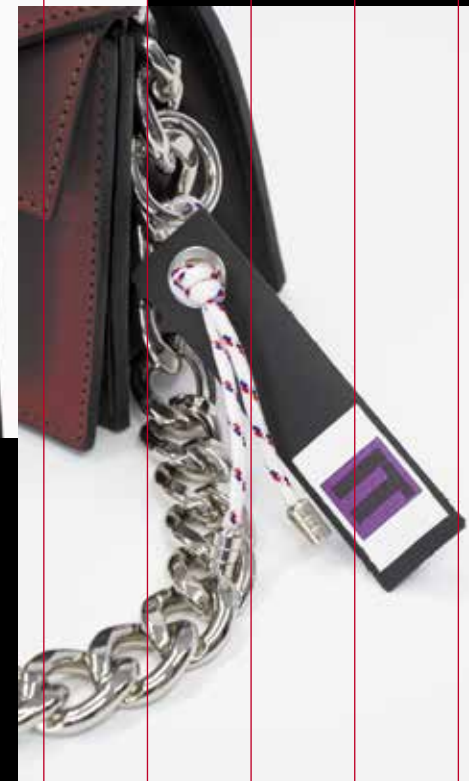
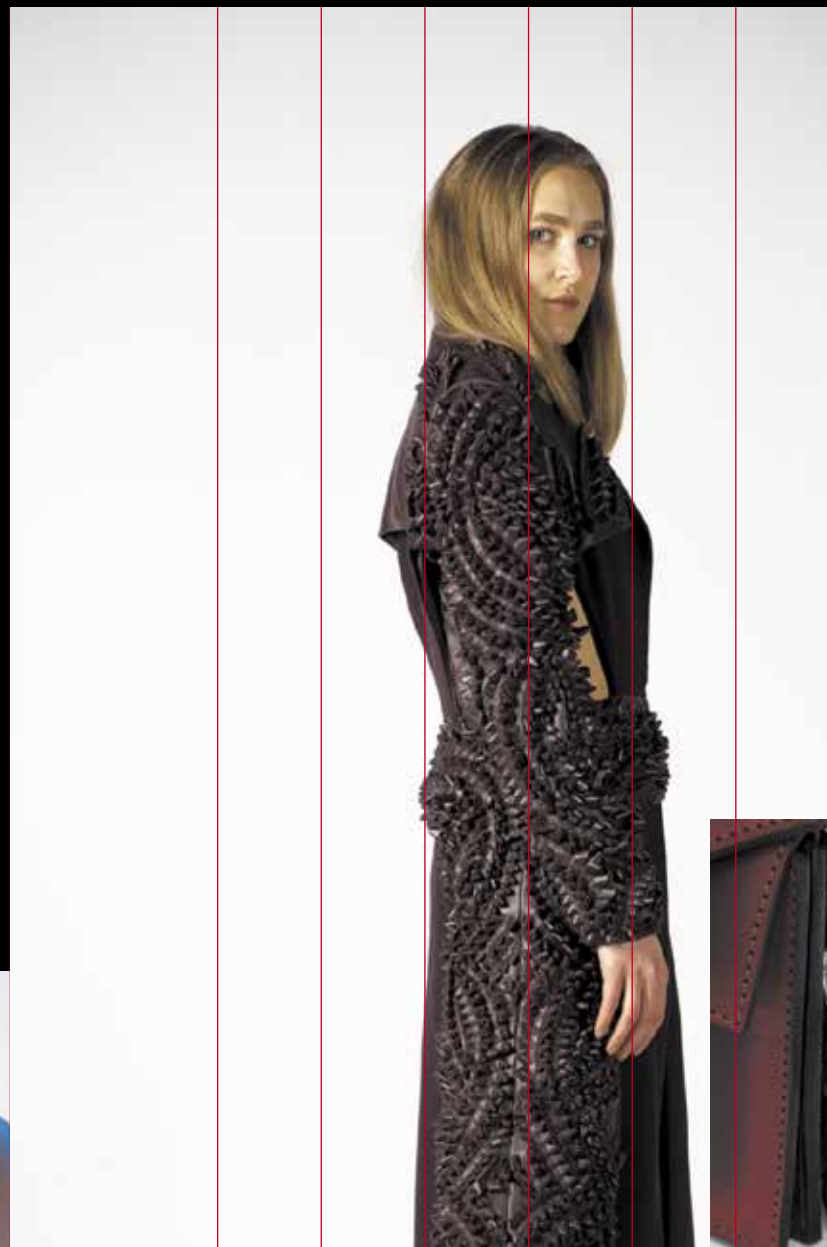


## WINNER PROFILES

# ITALY WINNERS

The Italian Real Leather. Stay Different. Student Design Competition was run in partnership with the Italian Tanneries Association (UNIC) and LINEAPELLE, Italy's international leather fair. There were 80 entrants from Italy's very best colleges, and winners drew inspiration from artists, writers and planet Earth.

As well as the apparel, footwear and accessories categories, there was a public vote, with a winner chosen by readers of the Real Leather. Stay Different. website. Winners and runners-up showed their designs at a fantastic exhibition at LINEAPELLE 2021 in Milan.



**“It is super important to only design things that last many years”**



ITALY  
GOLD FOOTWEAR WINNER

# ASTRID HEISTERBERG

Astrid Heisterberg is studying an undergraduate degree in leather technology at Polimoda in Florence. Her shoe collection focuses on sustainability. She used leftover leather from factories and schools to create new forms of art, each one of which is unique.



## SHE SAID

The word 'sustainability' is derived from the Latin word 'sustinere' which means to maintain, support or endure. It currently refers to development processes that "meet the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own necessities". Sustainability therefore implies awareness and vision. Creators have a choice. The actions they take; the material they use; the treating processes they undertake; the selling chains they feed into. All have an impact on the environment, on economies and on society as a whole."



## WINNER PROFILES

### ITALY GOLD APPAREL WINNER

Brigida Aiello studied a Masters in Fashion Design Womenswear and Fashion Design Menswear at Istituto Marangoni in Milan. She wanted to explore the versatility of leather and the various forms it could take. The colors she chose were inspired by the earth. Thanks to the skills she developed in the competition, she now works with leather for a brand owned by the LVMH group.



# BRIGIDA AIELLO

#### SHE SAID

“VIRTUS is a project which takes its inspiration from the current Covid-19 pandemic, in which a small cell with crown-shaped faces has transformed our lives. From this absolutely malignant virus, I analysed the only positive aspect that this element offers: its shape. The proposed leather manipulations retrace the countless textures that it offers, through a careful analysis of the external facades and inner shell of the virus. In this way, the virus becomes ‘virtus’, which in the world of ancient Rome, indicated the individual who was able to resist adversity, and so manifested his value.”



ITALY  
GOLD ACCESSORIES WINNER

# ELISA CASTIGLIONI

Elisa Castiglioni is studying at Accademia Costume & Moda di Roma for a First Level Academic Diploma in Costume and Fashion. Her handbag capsule collection, Lucky Me, contrasts the neutral color of vegetable tanned leather with the brightness of metal and liveliness of color.



**SHE SAID**

“The decision to use leather was dictated by the infinite possibilities this material can offer and by the exciting idea of matching different elements such as the full-bodied feel of leather, the coolness of metal, the graphic signs of lettering and the bright tinges of color. Furthermore, the use of leather allows me to experiment with three dimensional shapes which don't need a body or anything else to exist: objects that have a life of their own.”



## WINNER PROFILES



**Philomena Seelos is studying Costume and Fashion at the Accademia Costume & Moda di Roma. Inspiration comes from the colors of Mark Rothko, the words of John Giorno and the timeless interior design of Marcel Breuer. The five different bags, in vegetable tanned leather, come in two color ways with reversible and adjustable straps, so the whole look can be changed easily from minimal to statement, depending on the mood.**

**ITALY  
PEOPLE'S CHOICE WINNER**

# PHILOMENA SEELOS

### SHE SAID

“There is no material like leather that lasts so long - and to me, it is super important to only design things that last many years. It has endless possibilities. You can find the right type of leather for every style. It can be any color, any effect you'd like: rigid, smooth, grainy, embossed, shiny! The possibilities of working with leather are endless.”



# AND THE INTERNATIONAL WINNER IS...



**The International Competition, coordinated by ARTS THREAD in partnership with Rollacoaster Magazine, saw a huge range of entries, including extravagant costume designs, shape-defining handbags, intricate patchwork and delicate jewellery.**

To ensure equal access for entrants worldwide, particularly in the middle of the pandemic, submissions were made virtually with the help of mood boards, sketches, technical specifications and videos. A shortlist of 10 finalists was compiled by ARTS THREAD, the digital platform for emerging talent. Then, our judging panel of industry experts interviewed the top five virtually before choosing the overall winner.

