

# Reimagining Australian Fashion: An Artisanal Approach

Alida Milani

Sir James Gobbo legacy

Italian Australian Foundation Fellowship, 2025

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First Published 2025

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Report by Alida Milani  
Typeset by Danielle Cull  
Printed by Elgin Printing

**The International Specialised Skills Institute**

1/189 Faraday St,  
Carlton VIC 3053  
[info@issinstitute.org.au](mailto:info@issinstitute.org.au)  
+61 03 9347 4583

ISBN: 978-1-923027-95-4

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# 01

## Acknowledgements

### The Awarding Bodies

The Fellow sincerely thanks The Italian Australian Foundation for providing funding support for the ISS Institute and for this Fellowship.

The ISS Institute plays a pivotal role in creating value and opportunity, encouraging new thinking and early adoption of ideas and practice by investing in individuals. The overarching aim of the ISS Institute is to support the development of a 'Better Skilled Australia'. The Institute does this via the provision of Fellowships that allow Australians to undertake international skills development and applied research that will positively impact Australian industry and the broader community.

The ISS Institute was founded in 1991 by a small group of innovators, including Sir James Gobbo AC, CVO, QC, and former Governor of Victoria, who had a vision of building a community of industry specialists who would lead the up skilling of the Australian workforce.

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The Italian Australian Foundation (previously the Italian Services Institute Inc.) is an association dedicated to providing welfare and education services for disadvantaged persons of Italian descent who are a resident of Australia who would not have access to these services.

## Fellow's Acknowledgements

The Fellow would like to extend her sincere gratitude to the International Specialised Skills Institute and the Italian / Australian Foundation for entrusting her with this Fellowship. It has been an immense honour and without a doubt, transformational. Deep gratitude to all, especially Kay Schlesinger for expertly guiding the way and Katrina Jojkity for elevating the experience.

The Fellow would like to thank Karen Webster and Fran Kerlin of Creative Victoria, for their introduction to the digital, technological and AI space in addition to their support and encouragement, for which without, this research would not have been possible.

As they say, it takes a village. It certainly was the case in this experience. The Fellow is deeply grateful to all who took time to expand ideas and introduce wonderful people to enable this Fellowship, special thanks go to:

Susan Renouf, Strategic Management Consultant, Renouf & Associates, who inspired the exploration of a more responsible fashion industry.

Robert Buckingham, Director, Mr Buckingham, for his unwavering support and very kind introduction to Brunello Cuccinelli.

Marisa Mandile, Strategist & Communications Executive, Philanthropy Squared Academy, for ongoing strategic advice, relentless friendship and support.

Gönül Serbest, Commissioner for Victoria to Europe, Middle East, Türkiye and Africa, Global Victoria for her support and kind introductions to the Italian Chamber of Commerce in Victoria and Diana Brock-Negri.

Diana Brock-Negri, Vice President, Australia Italy Business Association (AIBA), for her kind introductions to Fabrizio Servente at Woolmark, Artknit Studios and Joanna Lyle.

Anna Crozier. Wild Earth, for her kind introductions to Piacenza 1733 and Ermenegildo Zegna Figli SpA.

Luca Bottallo, Flanders Investment and Trade Agency, for his insights into the Italian landscape and kind introductions.

Simon Zdraveski, Speciality Pleaters, for support of this idea which was fundamental to the Fellowship application alongside introductions including Maison Barbagli Plisse.

Meriel Chamberlin, Founder, Full Circle Fibres for providing insights from her Churchill Fellowship experience, sharing the submission to the Federal Government's Productivity Enquiry: Circular Economy Opportunities - an illuminating report which introduced another report, The value of craft skills to the future of making in Australia which confirmed a business case for this research - and introducing me to Biella.

Margaret Pagone, for her insights into the Italian arts, architecture and culture alongside an introduction to Professor Cecilia Hewlett, Pro Vice Chancellor (Europe) at Monash University.

In addition, the Fellow would like to thank the many artisans and artisanal businesses that informed this research in understanding both the Australian and Italian context. It was a great privilege and pleasure to listen, learn and connect to so much expertise, passion and 'know how'. A full listing of the people and businesses are included in Appendix 1.

It was a great pleasure for the Fellow to travel this journey with Dennis D'Angelo, who enriched the experience and supported throughout, thank you.

And finally, the Fellow would like to acknowledge Chat GPT for the assistance in the consolidation of text and the exploring ideas. Both the speed and responses elevated the process. However, it has to be said, the ideas, the direction and nuances are entirely the Fellows.

# 02

## Executive Summary

In a rapidly changing world defined by automation, and environmental challenges, the need to reimagine how we value, and produce fashion is more vital than ever. This Fellowship explored how artisanal fashion skills - grounded in tradition, cultural identity, and human ingenuity - can evolve alongside innovation and digital technology to create a more sustainable, connected, and economically resilient future for Australia's fashion and textile sector.

