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ITS AMAZING

SIX DESIGNERS LOOK BACK AT HOW ITS GAVE THEIR CAREERS A KICK

- (1) Zac Harris
- (2) David Lainger
- (3) Bloodar Miskovic
- (4) Ek Thongprasert
- (5) Taro Horiuchi
- (6) Christoph Froehlich



ITS stands for International Talent Support. Their objective is to support new talent in fashion design and provide a global platform for the work of the year's most exciting young newcomers. A network of international names from the creative industry award a selection of prizes to the winners, and the event has been supported since its birth in 2002 by denim giant Diesel.

Realising the hurdles that face new talent struggling to break through, they give designers a head start – dedicating the Diesel Award to one lucky candidate. The winner earns the opportunity to design a capsule collection of five garments that are produced by Diesel and distributed in their stores worldwide. Among the other awards is a first prize of £20,000 and an invitation to return the following year to present their latest collection. Dazed picked some competitors from the previous six years and asked them why ITS is so important.

Ek Thongprasert, who studied fashion in Antwerp, was one of this year's winners – his quirky masked characters catching the judges' eyes. "ITS gave me an opportunity to prove what I believe in, gathering people together from all around the world, it reflects a lot of great ideas."

Another Diesel winner, Taro Horiuchi, created a collection that features boys in white flowing skirts and inventive streetwear. "At the moment the situation in the fashion world is very difficult for young designers, both to show work and make a business survive. That's why we all need the support. Barbara Franchin (founder of ITS) comes to Antwerp to see our work every year."

Christoph Froehlich won ITS 4 with a modern twist on menswear. "There is hardly any support out there once you graduate and there are very few professional platforms from which designers can present their work without putting their own money in. Taking part in ITS enabled me to show my work to a much broader public. I also got a job in the creative department of Diesel which is good fun... so I would say taking part in ITS helped launch my career. I got to design a capsule collection, which was the first time that my designs were realised in a big production. I became aware then of the huge difference between the art academy and the reality of the fashion business."



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- (1) Aitor Throup
- (2) Daniel Ivarsson
- (3) Ek Thorngärd
- (4) Daniele Controversio
- (5) Aitor Throup



Siobodan Mihajovic, another Antwerp graduate, was the winner of the Maria Luisa award in 2003 for his cutting-edge knitwear collection. "The importance of ITS is huge. It gives young people a chance to present their work in front of a very important jury and then to organise a fashion show. "Maria Luisa presented my award at ITS 2 and since then she has been a regular buyer of my work for her shop in Paris." Siobodan has also gained work experience at Roberto Cavalli, and has been working on his own label, launching a men's collection during Pitti Uomo in Florence and Milan fashion week. In September, he shows his second women's collection in Milan and Paris showrooms.

Daniel Ivarsson won last year's Diesel prize with a gothic-inspired graduation collection from the Royal College of Art. "Winning provided me with a platform and enabled me to showcase my design on an international level."

Daniele Controversio won the Collection of the Year prize in the first ITS when he presented models as life-size cut-outs from magazines complete with cardboard dog accessories. Lesley Mobo was a winner of ITS 3 and is now the head designer at Jasmine De Milo in London. "I had this opportunity to work with the Diesel team in Molvena, Italy. I experienced and observed how they work and I really respect and admire their ideology. In this very competitive and fickle-minded industry I quickly learned that if the message isn't strong it won't sell - it's all about the product."

Aitor Throup, the overall winner last year, has had a whirlwind of a year. "They provide an amazing continuous structure of support which doesn't end when the event ends. ITS also act as talent scouts, so if they see someone's work they think might not be right for the event, they still support them by putting them in touch with the right companies. They have loyalty and respect for all the talent they come across, which really subverts the usual hierarchy found in fashion. I found myself presenting my work to a really prestigious jury. Now I'm working towards the MAN show at London Fashion Week. I'm showing my new collection, which is sponsored by Stone Island."

Dazed are looking forward to Aitor's show at MAN and the ITS class of 2008. KATE SHELINGFORD

See www.itsweb.org for more information and information on how to enter