With entries from 58 nationalities in 36 countries, the competition exceeded all expectations. The winner, Emily Omesi, is a fashion designer based in New York City, USA. Emily not only claimed the RLSD trophy, but also had her design professionally made and featured on the cover of acclaimed international fashion magazine, Rollacoaster, modelled by Sano Turdiev (as featured elsewhere in this book).



# ROLLACOASTER

AUTUMN / WINTER 2021



## WINNER PROFILE



# EMILY OMESI

Emily Omesi was presented with her trophy in New York City by Kevin Latner, Senior Vice President of L&HCA

We caught up with Emily following the announcement of her victory – and sent one of the team to New York City to present her with the trophy.





#### 1 — WHAT WAS THE INSPIRATION FOR YOUR DESIGN?

The inspiration for my design came from my graduating collection, GFP, which started from images of my brother's medical research. He studies infectious diseases at UNC at Chapel Hill's Pediatric Research Center.

The scans from his research are green fluorescent protein (GFP) scans. The image is of many cells with some spots glowing in bright green. I loved how organic the shapes were, and how certain areas glowed differently from others.

This was the start of my research and a topic that felt very relevant to what we are experiencing today. I hoped to take inspiration from something that can be frightening and dangerous and make something beautiful out of it.

I also love history, so I used the pediatric research from my brother to deep dive into Victorian-era pediatric medicine and fell in love with the almost-creepy imagery. I then finished my research with Victorian children's clothing. I love how much detail is in the clothing during this time and found the childlike silhouettes inspiring as well.

#### 2 — WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON WORKING WITH LEATHER?

I love working with leather – there is truly no other material like it. It's durable and can last the wearer almost forever, but is also very delicate to sew. Handling leather takes patience and practice – similar to creating a sculpture. Every leather skin is unique, which makes the process that much more special.

#### 3 — WHAT FIRST ATTRACTED YOU TO USING LEATHER FOR YOUR DESIGNS?

For this jacket in particular, I wanted something that would feel expensive and provide enough dimension to make the details in the garment pop. I played around with various skins and thicknesses until I found what I felt would be best for my original prototype.

#### 4 — IS THERE SOMETHING WITHIN YOUR COUNTRY'S DESIGN OR FASHION CULTURE THAT YOU THINK MAKES IT UNIQUE?

Without realizing it, I think the culture and people of New York City inspire the type of clothing I design. Living in NYC, almost anything you wear goes. With that being said,

I still wanted to create a jacket that could be worn out as a statement piece or thrown over your shoulder to visit your local bodega. I believe my jacket balances both ends of the spectrum for any New Yorker.

#### 5 — WHY DO YOU THINK LEATHER HAS CONSISTENTLY REMAINED 'IN STYLE' WHILE OTHER MATERIALS COME IN AND OUT?

Leather is both luxurious and sustainable. It's a textile that can be used for various mediums. Leather can be incredibly expensive or affordable, depending on the quality – but regardless of the price, it is still viewed as luxury. It's durable and keeps the wearer warm while still being breathable. Without a doubt, leather is one of the most sustainable textiles, as it comes from the earth, lasts a lifetime and goes back into the earth as it deteriorates.

#### 6 — WHAT DOES PARTICIPATING IN THIS COMPETITION MEAN TO YOUR CAREER AS A DESIGNER?

This competition provided me with the opportunity to explore leather and its capabilities in the fashion industry. Having an understanding of leather aids my design process, from realising a sketch to creating the final garment.



**“This jacket is not only super editorial but its modern and futuristic design easily translates into music and celebrity styling, as well as the retail space.**

**We need new designers who will challenge the norm and can combine sustainability with high fashion effortlessly — Emily has delivered on all these points. From the cover of Rollacoaster to the rest of the world!”**

**Mike Adler, Judge**



MEGHAN BEATTIE

is studying costume design at the University of Birmingham, UK. She designed a collection that features lightweight pleated fabric with various structured leather garments, from trousers to overskirts, corsets and suspender-style leather straps.

SHE SAID

“For this experiment, I used more dramatic colors, inspired by the contrasting colors of deep-sea fish. I also added a patterned lining to the inside of the skirt, inspired by my stitched piping leather experiment. I find by adding the piping effect to a flexible piece, it replicates the suction cups of a tentacle. The contrasting lining also helps to break up the amount of leather around the hip area, preventing it from looking too heavy and weighed down.”

“Inspired by the contrasting colors of deep-sea fish”



SHE SAID

“The earrings in my proposal seek to create a jewel the user can interact with in different ways. A versatile product was made so that the consumer can adapt the shape of the earrings to their liking when placing it in the ear. This was achieved by creating an elongated strip that combines the flexibility of the material with silver-coated holes and belt-simulating stitching.”

TERESITA MARRERO ESCALONA

is studying object design at the Universidad del Azuay (Ecuador). Her jewellery designs were both original and adaptable, allowing the wearer to make them more personal.



“A jewel the user can interact with in different ways”

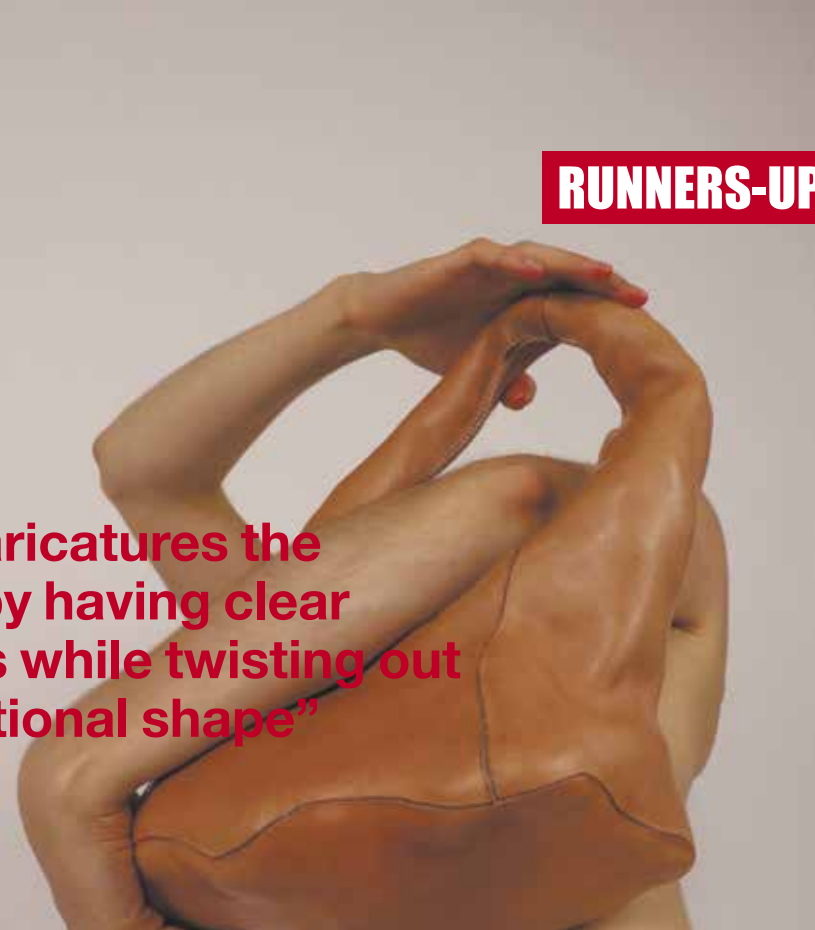
NATHALIE HAUSER

is studying accessory design at the Kolding School of Design in Denmark. Her collection of handbags was produced with great technical skill. The bags explore the relationship between gender and design.

SHE SAID

“Gestalt is a series of bags, created with inspiration in how objects – specifically the handbag – are created by and create our gender image. By the use of wet moulding, Gestalt caricatures the handbag by having clear references while twisting out of its traditional shape.”

“Gestalt caricatures the handbag by having clear references while twisting out of its traditional shape”



RUNNERS-UP

ALICE MORGAN

is studying fashion at the University of Derby, UK. Alice is vegetarian and believes the most ethical choices come from decisions made with care and consideration. Her apparel designs were inspired by stained glass windows.

SHE SAID

“Inspiration for this project comes from the concept of stained glass windows. Stained glass is a technique which dates back as far as the 4th century. This decorative process showcases the power of fragmented designs and communicates that ‘broken’ pieces can be the very beauty of an artform. By applying this influence to the offcuts produced by the leather industry, we are able to generate one-of-a-kind garments that reduce the waste left on the cutting room floor, ready to be burned. This considered approach offers more sustainable manufacturing, paying greater respect to the cows that provided the hides.”

“Alice is vegetarian and believes the most ethical choices come from decisions made with care and consideration”



# OUR GOAL IS ALWAYS TO NOT WASTE HIDE



**JAY JENSEN**  
**THE SOUTHWEST HIDE CO.**

**One way to make beef and dairy production more sustainable is to make sure every cowhide possible is used for leather. A huge number of our Student Design Competition entrants stressed the need to avoid waste – so we caught up with a man who makes that his mission.**

As much as he insists his business is market driven, Jay Jensen can't hide his passion when he talks about wasted cowhides.