Awarded the ISS Institute Italian/Australian Fellowship in 2024, the Fellow undertook the research in Italy in 2025, focusing on how artisanal fashion skills are being preserved and modernised through education, industry collaboration, and cultural leadership. The Fellow visited leading institutions, specialist ateliers, heritage businesses, and explored new initiatives in cities including Milan, Biella, Prato, Florence, Arezzo, and Rome. The research combines interviews with creative artisans and industry leaders alongside policy analysis, site visits, and cultural immersion.

With a background in the creative industries in events, marketing and championing new initiatives, the Fellow's professional practice sits at the intersection of creativity, community, and systems change. This Fellowship offered the opportunity to deepen that practice and return with insights to apply within Australia.

### Fellowship Learnings

Through research, the Fellow uncovered compelling and timely insights: the need for a future that invests equally in machine intelligence and human hands. Italy's leadership in this space stems from a deep cultural reverence for making, an earnest transfer of multi-generational skills, strong education pathways, and continuous, intentional investment in artisanal craft and design-led industries.

### Key learnings include:

- The Arts and Crafts Movement of the late 1800s emerged as a response to social and economic upheaval; an Artisan Movement is emerging now as a response to social and economic upheaval of the technological revolution.
- Artisanal craftsmanship is both cultural and economic capital - not a nostalgic relic, but a future-oriented capability.
- Innovation and tradition are not opposites - they can thrive together through place-based ecosystems and supportive policy.
- To stay viable, artisanal fashion skills need deep know-how, digitisation, and real, paid pathways for the next generation to learn and earn.
- The most impactful initiatives arise where education, industry, and cultural leadership intersect and are led by extraordinary individuals.
- Technology can uplift, not replace - human creativity, storytelling, and emotional connection are irreplaceable.

### Impact

This Fellowship has been transformative. It has sharpened the Fellow's purpose to champion an Australian artisanal industry that values human wellbeing, creativity, and culture alongside sustainability and productivity. Professionally, it has provided a foundation for new collaborations with industry leaders, policymakers, and educators. Personally, it has deepened the Fellow's belief in the social and spiritual value of making and in the possibility of more human-centred futures.

For the sector, this work provides both a pathway forward and a provocation: to shift perceptions of fashion and textiles from a sunset industry to a space of strategic national opportunity - one that generates national pride through exportable stories, dignified jobs, cultural richness, and sovereign capability.

## Recommendations

Australia has the opportunity to lead globally in purpose-led production by balancing technological transformation with investment in artisan capability. The following recommendations are proposed:

### 1. Position artisanal fashion as cultural infrastructure

Recognise its role in shaping identity, economy, and global reputation and embed it in national strategy, creative industries policy and programming.

### 2. Build the flow / Set the target: Produce 10% of fashion in Australia by 2030

Set a bold national goal to increase domestic fashion production from 3% to 10% by 2030, with the aim to stimulate coordinated investment, support ethical manufacturing, and strengthen Australia's sovereign capability.

### 3. Create an Investment Fund for industry transition

Establish funding to support the modernisation of artisan businesses through development programs, digitisation, circular design and marketing initiatives.

### 4. Invest in skills, mentorship and cross-cultural learning

Identify and upskill existing artisan talent and build future capacity through hands-on training, intergenerational mentorships, and international exchange.

### 5. Map Australia's fibre-to-fashion ecosystem

Conduct national supply chain mapping with specific business case studies to identify regional capabilities, gaps, and opportunities for strategic growth to inform investment, procurement, and education planning.

### 6. Champion Cultural Leadership through a National Working Group for Artisanal Futures

Create a cross-sector forum to advance Australia's strengths - from natural fibres to quality production - through collaboration, thought leadership, and long-term visioning.

## Conclusion

By embedding artisanal skills into national policy, by investing in the people and places that sustain them, and by elevating fashion and textiles as expressions of identity and industry, we can build a future where meaning matters as much as scale — and where making is a national strength.

While the focus of this research is on fashion, the values espoused in artisanal fashion also extend to other forms of design, craft and art.

Work is already underway to share these findings through industry consultation and presentations. This Fellowship is a beginning.

# 03

## Fellowship Background

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The Australian fashion industry stands at a crossroads, where challenges and opportunities are intersecting to shape its future. Pressures from social and environmental accountability, governance reforms, tariff uncertainty alongside rapid technological advancements are driving transformational change. With this brings opportunities.

Without change, Australian fashion risks losing its distinct identity, leaving only global luxury and mass-market brands to dominate the landscape.

This Fellowship explores how artisanal fashion skills are evolving with innovation, modernisation, and technology and how Italy continues to be one of the world's leaders of textile and fashion craftsmanship, strengthening Made in Italy as one of the world's most revered brands.

This research aims to guide efforts to maintain and modernise artisanal fashion skills with a focus on business solutions, educational initiatives, and innovative collaborations that make fashion more accessible and valued.

### Methodology

The Fellow conducted extensive desktop research to inform her understanding of the Australian context. To add to this, the Fellow attended the 2024 Sustainable Fibres Forum in Geelong, the Australian Fashion Council industry forums developing industry strategy and the first ever National Manufacturing Strategy, and interviewed over 15 people across education, industry and government.

