

Fashion. Beauty. Business.

# WWD

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# Lessons in Sustainability

CFDA designers take part in CLASS workshop.

By ARTHUR FRIEDMAN

It was a teaching moment. Brands and designers chosen to participate in the CFDA + Lexus Fashion Initiative were schooled on sustainable innovation in textiles this month as part of their 17-month virtual

residency program.

An integral aspect of the program, designed to inspire thought leadership, facilitate the implementation of innovative business practices and create meaningful change within American fashion, is to elevate the level and percentage of sustainability within apparel, jewelry and accessories design businesses.

Doing the teaching was Giusy Bettoni, founder of CLASS, or Creativity Lifestyle and Sustainable Synergy, whose purpose at the two-hour workshop at Council of Fashion Designers of America headquarters, was to facilitate a conversation regarding

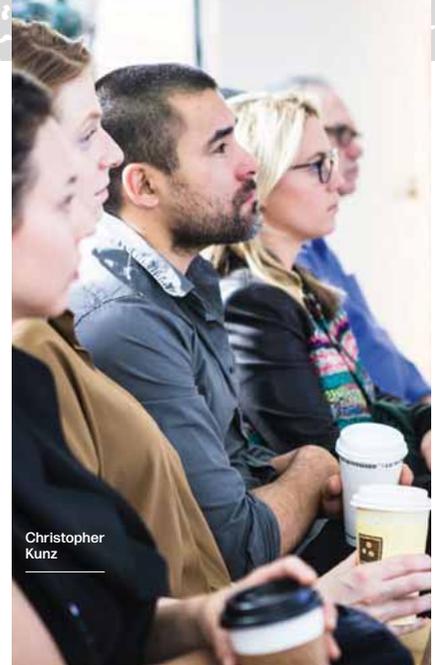
responsible sourcing.

CLASS is a multiplatform network that showcases exclusive fashion, textiles and materials created using the latest technology that demonstrates sustainable design solutions.

Ten brands have been selected to participate in the CFDA + Lexus Fashion Initiative, which focuses on the environmental, social and financial challenges faced by the industry today with the intention of problem solving through new materials, processes and systems, including responsible sourcing, ethical manufacturing, supply chain transparency, scalable business strategies and consumer literacies.

Among the finalists in attendance were Christopher Kunz from Nicholas K, Prabal Gurung, Britt Cosgrove and Marina Polo from SVILU, Erin Isakov of Erin Snow and design team members from Tome and Zero + Maria Cornejo.

Kunz agreed with a key point Bettoni made during her presentation that “sustainable fabrics



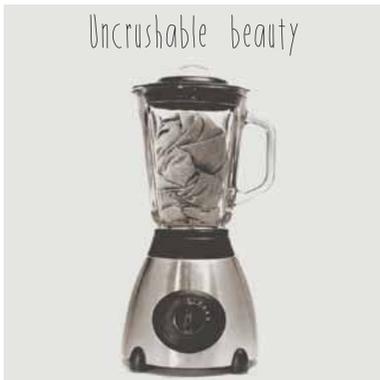
Christopher Kunz

take on great designs and are eco-friendly.”

He said he “loved the recycled wool and cashmere” and was looking into using some in his collection. Kunz said Nicholas K also uses a lot of cotton in the collection and is sensitive to yarns and fabrics produced with methods that use less water.

In the end, he said, “It’s more difficult to sell sustainability to the consumer. It’s easier to sell a product and then explain it to the consumer in some way to show that it’s an added benefit.”

During the workshop, Bettoni also stressed that the “commercial viability of the sustainable material and fabric” was essential.



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“The average consumer still believes sustainable doesn’t equate with quality,” she said.

That’s why she likes to call this new generation of fabrics “responsible innovation” with a “3-D approach: creativity, innovation and responsibility – three distinct elements when combined... guarantee a competitive market advantage.”

Bettoni explained and showed several examples of fabrics that are part of CLASS. Ecotec by Marchi & Fildi, which drew Kunz’s interest, transforms pre-dyed fabric clippings into high quality cotton yarns, thereby saving water and energy and reducing landfill space.

Re.Verso is a line of re-engineered wool and cashmere upcycled using pre-consumer fabric cutoffs. Bettoni showed a Gucci fall 2016 coat being made using Re.Verso cashmere.

New Life’s polyester, made using post-consumer plastic bottles, is now being utilized by Gruppocinque in a new range of jacquard prints, while Asahi Kasei’s Roica Eco-Smart stretch is made from 50 percent pre-consumer recycled elastane that saves water and has better dye uptake due to its lower oil content.

There was also Asahi Kasei’s cupro, a cellulose fiber made from recovered cotton waste that’s being used by such mills as Jacytext, which also uses the company’s Roica fabric.

Gurung, like many of the attendees, seemed impressed by the hand and look of the materials presented, as pieces were passed around the room for the old “touchy feely.”

While not part of Milan-based CLASS, many Italian mills have been pioneers in textile sustainability and innovation.

Cariaggi’s Systema Naturae collection of

cashmere yarn is dyed with herbs, berries and roots such as the blue-indigo tones of the woad plant from the spinners’ native Cagliari territory.

At the most recent Pitti Filati fair, Lanificio dell’Olivo showed off its sustainable “Going Green” project that uses organic cotton yarns for a cleaner, more classic approach.

Tollegno 1900 has stressed its investment in sustainability through areas such as methods to decrease water usage, and in more energy-efficient machinery, and Zegna Baruffa has developed a special technology with Turin’s Politecnico University that was applied to wool to manufacture H2Dry, a high-tech yarn that’s washable for travel wear and activewear.

Additional finalists for the CFDA + Lexus Fashion Initiative are Dezso by Sara Beltran, Katie DeGuzman and Michael Miller from Killer Collection, and WWake’s Wing Yin Yau.

At the conclusion of the program, the three brands that have most significantly advanced their companies’ ethos to a higher standard of sustainability and social responsibility will be awarded the grand prize and two runner-up prizes will also be handed out. The winner will receive \$150,000 and each runner-up will be awarded \$50,000. ■



Prabal Gurung checks out the fabrics.



Britt Cosgrove and Marina Polo of SVILU.

**\$50k**

Each runner-up to the CFDA + Lexus Fashion Initiative will be awarded \$50,000.

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Finalists in the CFDA + Lexus Fashion Initiative are involved in a 17-month virtual residency program.



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