Jensen's company, the Southwest Hide Co. operates almost as a cooperative for small ranches and cattle processors across the west of the US. Hides are worth such a small proportion of the whole value of the animal that often it is not economically viable for ranchers to sell them in small numbers. Essentially, Southwest Hide Co. does the hard work, covering thousands of miles between suppliers, buying and collecting cowhides to sell on in volume and saving them from being abandoned for disposal.

Without Southwest Hide Co. for most of these ranchers, selling hides would be

an economic impossibility. They would be consigned to landfill or the incinerator. Jensen's service swings the price margins back in favour of the smaller producers, making selling the hides viable. These contributions to profits can sometimes make the difference between their smallholdings breaking even and making a loss.

Just as they have for many people, recent times have been tough for Jensen: "It's a market-based system so, unfortunately, when the price of a hide plummets, like it has in the past year, we're unable to get as many of them. We would love to be able to pick them all up because when a hide is wasted, I think..." He tails off as his passion rises, and you sense that the dollar isn't foremost in his mind.





**“Since the small and medium-sized packers have nothing to productively do with these hides, they can only dispose of them – they are all landfilled.”**

“We have five hide plants around the Western US. At this one plant, we just estimated for last year, we missed out on about between 75,000 and 100,000 of those hides, which is about... It's about 75 to 100 containers of hides that we would normally ship to China or Korea or Indonesia for being turned into leather.”

“So what we do is we send trucks around, and the truck has two compartments. One is full of salt and one is for the hides. And we'll stop at a farmer's place. He'll give us five hides. We'll pay him for those five hides and we'll dump off maybe 100 pounds of salt so that when he produces his next five hides, he can put a layer of salt between the hides.”

**“You’re actually helping the environment by using a leather product, the raw material for which is going to be there, whether you buy it or not.”**

The Southwest Hide Co. works with small slaughterhouses as well: “They go through 50 cattle a week or maybe 20 cattle a week. And these companies have no capability of handling their hides to get them to a leather market somewhere. So we collect them, we pay them in most cases and then we process the hides, cure the hides so that they're preserved, then market them by putting them all in some kind of group together.

“Three of our plants collect hides from small meat packers in an area roughly 300 miles in radius from each plant. Since the onset of Covid, these plants have not been taking hides from ‘small packers,’ which are the small and medium-sized meat companies who still use low-tech methods to remove the hide from the animal. On average, each of

these three plants is leaving 6,500 hides per week out of our processing chain compared to pre-Covid numbers.

“This amounts to 338,000 hides per plant per year. For all three plants, just over one million hides. Since the small and medium-sized packers have nothing to productively do with these hides, they can only dispose of them. They are all landfilled.”

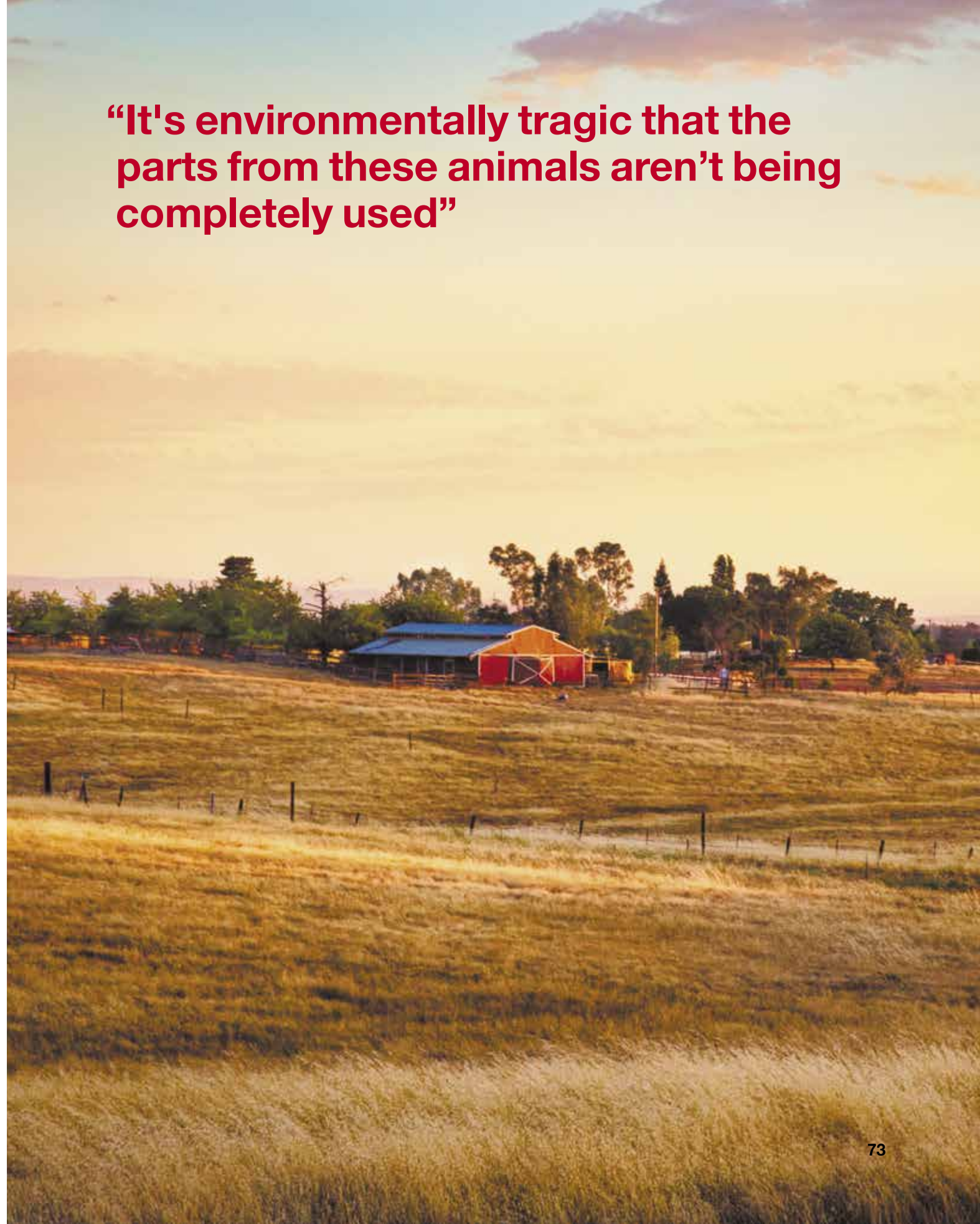
Jay is determined to make use of as many hides as possible: “I don't want to get too philosophical here but, all through history, an animal dies and its body parts get used. Even if you're a Hindu and you don't believe

in eating meat or using products from the consumption of meat, there's still leather available from animals that die of natural causes. There always have been, and it's not a small number.

“And nobody needs to feel guilty about that. Nobody needs to try to look at the process and say, ‘I'm contributing to some kind of environmental degradation.’ You're actually helping the environment by using a leather product, the raw material for which is going to be there, whether you buy it or not.”

Come on Jay, admit it – this IS more than a business to you: “Do we see ourselves as environmental stewards? I think we do. And we're learning new things in this new market situation, but our goal is always to not waste hide.”

**“It's environmentally tragic that the parts from these animals aren't being completely used”**





# SL—O—W—L—Y DOES IT

Leather that lasts as long as you.

One of the things our designers had to bear in mind was the lifespan of leather and how it wears. Leather doesn't just last a long time, it gets more and more beautiful the older it gets.





# SHOES

There is no doubt a new pair of shoes can bring a great deal of pleasure, but it's when the newness wears off that the real joy begins. A relationship with a pair of shoes is like a relationship with a person and can often last longer – the more you put in, the more you get out. Polish them regularly and the leather will develop a patina that grows more beautiful with each year. The leather will soften while remaining strong and mould to the wearer's feet to become more comfortable than a pair of house slippers. A well-executed repair will not only prolong the life of shoes, it will give them a fresh lease of life. And it will give you a fresh sense of joy.

**“A patina that grows more beautiful every year.”**



# JACKET

**“The longer your leather jacket has been with you, the more it will become a part of you.”**

As we discuss elsewhere in this book, a leather jacket does more than just warm and protect. It helps tell the story of the owner. Of their attitude, of their ideals and their past. The longer the leather jacket has been with you, the more it will become a part of you. It will shape itself to fit better than any other coat, and pulling it on will feel like coming home. The best leather jackets age to appeal more and more to the senses. They develop a fragrance like a sophisticated aftershave. They feel softer and smoother as each year passes. And as the color matures and natural creases take on their own beauty, they look better and better each time they are pulled from the cupboard.