To explore the Italian context, the Fellow conducted extensive desktop research, online interviews, site visits and observations. The Fellow travelled from Milan to Biella, Florence to Prato to Arezzo and finally to Rome. The Fellow engaged with CEOs,

creative directors, educators, artisans and business strategists exploring education, industry and government policies.

Whilst the research was broad, the Fellow focussed on key investigations to inform potential outcomes. These key investigations are outlined in Appendix 2.

Awarded the Italian Australian Foundation Sir James Gobbo Legacy Fellowship on 1 July 2024, the Fellowship took place over four weeks across April and May 2025, with post-travel analysis and synthesis continuing into June with the dissemination of findings and knowledge sharing extending beyond this date.

### Fellow Biography

Alida Milani has been working in and contributing to the fashion industry for over 20 years' operating across a diverse range of platforms and projects alongside a multitude of partners - from government to Australian designers, fashion brands and retailers.

Initiating her fashion career in Milan, Alida went on to work extensively in fashion show production and event management to showcase creativity. The experience at Milan and Paris Fashion Weeks made Alida appreciate the unique Australian voice that was emerging. Returning to Sydney, Alida became part of the first full Australian team to deliver Simon Lock's Australian Fashion Week – previously delivered by a team led by Italian Marco Maccapani and ex NZ model Jennifer Souness.

This experience led to a role with the Melbourne Fashion Festival. Under the direction of Robert Buckingham, the Festival founded the new look Ready to Wear (RTW) runway shows. Alongside RTW Creative Director Michael Angel, Alida led a team to showcase the best of independent

Melbourne fashion alongside leading Australian and New Zealand designers. It was a special time with the Festival elevating Melbourne as the fashion capital of Australia and garnering international respect with its approach to engaging audiences.

Alida founded amme (Alida Milani Marketing & Events) in 2006, a boutique event and experiential marketing agency. amme worked with clients to develop dynamic campaign content and memorable brand experiences at a time when online retail was emerging.

Recognising there were transformational shifts occurring, Alida pivoted the agency in 2018 to place a greater focus on advancing a more responsible fashion industry. Over the last seven years, Alida has led or consulted on projects to advance the Australian landscape, these projects include:

### **Blueprint for a Sustainable Fashion Industry**

A 2018/2019 advocacy initiative with Peter Allan, Clara Vuletich and Robert Buckingham to champion support for a more responsible fashion industry. This included meeting with key stakeholders across industry, government, education and the charitable sectors. Outcomes included receiving 6 letters of support and 26 in principal confirmations - foundational support for what has now evolved into 'Seamless', a world-first clothing product stewardship scheme aiming to achieve clothing circularity by 2030.

### **Australian Fashion Summit**

Delivery of the Melbourne Fashion Festival's inaugural initiative in 2019, to tackle environmental, social and ethical issues with an equal measure of reality and optimism. The one-day Summit featured 10 informative sessions with 28 leaders from government, industry, and education to an audience of over 400 guests.

### **Reimagining Local Fashion Manufacturing: A Victorian Perspective**

A 2020 Creative Victoria grant opportunity enabled Sanna Conquest, Clare Miles and Alida to envision this project. 29 interviews were conducted with 32 people from Industry, Designers/Brands and Manufacturers. The objective was to explore the issues surrounding local fashion manufacturing and to canvas industry led solutions. The Report provides a fresh outside perspective looking in.

### **Australian Fashion Council**

Consulting on projects to engage members for the AFC Fashion & Textiles Directory, creating an

initiative to map skills within education and industry, assisting to curate the Responsible Fashion Webinars, and other initiatives as required.

### **Carbon8**

Carbon8 is a charity founded to educate consumers and empower farmers to implement regenerative practices. How do you make world class natural fibres? Start with healthy soil. As Board Member and CEO, Alida led the strategy and capability build for a sustainable business solution and launched an online mentoring program to guide the implementation of regenerative farming practices.

### **Assembled Threads**

A social enterprise founded by Edwina Walsh helping to tackle long-term unemployment by providing training & employment in garment manufacturing at an ethical wage. As Project Lead, Alida delivered a Sustainability Victoria Circular Economy grant working with industry partners, including a novel initiative with Melbourne University exploring recycling end-of-life polyester into concrete, creating 'texcrete'. This project went on to win the 2023 Premier's Sustainability Awards: the Premier's Recognition Award.

### **Creative Victoria**

Creative Victoria is the State Government body dedicated to championing, growing and supporting Victoria's creative industries. In 2023, alongside Marisa Mandile, Communications Strategist, Alida co-designed and delivered a new initiative, Circles of Fashion, to address challenges and opportunities, build community and engage the sector to establish a 3–4-year strategic plan focused on building capability and enabling sustainable growth.

In 2024, alongside Karen Webster, Alida delivered the inaugural Melbourne International Games Week Careers + Frontiers: Education Symposium bringing together students, educators and industry exploring how technology and digital games are transforming not only education, but life as we know it.

With this deeper understanding of the local landscape, Alida now works to develop initiatives that not only respond to the sector's complex challenges but spotlight its unique strengths.

### **Memberships & Volunteer Roles**

- Member, Australian Fashion Council (AFC)
- Member, FashLab.
- Director, Marc Wasiak Foundation.



