

RUNWAY

Demna Gvasalia, Lotta Volkova, and Co. Give the ITS Prize to New Zealand Designer Mayako Kano

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Looks from ITS 2016 winner Mayako Kano from New Zealand

Photo: Courtesy of International Talents Support



Spending a weekend in Trieste is #AlwaysGoodIdea. Sitting near the Slovenian border on the Adriatic Sea, the Italian city's elegant Habsburg architecture and literary cafés are testament to a cultivated past, an unusual mix of the Mediterranean and the Mitteleuropean. For the past 15 years, it has proved the perfect backdrop for an international fashion contest called ITS (International Talent Support), which has provided the fashion industry with quite an impressive number of young designers with innovative perspectives and fresh energy to spare.



Looks from OTB Award winner Anna Bornhold from Germany

Photo: Courtesy of International Talents Support



Masterminded by Barbara Franchin, a redheaded dynamo, the candidate selection is a herculean task: “We collected 935 portfolios from 200 fashion and design schools in 53 nations,” she explained. “Then we reduced the list to 11 finalists.” “Utopia” was the title of this year’s edition, and on the jury were the likes of Vetements’s and Balenciaga’s Demna Gvasalia, Lotta Volkova, Silvia Venturini Fendi, Iris van Herpen, Valerie Steele, and Colin McDowell. After much deliberation, they granted the ITS Fashion Award to Mayako Kano, a Kiwi Parsons graduate who presented Reverse Fade, a charming feminine collection with a retro ’40s flair, reworked with a deconstructive hand and fluid, translucent techno fabrics. Renzo Rosso, one of the contest’s earliest supporters, chose to give his OTB Award to two designers. The German Anna Bornhold was convincing with her witty take on knitwear, calling her lineup Kiss a Frog But Only With Brushed Teeth, while the Dane Niels Gundtoft Hansen won Rosso’s praise for a menswear collection with a rough, Nordic street-kid aesthetic. Most designers worked around a futuristic interpretation of the past, relying on traditional narratives given an abstract, hypervisual, or experimental spin.



Looks from OTB Award winner Niels Gundtoft Hansen from Denmark

Photo: Courtesy of International Talents Support



A sense of freedom and possibilities permeated the contest; it's safe to say it felt fairly utopian. Yet Volkova, the Vetements and Balenciaga stylist, had some nonsense advice for the young designers: "Believe in your passions and dreams," she said. "But do not rebel against the fashion system; it's better to infiltrate it from the inside."