# BAG

**“Some bags  
are carried,  
but leather bags  
are worn.”**

There is no better bag for life than a leather one. Yes, you could pull your belongings together in any old plastic sack, but that will always clash with your clothes. It will never become part of your outfit, of your essential look. Leather bags truly defy the years and can be passed on through the generations. Some bags are carried, but leather bags are worn. The familiar feeling of your favourite leather bag resting against your leg, its surface shined by your clothes, with the knowledge that your favourite things are inside, provides comfort and reassurance. Your favourite bag does not appeal just for practical reasons. It carries memories just as much as it carries belongings.





# BELT

**“A leather belt can be something you only need to buy once.”**

It may be simple and practical, but a belt can make or break an outfit. From the most rugged toolbelt to the thinnest, most sophisticated designer strap, each one tells a story. With the most rudimentary care, the occasional wipe clean and a yearly treatment with saddle soap, a leather belt can be something you only need to buy once. Made from the thickest part of the cow's hide, a good sturdy belt will assume the shape of the waist of the wearer and will be paid for doing its job with the deepest of shines. And aside from all that, a pair of jeans looks plain wrong without one.





# STUDENT ACTIVIST!



**ALEX BROWNLESS**  
ARTS THREAD

Alex Brownless has designed for some of the world's biggest brands in his long and distinguished career. They include Gap, Banana Republic, Topshop and M&S. ARTS THREAD, his digital platform for emerging creatives, has partnered with brands including Gucci, Hermès, Levi's, Nike and Urban Outfitters, has now teamed up with the Real Leather. Stay Different. International Design Competition.

With decades of experience in fashion design and a mission to champion students and young designers, Alex Brownless has a lot to say. He begins with a rundown on his favourite leather pieces: "I've got two pairs of shoes that are my love. I've got a pair of Tricker's from Northampton, which I purchased years ago and am constantly trying to repair. Maybe I could have looked after them a bit better in the early stages without them cracking, but they always come out for important occasions. And my Paul Smith chocolate Chelsea boots.

"Then I've got a leather jacket hanging up in the wardrobe that comes out once in a while. And I've got this Bill Amberg leather bag, which is beautiful. It's a big version of a

bowling bag. I mean, it's absolutely fantastic. Genuinely, the amount of people that come up to me and say, 'Where did you get that bag from?' looking back on it, I wish I bought the oxblood one as well because it's just an amazing shape. It's pure leather and it's lasted me 15 years, and it actually gets nicer with age."

Alex is a keen advocate for this generation of students, defending them from the criticism a lot of members of older generations seem to like dishing out: "I think the younger generation have got every right to be cheesed off. I mean, the politicians, I mean, name a good one. You can count them on one hand probably. So who are young people looking up to now? The world's a bit of a mess.





## “Who are young people looking up to now?”

“The environment should never have got to where it is today. So, I think they’re pretty good under the circumstances. If you want the God’s honest truth, the older generation are moaning about the younger generation, but it should be the other way around. The majority of the older generation needs to apologise to the younger generation for what they’ve created for them.”

The next generation doesn’t get off entirely free, though: “I do find it quite amusing that quite a few of them are walking about wearing ‘pleather’, which is far worse for the environment because it’s synthetic and you can’t get rid of it when you’re finished with it,

unlike real leather, which is biodegradable.

“What it comes down to is the fact that the skin of a cow is a by-product of meat and dairy, so what do you do with it at the end? I mean, do you bury it? Or burn it, which is horrendous for the environment as well? It’s far better to utilize it. It’s a bit of a no-brainer from my perspective.”

Always a hard taskmaster, Alex was excited by this year’s competition but is always striving for more: “This year’s competition’s’ general standard was highly executed. But I think it can always be better. We can always strive to get better year on year. Then that’s

the thing that we’re looking to achieve. I mean, the work of the winners and the runners-up were excellent. But I think the more the students participate globally, the odds of achieving perfection get better. I mean, at the end of day, you talk to anyone creative and they’re always striving for something even better, aren’t they?”

“If you hit the peak, it’s like, well, what’s next? What can be better? I think that we’re looking for better and always striving for better. The standard was high last year, but we’re looking for even better this year.”

## “I do find it quite amusing that some of them are walking about wearing ‘pleather’”



### The evolution of ARTS THREAD, in Alex’s own words

“ARTS THREAD was originally a magazine. It became a digital platform nearly 14 years ago now, and it is purely a launchpad for emerging creatives – artists and designers. So, the motivation and the total focus is to help the creative younger generation get a break in the industry, whether that’s full-time employment, freelance or even launching their own business. This year, we’ll launch a marketplace which will enable the students graduating to sell their wares. They’ll sell the products that they create.

“But we try to educate at the same time. Originally, it was a portfolio platform only, but then we started thinking, well, wait a minute, we need to educate kids before they go on to further and higher education, and give them an understanding of what actually exists out there on their doorstep, or in other parts of the planet. So it’s a go-to, a one-stop shop for emerging creative talent.”

Find out more at [artsthread.com](https://artsthread.com)





# BUY RIGHT

**HOW TO SOURCE THE MOST  
SUSTAINABLY PRODUCED LEATHER**

**One of the objectives of the Real Leather. Stay Different. Student Design Competitions is to promote the use of sustainably sourced leather. Here, we explain how consumers can ensure the leather they buy is of the best standard.**

The adoption of clean production techniques, and the increased accountability of manufacturers, is making it easier and easier to source sustainable and ethically produced leather.

The leather industry is working hard to create a transparent supply chain and make it easy for the consumer to check for best practice along every part of the process – from cow to product. So there has never been a better time to be making the most of one of nature’s most durable and beautiful materials.

#### **QUALITY IN PRICE**

Price, as in almost everything, can be a factor in ensuring leather goods are sustainably

produced. If you are buying from a high-end, luxury producer, you can be pretty sure they will abide by best practice. Their profits are derived from great design and craft, and they won’t waste those things by using anything but the best leather. And the best leather comes from producers that are generally certified to the highest standards.

The best producers should be open about their supply chains. If you want to look further, check the corporate responsibility and sustainability sections on their websites if you need more reassurance. More and more producers are taking responsibility for this as consumers are demanding more transparency.

**“There has never been a better time to make the most of one of nature’s most durable and beautiful materials.”**



**BUT WHAT IF YOU ARE BUYING LEATHER TO WORK WITH YOURSELF?**

It is important to take into account the production of the leather as well as the providence of the hide. The tanning process has come under particular scrutiny recently. Many people extol the virtues of vegetable tanning over chrome tanning, saying the former is more natural. But it is not as simple as that. After all, chrome III is a naturally occurring element that is crucial to human metabolism. Good chrome III tanneries have vastly reduced their water consumption – down by 35% in the last 25 years – and clean and reuse water either by filtration, evaporation or the use of naturally occurring bacteria. So it is better to check

the standards of individual tanneries rather than to assume vegetable tanning means cleaner tanning.

A great way to check the standards of tanneries is with the Leather Working Group (LWG) and the Sustainable Leather Foundation (SLF). They audit tanneries to standards agreed with some of the world’s leading NGOs and give them a rating. Together, they have rated more than 450 tanneries worldwide, so it is simple to check whether the leather they supply is up to standard.

The LWG also has more than 100 brands – including Zara, H&M, Nike and Burberry – as members. So, if you need to check a company’s commitment to sustainability, that’s a good place to start.

This year also saw the launch of a collaboration between the National Wildlife Federation, the World Wildlife Fund, Leather Working Group and the Gibbs Land Use and Environment Lab at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. They jointly aim to tackle deforestation’s links to leather supply chains by mapping territories in the Brazilian Amazon and Cerrado and the Paraguayan Chaco. This will provide the data to ensure no hides produced following deforestation enter the supply chain. Companies will be allowed to align themselves to show their leather has been sourced sustainably.

**“If the Higg Index were applied to cutlery, a single-use plastic fork would be scored as more sustainable than a metal one.”**

**DEFINING SUSTAINABILITY IS NOT WITHOUT PROBLEMS**

There are a few problems with the way parts of the fashion industry currently define sustainability, and still promote plastics and petroleum products.

Environmental impact tools consistently rank fossil fuel-based products as more sustainable than natural renewable products. For example, both the Higg Index and Kering’s Environmental Profit & Loss include the carbon footprint of cattle production in their assessment of leather while omitting the carbon footprint of petroleum inputs, skewing comparability. But as cowhide is a by-product, it starts with zero emissions – in fact, simply using hides prevents them from becoming landfill or fed to the incinerator. If the Higg Index were applied to cutlery, a single-use plastic fork would be scored as more sustainable than a metal one.

Another gap in environmental impact tools is omitting end-of-life (EOL) analysis. For example, the EOL environmental impact of an article of clothing that lasts a few washes and then biodegrades over centuries in landfill is quite different from something that lasts a generation, or two, and biodegrades in a few decades. Leather is known for its durability and for its beauty increasing over time – a beautiful leather jacket, purse or belt can last for decades and return cleanly to where it came from.

Take care in sourcing your leather and you can craft it, wear it or use it, secure in the knowledge that it has been responsibly produced. And that’s not all – you are also working to cut waste.