## Definitions

### Artisan

An artisan is a skilled craftsperson who possesses deep, often generational knowledge of materials, techniques, and processes. Their work is defined by precision, care, and creative authorship.

Artisans combine tradition with innovation, exercising a deep understanding of materials and processes to create garments or textiles of enduring quality and cultural significance. Artisanry prioritises quality over quantity and holds a commitment to excellence, authenticity, and longevity.

Key qualities of an artisan include:

- Mastery of specialised craft skills
- Hands-on, human-centred making processes
- Creative interpretation and authorship
- Deep relationship with materials
- Commitment to quality and longevity over volume
- Custodianship of cultural and regional knowledge

Artisan roles in fashion are diverse and specialist, examples include and are not limited to:

- Embroidery Artist
- Shoemaker (Cordwainer)
- Milliner (Hat Maker)
- Handbag and Accessory Maker
- Pattern Maker
- Dyer and Textile Artist
- Knitwear Designer and Knitter
- Jewellery and Accessories Designer
- Appliqué and Patchwork Specialist
- Lace Maker

These roles represent a broad spectrum of expertise underpinning the fashion industry's artisanal traditions.

### Artisanal Businesses

An artisanal business integrates the principles of craftsmanship into its structures, strategies, and outputs. These businesses can operate at a micro, small, medium, or global scale. What unites them is a shared commitment to human skill, material integrity, cultural stewardship, and excellence as their competitive advantage.

Artisanal businesses operate across the fashion supply chain, from specialist workshops to globally recognised brands. Their work forms a vital foundation for the industry's quality, creativity, and cultural value.

#### 1. Specialist Manufacturing and Production Businesses

These businesses offer expert, craft-led production services, supplying designers, brands, or working directly with clients.

- Garment Manufacturers with Skilled Machinists
- Textile Finishing and Dyeing Workshops
- Artisanal Knitwear Production
- Leather Goods and Accessory Workshops (Bags, Belts, Footwear, crafted using heritage techniques)
- Heritage or Specialist Fabric Mills (Jacquard, Selvedge Denim, Handwoven, Regenerated Fibres)
- Made-to-Order and Custom Garment Workshops (Combining artisan techniques such as tailoring, embroidery, hand-finishing)

#### 2. Designer-Led Micro and Small Businesses

Independent designers who operate as both creative leads and hands-on makers, overseeing design, materials, and production.

- Designer-Maker Studios (Producing in-house)
- Made-to-Measure or Bespoke Ateliers (Combining design and artisan skills in highly personalised, human-scaled production)

#### 3. Artisanal Fashion Brands

Brands whose business models are rooted in craftsmanship, human-centred production, and responsible innovation.

- Micro to Medium-Scale Artisanal Brands, e.g., Artnit Studios, Rifò Lab - integrating direct-to-consumer transparency with artisanship and regional knowledge.
- Large-Scale Artisanal Brands, e.g., Brunello Cucinelli, Zegna - demonstrating how artisanship, sustainability, and cultural leadership can coexist at scale and deliver commercial success.

## Why These Definitions Matter

In advocating for a future for Australian fashion, this report recognises the vital role of both the individual and the business models that enable their work to thrive. Artisanship is not confined to small, isolated practices; it exists from independent makers and designer-artisans to global exemplars. These businesses demonstrate how craft, culture, and commerce can coexist successfully at scale.

Understanding the diversity within the artisan ecosystem helps dispel outdated notions of craft as niche or nostalgic. Instead, it reveals artisanship as a forward-looking, competitive, and culturally significant foundation for fashion's sustainable and human-centred future.

## 04

# Fellowship Learnings

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When thinking about artisans, artisanal craftsmanship, innovation, technology, the future of the fashion and textile industry, the Fellow began the exploring: Given we have an ability to produce more, faster, are artisans important? Do we really need them? This led the Fellow on a journey, as some would say, of enlightenment.

From the moment we are born, we are swaddled in textiles. From the Etruscans to the Romans, all through the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and carrying us to where we are now... ever was thus. Clothing is personal, and as we grow, is a way to communicate something about ourselves – our values, what we care about, or in fact, what we don't care about. Clothing, and as it has come known as fashion, reflects society.

During the Renaissance, textiles were a form of trade and were protected by very powerful guilds due to the immense economic benefit. These guilds thrived, but with the industrial revolution came change and textile production shifted from homes to factories, from manual to mechanised, and from artisan to industrial. This shift revolutionised not just how textiles are made - but how people work, live, and dress. This huge societal shift started some people to question, where are we going?