**For more information, see:**  
[chooserealleather.com](http://chooserealleather.com)  
[sustainableleatherfoundation.com](http://sustainableleatherfoundation.com)  
[leatherworkinggroup.com](http://leatherworkinggroup.com)



# BEHIND



**For every great event, magazine cover story or catwalk show, there are many people striving hard in the background.**

Make-up artists, craftspeople, stylists and photographers – from all across the fashion and design industries, people came together to put together the spectacular events and features that showcased our young designers' success.

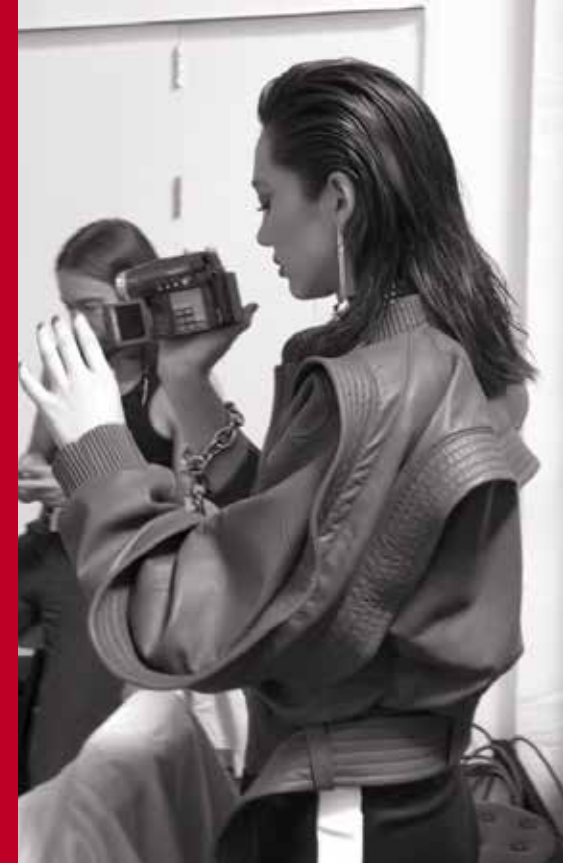
Here is our behind-the-scenes look at the international winner's photo shoot for Rollacoaster Magazine, the amazing awards ceremonies and catwalk shows in Xinji, China, and at the Red House, Taipei, and the stunning exhibition at LINEAPELLE international leather fair in Milan.



# THE



# SCENES





# HANDBAGS

# AND

# GLADRAGS

**As our competitions have shown, every designer must have an eye for detail, and it is those details that add up to make a classic. No outfit is complete without a leather handbag, and these five have certainly reached the status of classic. Not only have they stood the test of time, they have become more coveted the longer they've been around. Not many things are as durable as that!**



## HERMÈS' BIRKIN

In 1984, the actress Jane Birkin found herself sitting next to Hermès Chief Executive Jean-Louis Dumas on a flight from Paris to London. After her straw travel bag fell from the overhead compartment, scattering her possessions all around, she complained to Dumas that it was impossible to find a bag that was suitable for her needs as a young mother. M. Dumas took the hint, took up his design pen there and then, and the Birkin was born. Over the years, it has come in a variety of colors and sizes, but all feature the burnished flap and saddle stitching. And a dedicated pocket for babies' bottles.



## LOUIS VUITTON NEVERFULL

Proof that sometimes simple can't be improved upon, the Neverfull is basic tote bag that was executed so luxuriously, it became an instant classic when it was introduced in 2007. It takes a Louis Vuitton craftsman 45 hours to make one with a removable pouch that can be used as a clutch bag. It comes in the classic Louis Vuitton monogram print and has laces at the side to rein in some of its roominess if needed. Despite all the luxury, the Neverfull is totally practical. The largest model, the GM, can carry up to 90kg – a true testament to the strength of the leather straps. It is also reversible, so you get two bags for the price of one.



## CHANEL CLASSIC DOUBLE FLAP

The Chanel 'Double Flap' is perhaps the most famous of all handbags. Created in 1955, it is as coveted now as it ever has been. As Coco Chanel said: "In order to be irreplaceable, one must always be different." The Double Flap was so different, it changed the way handbags were worn. Until its design, handbags were carried. This one had a strap, making it one of the first handbags that could be worn across the body. The quilted leather and chain strap have remained the same since the bag first appeared. The only design change was made in 1983, when Chanel's then Creative Director Karl Lagerfeld replaced the square, twisting lock with the classic interlocking CC clasp.

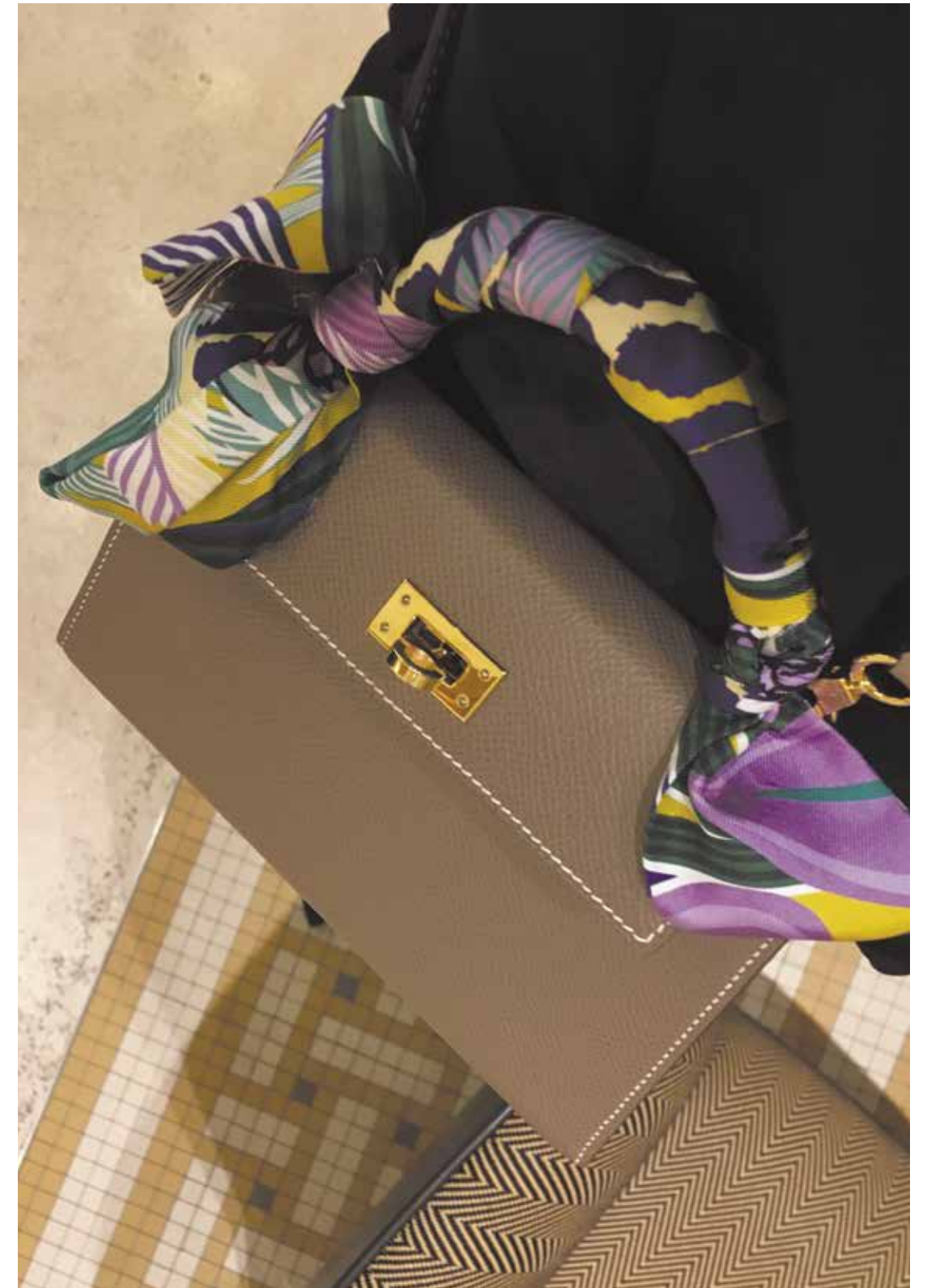
## DIOR SADDLE BAG

This one took a while to become a classic, and its quirky saddle shape may not be to everybody's taste. Designed in 1999 by Dior's then Creative Director John Galliano, it was initially popular after being adopted by Sarah Jessica Parker's character Carrie Bradshaw in *Sex in the City*. That popularity proved short-lived, and the bag faded from view. Then, in 2014, Beyoncé was spotted with one, and people began hunting for old stock and second-hand versions. Three years later, demand was still strong. Dior put the style back into production, and the Saddle Bag has gone from strength to strength ever since.



## HERMÈS KELLY

Originally designed in 1923 and named the Bugatti, the bag had a few iterations before it took the name of the actress who popularised it. In 1954, the bag was used as a prop in the Hitchcock film *To Catch a Thief*. The film's star, Grace Kelly, fell in love with it. In 1956, after she became Princess of Monaco, *Life Magazine* featured a photograph of her using the bag to hide her pregnancy from the paparazzi. It instantly became known as the 'Kelly', although it wasn't officially renamed until 1977. Of the 32 styles of handbag Hermès now makes, this trapezium shaped classic is by far the biggest seller.







# REGENERATIVE

# LEATHER

## HOW CATTLE CAN COMBAT CARBON

We already know leather is the right choice when it comes to sustainable materials, but when cattle are reared right, they can help regenerate soil and reinvigorate its carbon capturing properties. This has recently been documented in hit film *Kiss the Ground* as soil management comes to the forefront of the response to climate change.

Footwear and apparel brand Timberland leads the charge to use leather produced by regenerative farms. This leather gives young designers the perfect opportunity to help the planet with their choice of material.

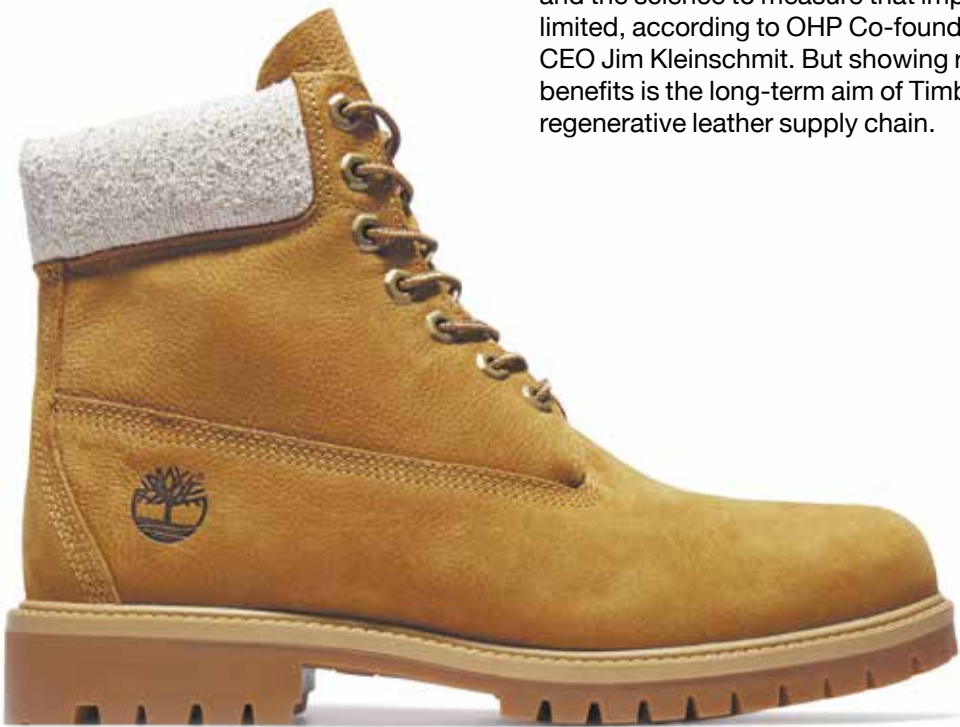
In 2019, Timberland announced its intention to build a “regenerative leather” supply chain. As part of its 2030 vision to design products with a “net positive impact”, the company committed to sourcing 100% of its natural materials from regenerative agriculture, which aims to restore the soil. But what exactly does that mean and how does it work? Looking at the steps Timberland is taking to create a more responsible leather supply chain provides a clearer picture.



# “Our planet has a problem: there is too much carbon in the air and not enough in the ground.”

## FROM THE GROUND UP

To deliver on its regenerative leather promise, Timberland is working with partners in the United States, where the brand sources 90% of its leather. These include Other Half Processing SBC (OHP), a company that works with farms and ranches, meat companies and processors to source ethical, traceable by-products, and Thousand Hills Lifetime Grazed Regenerative Ranches. These supply chain partners give it access to hides that meet its standards with respect to, for example, animal welfare, biodiversity, soil health and carbon sequestration. In other words, the way the cattle are raised and how that affects the soil are paramount.



Regenerative farms are those that are grass-fed and practice managed grazing. Farms that meet Regenerative Outcomes standards can join Timberland’s regenerative leather supply chain. They need to be able to demonstrate their compliance with each of the criteria through verification via various market certification schemes, such as the American Grassfed Association standards, the Regenerative Organic Certification, the Savory Institute’s Ecological Outcome Verification or Audubon’s Conservation Ranching Initiative.

Effectively, it’s not enough for producers to have the right practices in place; they need to prove it and show that what they are doing is having a positive impact. Today, the tools and the science to measure that impact are limited, according to OHP Co-founder and CEO Jim Kleinschmit. But showing real soil benefits is the long-term aim of Timberland’s regenerative leather supply chain.

## MIMICKING NATURE

As per Timberland’s specifications, grass and grazing are a major focus in regenerative systems. The idea is that by moving animals around ranches in a way that imitates the natural movement of herds in the wild, there are benefits for the land. The approach is based on the rule of thirds: graze a third, trample a third and leave a third of the land as grass, which allows plants to regrow and boosts carbon storage in the soil.

As Timberland explains: “Our planet has a problem – there is too much carbon in the air and not enough in the ground. Regenerative practices mimic nature, enabling the land to pull more carbon out of the atmosphere and efficiently store it in the ground, where it can rebuild the structure of the soil, leading to healthy, hydrated, fertile ground – and ultimately, net positive impacts for the land and the farmers.”

In this way, regenerative leather made from cattle reared using regenerative practices actively heals and restores the earth from which it is sourced.



## A GROWING TREND

The results of Timberland’s regenerative leather supply chain can already be enjoyed, with several products already available. Most recently, the brand introduced updated versions of two of its most iconic styles – Original Earthkeepers® 6-Inch Boot with regenerative leather, updating the Original Earthkeepers® boot from 2007; and the Heritage EK+ 6-Inch waterproof boots with regenerative leather, based on the Original Yellow Boot design from 1973. In addition to using regenerative leather, both boots feature Timberland’s ReBOTL™ fabric lining containing at least 50% recycled plastic.

Timberland is not the only company following the regenerative path. One of the most prominent is British luxury brand Mulberry, which outlined its regenerative aims in its Made to Last Manifesto in April 2021, including plans to develop “the world’s lowest carbon leather sourced from a network of environmentally conscious farms”.

In the words of the manifesto: “It is abundantly clear that Mulberry’s 50-year association with leather is both our greatest challenge and our greatest opportunity. That’s why we are pioneering a hyper-local, hyper-transparent ‘farm to finished product’ supply chain and working with a network of progressive farmers who are committed to practices that improve soil health and encourage biodiversity.”

The prospect of more brands investing in regenerative leather is exciting. Leather is already sustainable by dint of the fact that it’s made from a by-product of the meat and dairy industry that would otherwise go to waste. But regenerative leather goes beyond sustainability. It goes deep into the soil, helping nature thrive and giving back to the earth more than it takes out.



# HITTING THE HEADLINES



Competition partners Rollacoaster Magazine greeted our winners in style. The international music, culture and style publication has a circulation of 300,000 printed copies and huge influence worldwide.

With an exclusive photo shoot, overseen by Milan Miladinov, Rollacoaster's Art Director and member of our International Competition judging panel, a high-profile interview and a cover story, International Competition winner Emily Omesi's design career got off to the kind of start most people can only ever dream of, with her jacket modelled by elite model Sano Turdiev.



# REBELLION

# GLAMOUR

# ATTITUDE

When it comes to design, no leather item is more deserving of the term 'classic' than the leather biker jacket. No style of clothing has sparked as many emotions and reactions and spawned as many subcultures, and it serves as the benchmark for all aspiring designers.

**JOELY CHILCOTT**



After its practical beginnings as a layer of protection for pilots in WWI, the leather jacket became the uniform for motorbike gangs, instantly signalling rebellion and threat. And since the 1950s, it has been seen on the backs of Hollywood royalty, worn as a symbol of political anarchy, unified people and pulled them apart.

Despite its rocky past, it is still considered a key element of a staple wardrobe, transcending age and gender like few threads can claim.

So just what is it that makes the leather jacket so iconic?

“It’s modern, but also classic,” says Philip Warren, Chair of The Costume Society. “It’s hard-wearing, durable, rebellious and subcultural. You can take that classic shape, adapt it and put an individual twist on it for those who want their clothes to exist beyond fashion.”

It helps that the leather fabric looks just as good when distressed or worn as it does brand new.

“As a garment, it does exactly what it’s supposed to do. A functional jacket that moulds to the body and is resilient,” continues Philip. “It means that people can form a long relationship with it.”