John Ruskin emerged, and William Morris, best known as the 19th century's most celebrated designer, founded businesses that embodied the ideology. This set the foundations of the Arts and Crafts Movement; a movement that forms as a response to a century of unprecedented social and economic upheaval<sup>1</sup>. Central to the movement's philosophy is the moral and spiritual uplift that would come with the revival of making objects by hand. The improvement of working conditions, the integration of art into everyday life, the unity of all arts, and

an aesthetic resulting from the use of indigenous materials and native traditions also were central to the movement's philosophy<sup>2</sup>. An insight into William Morris' foundational thinking is that:

*Have nothing in your houses that you do not know to be useful or believe to be beautiful.*

*Further, there should be inherent joy in labour and without it, humans become disconnected in life. For Morris, machines were meant to do the hard and uninteresting parts of labour, to free up humans to create beautiful things.<sup>3</sup>*

If we think about where we are as a society now, never have we had so many things so easily available. In fact, we're producing so much so quickly it's destroying our environment and keeping people marginalised for the mighty dollar.

The Fellow proposes that the Artisan movement is emerging as a response to this social, economic, and most breathtaking technological revolution, and that, technology alongside artisanal leadership, education and government initiatives, will shape the future of the fashion and textile industry.

For Australia to stay relevant on a global scale, investment must include supporting both a human centred and machine-driven fashion and textile industry. With this, government, industry and education have an opportunity to work together to elevate a sunset industry and celebrate, nurture and champion our uniqueness for economic and cultural prosperity.

The Fellows learnings are presented in three parts:

4.1 The Global Context

4.2 The Australian Context

4.3 The Italian Context

## 4.1 The Global Context

The fashion and textiles industry has ever been evolving. From the home cottage industry to the industrial revolution to a globalised world economy, with these changes, has come great impact.

A recent report by Skills Insight A Changing Workforce: Opportunities and challenges for shaping the future textiles, clothing and footwear industry, stated on the global context, "Over the past forty years, global textile, clothing, and footwear production capacity has shifted to developing economies, especially China. This shift is due to the expansion of the domestic TCF market in China, Chinese government policies aimed at boosting TCF export production, and significant foreign investment in the Chinese TCF industry. Much of this investment has come from retailers, designers, wholesalers, and manufacturers in developed countries looking for lower production costs. As a result of these changes, the TCF supply chain has evolved from a local to a global one."<sup>4</sup>

We know this global supply chain has come at a cost. Documentaries such as *The True Cost* have shone a light on horrific unethical production practices, *The Blue River* highlighted how lack of care and unregulated markets can destroy critical river systems; the Rana Plaza catastrophe demonstrated how lack of responsible practices devastate communities; the recent collapse of Australian company Mosaic Brands led by a former Macquarie Group banker, Richard Facioni and Scott Evans, a retail executive, reveals the many lives ruined globally with the moving of supplier payment terms from 30 to 120 days to enable unethical growth.

President Trump's tariffs have sent the fashion world into turmoil. Businesses with complex global supply chains are scrambling to make sense of what it means financially and whether to reroute or hold stock. Some were quick to move and have already shifted where they're manufacturing to circumvent this situation.

On the other hand, much work has been done in this space to try to champion a more environmentally and socially responsible industry. New systems of regulation have developed with certifications adding to the cost of doing business – most of which are covered by the maker and the primary producer, new financial markets have been developed to account for nature, revolutionising financial markets so that there is now an investment mechanism for businesses and governments to offset responsibility,

which if done well, could be the biggest transfer of funds for benefit, but if done badly, could be the biggest waste of time, energy and money for all, and we've developed Life Cycle Analysis (LCAs) which give us insight into the impacts of the materials on the world. Further, France's President Macron, has taken a lead in recently regulating a tax on fast fashion purchases, and Italy, led by Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, has founded an impressive 'Made in Italy' program to support economic and cultural prosperity.

Whilst these are some of the tools that try to shift the dial on a global system, it seems we are still producing and consuming at an extraordinary rate. If anything, with technology and modernisation, we're producing more, faster!

Big business and big profits of all sectors of the market - from luxury to the high street and fast fashion - have created a society where design for the finished product is more important than the make, no matter which price point a business operates in.

Yet things are starting to change with an appreciation of artisanship leading the way.

## 4.2 The Australian Context

Within this global context, the Australian fashion industry led by The Australian Fashion Council (AFC) has been trying to make sense of the future. This has produced several reports highlighting the value of the Australian fashion industry to the Australian economy.

Significantly, the 2021 report *From High Fashion to High Vis*, finds our fashion and textile industry contributes more than \$27.2 billion to Australia's economy, generating \$7.2 billion in exports each year. It employs more than 489,000 people, 77% of whom are women<sup>5</sup>. This AFC report identifies key challenges and presents a pathway for growth.

### A RESILIENT SECTOR IN DECLINE

In 2023, the Victorian TCF manufacturing industry generated over \$930m for the Australian economy and employed over 9,000 people, 53% of which are women. TCF exports are valued at \$334m, nearly \$200m more than Victoria's wine exports.

If left at the current trajectory, total industry value will decline by 18% with the loss of more than 700 jobs by 2030.

### BARRIERS TO GROWTH

The report dives into the many challenges faced by the industry including underestimated industry value due to outdated ABS definitions; Limited support for SME's that are not prioritised in grants or funding; Unmet skills demand restricting industry growth; Rising operational costs and cost-competitiveness with offshore; and Ineffective procurement policies.