A relationship that is steeped in nostalgia, yet has the ability to reinvent itself over time – the leather biker jacket’s staying power is second to none.



**PRACTICAL BEGINNINGS**

Outerwear made from cowhide became the military uniform for pilots during World War I. Buttoned up to protect the flyers from the cold, they quickly became referred to as bomber jackets.

But the leather cover-up made the leap onto the streets via a basement in Manhattan’s Lower East Side. Irving and Jack Schott, the sons of Russian immigrants, had made a name for themselves making raincoats and peddling them door to door.

In 1928, the pair revolutionised outerwear by being the first to sew a zipper onto a coat, making them more wind-resistant, robust... and ideal garb for motorcyclists. Irving named the biker design ‘The Perfecto’ after

his favourite cigar and sold them for \$5.50 at a Harley Davidson dealer in New York.

While immediately embraced by the motorcycle community, the production of the jackets were put on hold as all efforts for the Schott brothers turned to making leather flight jackets for the US military in World War II.

Fast-forward to 1953, and Marlon Brando took the leather jacket to new heights. Starring in cult film ‘The Wild One,’ he was pictured lounging on a motorcycle wearing the Perfecto. His character and costume oozed adventure and danger, a far cry from the dapper suiting of the decade. Sparking a style epiphany in youth groups, the jackets were even banned in US school systems for representing a rebellious teen demographic. Stars like James Dean, Elvis Presley and

The Beatles followed, but the jacket would not be accepted in high fashion circles for some time yet. In 1960, a young Yves Saint Laurent was inspired by street style and designed a crocodile leather jacket for Dior. It was hated, and he was subsequently fired from the top job.

And so the leather jacket became a staple for those who saw themselves as nonconformists, whether that be gay men who adopted leather to reclaim masculinity or by politically disengaged groups to show their outsider status.



## THE PUNK ERA

At 430 King's Road in Chelsea, London, the leather jacket was adopted in the UK by a new subculture: punk. It was here, in 1974, that school teacher turned fashion designer Vivienne Westwood, and her partner, Malcolm McLaren, adorned the front of their boutique with a shocking 4ft pink foam rubber sign spelling out 'SEX'.

The couple, regarded as the sartorial parents of the anti-establishment punk era, sold fetish gear by existing labels combined with their own provocative designs as a backlash against the ethereal, hippie movement of the 60s. McLaren is thought to have brought the radical aesthetic across the pond from

New York City, where bands like the New York Dolls and the Ramones were combining protest fashion with nihilistic music, recognizing youth culture's willingness for a loud change of pace.

For the first time, leather jackets fed into the do-it-yourself ethic of the punk genre. Westwood and her contemporaries embellished jackets with studs, safety pins, patches and painted-on incendiary slogans, wearing them with ripped jeans, edgy t-shirts and Dr. Martens boots.

Fashion and music worked in tandem, and customers at SEX included key members of the punk movement like the Sex Pistols, who were managed by McLaren, Chrissie Hynde,

who also worked as a shop assistant, Adam Ant and Siouxsie Sioux.

Individuality was key, and gender politics made way for androgynous expression. Women were attracted to the oversized leather armour, with the likes of Debbie Harry and Patti Smith challenging typical feminine dress with clashing fabrics and styles.

Using clothes to illustrate their disillusioned views was paramount. "You have a more interesting life if you wear impressive clothes," Vivienne Westwood said. And the leather jacket's makeover was certainly anything but boring.



## GREASE IS THE WORD

As leather cemented its position as a symbol of defiance, the jacket was further embroiled in a good vs. bad narrative with the release of treasured musical film Grease.

Set in the 50s, the movie came out in 1978 to critical and commercial acclaim. Starring John Travolta as Danny Zuko and Olivia Newton-John as Sandy Olsson, the story culminates in one of Hollywood's most famous transformations.

As the gendered friendship groups were identified by the male T-Birds in their cool black bikers and the female Pink Ladies in their satin bowling jackets, getting the right

look was everything in Rydell High School. The love story reaches its climax when the sweet Sandy, who has dressed in pretty pastel colors and full skirts, emerges to sing the hit song You're The One That I Want in black skin-tight pants, an off-the-shoulder top and, you guessed it, a leather jacket.

Costume Designer Albert Wolsky wanted to create a stark contrast between the earlier character and her new badass persona, and what better way to illustrate the change than with the original rebel uniform?

Having been diagnosed with breast cancer three times, Olivia Newton-John decided to auction off the iconic leather jacket alongside some of her other famous possessions in

2019 to raise money for the Olivia Newton-John Cancer Wellness & Research Centre. It was sold for \$243,200 at the charity auction, and the actor said goodbye to her notorious jacket. Or so she thought.

Just a month later, Olivia received a gift from the buyer, who wished to remain anonymous.

"This jacket belongs to you and the collective soul of those who love you, those for whom you are the soundtrack of their lives. It should not sit in a billionaire's closet for country club bragging rights", the buyer said. And so it was returned to its rightful owner.





## POP IDOL

As the 80s rolled around, so did bigger and brighter fashion. Gender boundaries became blurred, and the diverse influences of office wear, aerobics and fetishism hit the high street. It was here the leather jacket hit the mainstream.

In 1983, it got a colorful makeover in Michael Jackson's pioneering Thriller music video. Designed by Deborah Nadoolman, the bright red jacket emblazoned with black stripes, angular shoulders and high collar was an

instant hit sparking thousands of copies all over the world.

Almost 30 years later, the jacket sold at Julien's Auctions for a massive \$1.8 million, with the buyer declaring it as "the greatest piece of rock and roll memorabilia in history". Versions of the leather biker became ubiquitous in global pop videos, with hordes of fans emulating the looks of their idols.

George Michael chose a black biker jacket for the seminal Faith video with a pair of Levi's jeans, Madonna wears one in her Papa Don't

Preach video, and Cher chose an oversized style for her infamous If I Could Turn Back time performance. Wearing it over a sheer body stocking with strategically placed fabric even got Cher's video banned from MTV, proving the leather jacket's connotations with rebellion were just as strong in this decade as they were 40 years earlier.

## MODEL BEHAVIOUR

Perhaps the modern appeal of the leather biker jacket can be attributed to the supermodels of the 90s. No longer leggy clothes horses, models had been gaining notoriety by becoming celebrities in their own right.

It wasn't until a British Vogue cover in 1990, shot by renowned photographer Peter Lindbergh, of Cindy Crawford, Christy Turlington, Linda Evangelista, Naomi Campbell and Tatjana Patitz, that the term 'supermodel' really took hold. Later, the 'supers', as they became known, were joined by Kate Moss and Claudia Schiffer.

Walking the most glamorous runways and starring on magazine covers was no longer

enough, as this set of gorgeous women had serious earning potential outside of their day jobs. Their social lives made up the backbone of gossip columns as the fashion elite turned the streets into paparazzi-lined catwalks.

And their off-duty uniform of leather outerwear became synonymous with the super cool, super rich and super beautiful. The fuss-free aesthetic was a world away from their well-heeled looks at fashion shows as they teamed them with plain tees and jeans or over simple slip dresses – the perfect mix of effortless style and nonchalant edge.

Then came 'couple dressing'.

As one of the decade's power couples, US film star Johnny Depp and British

supermodel Kate Moss began dating in 1994 and were regularly spotted in his 'n' hers leather jackets. Epitomising rock 'n' roll romance, the matching bikers screamed sexuality and fearlessness with a look that has been regularly copied – just look at Kim Kardashian and Kanye West, who chose black leather jackets from BLK DNM and Schott NYC with 'Just Married' on the back for their 2014 nuptials.

Kate Moss continued her love affair with leather long after her break-up with Depp and is still considered the modern biker jacket muse for millions today. In a world full of fast fashion, social media influencers and consumer excess, the classic shape of that first Perfecto jacket remains the one fashion constant that will never go out of style.



# LEATHER INTO TOMORROW

A material with a long past, leather has a huge role to play in a sustainable future. In a world on the brink, our young designers must seek to use what we have in the best possible ways.