### FROM DECLINE TO GROWTH

Modelling shows that implementation of the proposed policy suite would result in: An additional \$225 million contributed to the Victorian economy, bringing the total annual value of the sector to \$1.03 billion; A \$133 million increase in wages; A 15% increase to the Victorian TCF manufacturing workforce; Creating over 1,526 jobs, employing 9,900 workers with 6,200 positions estimated to be filled by female employees.

A 2023 report shining a light on the Victorian TCF Manufacturing Future: Jobs, Technology and Economic Growth, states "Victoria's fashion manufacturing industry has reached a critical point in its evolution. Compiled by RMIT University, the report

details for the first time, the current and potential value of Victoria's almost \$1 billion industry."<sup>6</sup>

Following are the recommendations identified in the Victorian TCF Manufacturing Future Report report to grow the industry.

## Recommendations

To prevent further industry decline and drive productivity, innovation and higher wage growth for the industry, comprehensive reform is needed across five key areas:

- 1 Include TCF manufacturing as a priority sector in the Made in Victoria 2030 policy.
- 2 Mandatory government procurement policies to increase local content in uniforms, workwear and personal protective equipment (PPE) contracts.
- 3 Develop a revitalised TCF skills and training program to fill workforce skills gaps.
- 4 Co-invest in advanced technology and jobs of the future for a sustainable, circular clothing economy.
- 5 Develop a national TCF manufacturing strategy, led by the Victorian Government and industry.



In consultation with industry, the AFC is leading the following initiatives critical to progress:

- Reimagining of Australian Fashion Week based on quality, not quantity
- Announcing a landmark partnership with R.M. Williams to develop Australia's first-ever industry-led National Manufacturing Strategy for the fashion and textile industry
- Calling for Expressions of Interest for a research partner for the first Smart Factory Feasibility Study.

Delving deeper into the skills and capabilities within our industry, the Skills Institute delivered the collaborative report on A Changing Workforce identifying ten recommendations to support a skilled, sustainable and competitive TCF workforce<sup>7</sup>:

The report further acknowledges “Consumers, particularly young people, are pressing companies to adopt ethical production methods, which can increase costs” and that... “To address these challenges, local businesses must adapt by embracing innovation, sustainability, workforce training, and efficient production methods. Although these pressures are significant, they allow companies to stand out by offering high-quality, sustainable products and catering to niche markets prioritising ethical and local production.”<sup>8</sup>

Following are recommendations from the A Changing Workforce Report, outlining opportunities for industry growth:

#### 4.2.1 Initiatives Championing Change

To do a very quick review of the industry, following are some initiatives championing change in Australia's fashion industry over recent years. The Fellow is aware there are many more, however, this is a snapshot with an interesting insight, not all, but many initiatives were launched around 2020:

##### Celebrating our Indigenous History

- **Piinpi: Contemporary Indigenous Fashion** opened at Bendigo Art Gallery on 31 October 2020. The exhibition brought together garments and textiles by First Nations designers and artists from around Australia in the first-ever major survey of contemporary Indigenous Australian fashion.<sup>9</sup> It was the first time the Fellow really saw our beautiful nation depicted through the influence of native nature and place with flora and fauna such as Bush Lady Apples, the Hibiscus representing regional connections within the textiles.
- **Country to Couture**, launched in 2020, is a contemporary way of cultural storytelling and sharing knowledge. The event builds on the growing textile design movement in remote Indigenous communities presented alongside the annual Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair (DAAF) since 2016.<sup>10</sup>
- **The National Indigenous Fashion Awards (NIFA)**, launched in 2020, NIFA provide a vibrant and exciting platform to celebrate the innovation, diversity and ethical practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists and

## Key recommendations

Stakeholder consultations including face-to-face and online meetings, online forums and surveys, along with input from the Subject Matter Expert Working Group have led to ten recommendations included in the [final project report](#) which has been shared with the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations. These will help inform potential JSC projects.

**Recommendation 1:** Map Textiles, Clothing and Footwear workforce skills and occupations

**Recommendation 2:** Enhance the flexibility of the MST Textiles, Clothing and Footwear Training Package

**Recommendation 3:** Recognise the skills of the existing textiles, clothing and footwear workforce

**Recommendation 4:** Build the skills of the existing textiles, clothing and footwear workforce

**Recommendation 5:** Expand textiles, clothing and footwear apprenticeship/traineeship delivery

**Recommendation 6:** Build sustainable capacity in critical occupations

**Recommendation 7:** Revise OSCA textiles, clothing and footwear occupations

**Recommendation 8:** Strengthen textiles, clothing and footwear trainer and assessor capability

**Recommendation 9:** Support industry networks and partnerships

**Recommendation 10:** Attract new entrants to the textiles, clothing and footwear industry



fashion designers, whilst contributing to the capacity building of the sector. Proudly brought to you by Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair Foundation's Indigenous Fashion Projects and supported by the Northern Territory Government through Northern Territory Major Events Company, recognising and showcasing excellence across seven categories.<sup>11</sup>

- In 2021, the groundbreaking first ever all-Indigenous show Fashion Show at **Australian Fashion Week**<sup>12</sup>, to be followed by a second the day after by Indigenous Fashion Projects.
- **Grace Lillian Lee x Jean Paul Gaultier.** Jean Paul Gaultier Fashion Freak Show: a stage revue documenting Gaultier's trajectory from fashion-obsessed child to creative force and featuring more than 200 archival couture pieces. First unveiled in 2018, Fashion Freak Show premieres in Australia at the Brisbane Festival, September 2024, after sold-out stints in Paris, London, Tokyo and Milan. Gaultier invited Meriam Mir artist Grace Lillian Lee to visit his atelier in Paris (January 2024) and create a showstopping piece. Grace has gone on to create extraordinary opportunities for herself and her team.