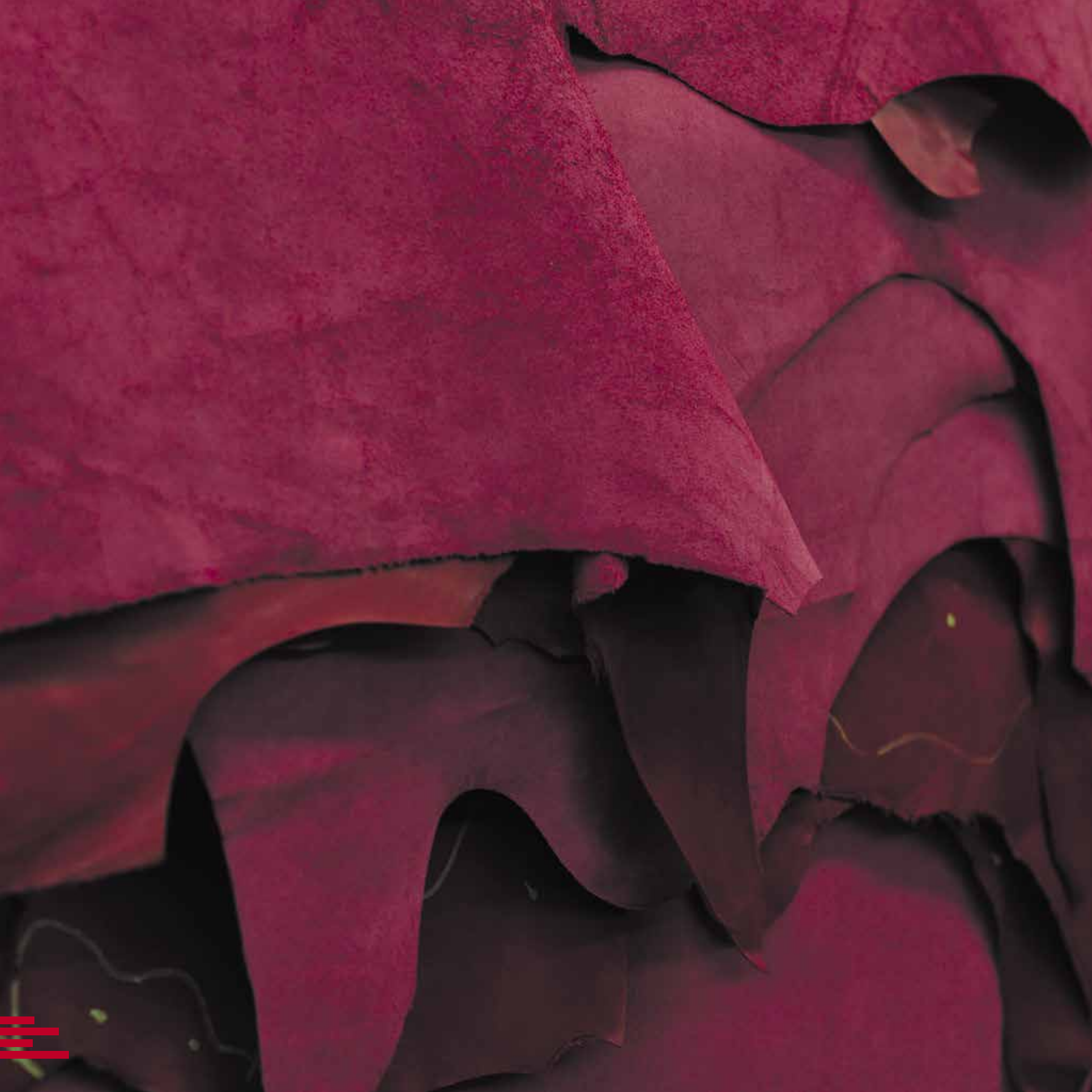
“The fashion industry contributes an estimated 9% of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions globally”

For all the futuristic looks and production techniques of synthetic alternatives to leather, it is time they were abandoned to the past. It is time for more sustainable alternatives. More sustainable alternatives that have existed almost as long as humankind.

Clothing production has more than doubled since the start of the 20th century. The fashion industry now churns out an estimated 120 billion items of clothing each year and, at the current rate of increase, that is set to

hit 200 billion by 2030. According to clothes waste charity TRAIID, the average garment is worn just 10 times before it is discarded. As more clothes are produced, the cheaper they become. The more cheaply they are produced, the lower their quality and the less durable they are. This is a vicious circle that needs to be broken. One that we set out to challenge by highlighting the need for durable material in our design competitions. It is vital that the next generation of creative decision makers is aware of the dangers of poor-quality clothing.





### LEATHER IN A FACTORY?

Looked after properly, a leather product can last a lifetime or longer. The fashion industry chiefly uses synthetic alternatives. This is an industry that, at the mass end, relies on the dangerous model just described. Buy, discard, replace, repeat.

Leather is not only long-lasting and durable, it can also be refurbished and repurposed. Other than being cleaned, synthetics can't be refurbished and, because they are flimsier than most leather, it is difficult to repurpose them.

When leather products are finally discarded, it takes between 25 and 50 years for them to compost. Synthetic products take up to 500 years – at least 10 times as long. Many of them also shed harmful microplastics throughout their lifetimes and during their extended biodegradation.

As hides are a waste product, they have no direct carbon footprint before the tanning process. Using leather, rather than sending to landfill to biodegrade, holds carbon in the system.

Leather's long lifespan, and the fact it needs very little care, means that, once manufactured, the carbon footprint of leather clothing is much smaller than alternative materials. The carbon footprint of leather production has been steadily reduced over the last 30 years, and the industry is still striving to make further reductions.

### LEATHER VERSUS SYNTHETIC ALTERNATIVES

Synthetic alternatives to leather are mostly produced using petroleum-based plastics. Production of synthetic alternatives also produces toxic compounds that remain in the environment for many years.

The production of leather is becoming more and more sustainable each year. Tanning is the technique that turns cowhides into useable leather. Essentially, it changes the structure of the collagen to make it resistant to the microbes that cause rotting.

Tanning techniques have improved drastically. The whole process has become cleaner, more sustainable and much more pleasant to be part of.

The volume of salt, which is mainly used to preserve hides during transportation to tanneries, has been dramatically reduced. In the US, a brine is now used instead of pure salt. This allows the salt to penetrate the hides better, making it more effective while using less.

And the water that is used in the tanning process can now be cleaned. Processes have been refined so much recently that the amount of water used has reduced by 35% in the last 25 years. And, with the reuse of water and the refining of techniques, that reduction is continuing.

### THE FASHION INDUSTRY EMITS MORE CO<sub>2</sub> THAN AVIATION

Although cowhide is a by-product of the meat and dairy industry, it is important that the source of leather is traceable. As outlined elsewhere in this book, collaboration between NGOs, trade organisations and educational institutions continues to build traceable systems to ensure you know where your leather comes from, providing a revolutionary tool to aid sustainable sourcing.

The fashion industry contributes an estimated 9% of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions globally. That is more than aviation. That figure is rising and, as yet, shows no sign of slowing down. It is time for manufacturers to act, and it is time for consumers to show them the way by adopting slow style instead of fast fashion.

We don't need to make more materials, we need to work with the organic materials we have. And we have plenty of cowhide.

**For more information, see**  
[chooserealleather.com](http://chooserealleather.com)  
[traid.org.uk](http://traid.org.uk)  
[leatherworkinggroup.com](http://leatherworkinggroup.com)

# RESOURCES

For more information on the Real Leather. Stay Different. Student Design Competitions and features on the sustainability of leather, its production, uses and craft techniques, see:

[chooserealleather.com](https://chooserealleather.com)

For information on sustainability, water use and regenerative farming, see:

[chooserealleather.com](https://chooserealleather.com)  
[usleather.org](https://usleather.org)  
[thesustainabilityalliance.us](https://thesustainabilityalliance.us)  
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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND THANKS

Real Leather. Stay Different. would like to thank the following people and organisations, without whose help and support the competitions could never have taken place.

The International Competition was administered by **ARTS THREAD** (artsthread.com), and our partners were **Rollacoaster** (rollacoaster.tv) and **Wonderland** (wonderlandmagazine.com) magazines.

**ARTS THREAD** is the leading digital platform for emerging artists and designers, a launchpad for the next generation of creative talent representing 300,000 students in more than 100 countries from over 850 design schools.

Rollacoaster is the premier magazine covering music, culture and style with a circulation of 300,000 print copies. Wonderland, its sister publication, has a circulation of 140,000 and

is dedicated to lifestyle, fashion and modern culture.

The China competition was run in conjunction with the **China Leather Industry Association** (CLIA) – chinaleather.org. The CLIA is a national transregional organisation dedicated to the promotion of the leather industry. It has more than 1,400 companies and organisations as members.

The Taiwan competition was run in conjunction with the **Taiwan International Leather Association** (TILA) – tila.org.tw. The TILA represents Taiwanese companies and organisations involved in the production, supply and distribution of leather.

The Italy competition was run in conjunction with the **Italian Tanneries Association** (UNIC) unic.it - and **LINEAPELLE** –

lineapelle-fair.it. UNIC is the trade body that represents tanneries throughout Italy. LINEAPELLE is responsible for international exhibitions of leather and bringing together the world's finest designers, manufacturers and innovators.

The UK competition was run in conjunction with **Leather UK** – leatheruk.org. Leather UK is the trade association for the UK leather industry. Established in 1908, it works to promote the sustainable growth of the UK leather industry.

We would also like to thank everyone who entered the competitions, and the staff at their schools and colleges who helped and inspired them. They are the reason for the incredible success of the competitions.

Thank you!



leatherUK

LINEAPELLE

ROLLACOASTER



UNIC