### Circular Economy Opportunities

**Full Circle Fibres.** A 2024 Submission to the Productivity Commission for Circular Economy Opportunities in Australia (a focus on the textile industry)

- Meriel Chamberlin draws on over 25 years of manufacturing and supply chain expertise, as well as insights from a recent Winston Churchill Trust Fellowship on zero-waste textile practices working at scale now, this submission covers observations and opportunities for Australia to recognise this sector as part of our pivot to a circular economy. Including leveraging its sustainable cotton and wool production capabilities, and capitalising on our natural advantages to become a leader in textile circularity, combining onshore and offshore opportunity. Establishing a robust circular economy policy is essential for driving sustainable transformation within the textile industry and the broader economy.<sup>13</sup>
- **Blocktexx®** is a pioneering Australian clean technology company that recovers polyester and cellulose from textiles and clothing. Based in Loganholme, Queensland, the facility officially opened in early 2022, They pioneered S.O.F.T.™ (separation of fibre technology) process for hard to recycle clothing blends which lead to recovered

and regenerating textiles given a new life with PolyTexx® → recycled polyester + CellTexx® → Lyocell.

### Innovation Fund

**The Country Road Climate Fund**, launched in October 2022, a fund that invests in grass roots projects that mitigate climate change and build resilience across four key pillars: biodiversity, first nations, innovation and circularity, with several initiatives emerging that are adding tremendous value to the industry, such as:

- **Mud to Marle.** Reshaping wool in the Australian fashion industry with Country Road Group. A collaborative project between Country Road Group, Full Circle Fibres (Meriel Chamberlin), LoomTex (Samantha V.) & Institute for Frontier Materials, Deakin University (Christopher Hurren), supported by the Country Road Climate Fund. This extensive project was created to test end-to-end textile manufacturing capabilities within Australia, focusing on low-impact production methods.
- **Circular Sourcing.** Circular Sourcing is an Australian marketplace dedicated to the sale of designer deadstock and quality surplus materials like fabrics (and in the future, yarns and trims). They began trading as a simple online shop in 2018 after A.BCH founder, Courtney Holm, experienced a major shortage of circular raw materials on the market. In 2022, with support from Sustainability Victoria's Circular Economy Business Innovation Fund and with our project partners Full Circle Fibres, Melbourne Textile Knitting (MTK), The Social Studio plus instrumental collaborators like Harvey and The Good Egg Collective, we transformed into a marketplace where more businesses could sell their surplus materials, to. Our goal is to radically shift the needle, supporting the Australian fashion and textile industry as it transitions to working with more surplus or recycled materials and less virgin materials.

### New Material Innovations

Whilst the Fellow has a personal preference for regeneratively grown natural fibres, she is in awe of new material innovations that champion environmental and social responsibility as economic benefit.

- **Uluu** the world's first truly compelling alternative to plastic for both rigid and fibre products. Based in WA, this is an exciting innovation. In 2020 the

company was co-founded by Dr. Julia Reisser and Michael Kingsbury to develop alternatives to plastics using a seaweed-based material.

- **Alt Leather** – Founded in 2022 by Tina Funder, an award-winning creative director with decades of global advertising experience, a 100% biodegradable alternative to leather – beautiful, durable and circular by design, perfect for footwear, accessories, fashion, furniture and automotive.
- **Eqwools** Launched in 2024 from the Michell 1870 innovation team, a range of unique Australian finest merino wool fibre solutions, crafted to deliver exceptional quality at exceptional prices, allowing Australian finest merino wool fibre to become accessible to everyone, everywhere.

### Supply Chain Investment

Dedicated people are giving new life to heritage businesses and social enterprises.

#### LoomTex

- Founded in 1922, LoomTex is an Australian textile mill + dye house, the fusion of Geelong Dyeing, Geelong Weaving Mill & Geelong Textiles
- Instyle Contract Textiles and Colan Australia jointly acquire Geelong Textiles & rebrand to LoomTex to rejuvenate & reposition the weaving & dyehouse manufacturer towards a stronger future and legacy
- With its rich heritage and decades of experience, LoomTex aims to be at the forefront of local, sustainable textile manufacturing with their vision to become Australia's most innovative & sustainable manufacturing facility.

#### Silver Fleece

- Founded in Adelaide in 1951, is one of Australia's last fully integrated knitting mills, producing school and sports uniforms, cricket jumpers, and knitwear from 100% merino wool and cotton. Known for its heritage craftsmanship and commitment to local production, the company manufactured everything in-house — from yarn to finished garment.
- After entering liquidation in mid-2024, Silver Fleece was rescued by Dean and Melanie Flintoft, founders of sustainable label Sunset Lover, who raised \$1 million to save the business and its 20 staff. Their vision is to preserve Silver Fleece's heritage while modernising its operations, positioning it as a symbol of sustainable, Australian-made fashion.

### Waverley Mills

- In 1874, a Scottish migrant named Peter Bulman believed Tasmania could do more than grow wool—it could craft it into something extraordinary. He proved it by producing and selling the first woollen goods made entirely on Tasmanian soil, earning a government bonus of £1000 and, more importantly, laying the foundations for what would become Waverley Mills. Today, as Australia's last fully vertical woollen mill, Waverley Mills continues to weave not just cloth, but continuity - a rare thread of local industry, natural fibre, and human skill that spans generations.
- For 150 years, Waverley Mills has been crafting Australia's finest textiles at our historic weaving mill situated on the idyllic banks of Distillery Creek in Launceston. They are the last mill of its kind in Australia and are proud to spin, weave and finish each blanket, throw and scarf onsite in Tasmania.

### Social Enterprises

- **The Social Studio** Established in Melbourne in 2009, part educator, part retailer, part production house and all about people, the not-for-profit social enterprise uses fashion and creativity to create work and learning opportunities for Melbourne's refugee and new migrant communities.
- **The Social Outfit** opened its doors in 2014 in the vibrant Inner West neighbourhood of Newtown. In September 2022, we expanded our manufacturing operations to Marrickville giving us more space to grow our impact. In their 10th year, we have reach 1,000 training outcomes and 100 jobs for refugee and new migrant women in Sydney.
- **Assembled Threads**, founded by Edwina Walsh in February 2021, a social enterprise to help tackle long term unemployment by providing training and employment in garment manufacturing. With the hub now based in North Melbourne, funding from NHHS delivered two pop up hubs proving the concept that there are migrants regionally who are passionate to work and can be upskilled to commercial levels in a short time, which is contra the advice that no-one wants to learn how to sew.

## Education Initiatives

- **RMIT.** Dr Alice Payne has been appointed as the new Dean at the acclaimed School of Fashion & Textiles, commencing in 2023. Alice is leading a quiet revolution, collaborating extensively, reimagining current courses, introducing new offerings in Textiles and Material Design and so much more.
- **2024 Sustainable Fibres Symposium**, was the inaugural event of its kind. Hosted at the National Wool Museum in Geelong, this first-of-its-kind gathering by the ARC Research Hub for Future Fibres (Deakin University), in partnership with RMIT and UTS, attracted over 200 participants from across the textile industry. It showcased groundbreaking work - such as prototype fabrics made from Uluu's bioplastic pellets and Michell Wool's eqwools™ product line - setting a strong foundation for ongoing innovation and collaboration in sustainable fibre development.
- **Australian Tapestry Workshop (ATW)** is an international leader in contemporary tapestry, collaborating with a diverse range of international and Australian artists to produce exceptional handwoven works of art. Established in 1976, they have created over 500 tapestries in creative collaborations for nearly 50 years. Located in Melbourne, Australia, their open studio space, bespoke Dye Lab and galleries are a creative hub for engagement with tapestry, textiles and contemporary art. ATW have recently introduced a micro residency for fashion designers and artists to explore weaving and dyeing practices.
- **The Emerging Designer Incubation Lab.** Launched in 2023 by AWI's marketing arm The Woolmark Company, the Incubation Lab connects up-and-coming Australian and New Zealand fashion creatives with the versatility of Australian Merino wool. Through a comprehensive program featuring educational sessions and insights from industry leaders, participants gain valuable market knowledge and resources to enhance their design capabilities with wool. The Incubation Lab is based in Sydney.

## Scholarships / Fellowships

- **The International Specialised Skills Institute (ISS Institute)** exists to develop an innovative, skilled and smart Australia by cultivating the mastery and knowledge of talented Australians through international applied research Fellowships. At the heart of The ISS Institute are individual Fellows who through the Fellowship

Program, learn globally and, upon their return, pass on their newly acquired knowledge and skills.

- **The Australian Fashion Foundation (AUSFF)**, based in New York, was co-founded in 2008 by Malcolm Carfrae and Julie Anne Quay. Their mission is to support emerging Australian fashion creatives by providing international internships, mentorship, and financial grants to help them gain global experience and return home with valuable industry insights. The foundation has partnered with "The Next Generation," the philanthropic initiative of Afterpay co-founder Nick Molnar and his wife Gabi, as of 2023, aligning with AUSFF's 16th anniversary. This elevated the bursary to USD\$20,000 each. Additionally, the American Australian Association served as the title sponsor for the 2020 AUSFF Scholarship Awards, further highlighting the foundation's strong ties with both U.S. and Australian supporters.

## Awards

- **Australian Fashion Laureate.** Established in 2008, the Australian Fashion Laureate are Australian fashion's highest accolades. The annual awards recognise and reward leadership and innovation in the Australian fashion industry across categories including Designer of the Year, Emerging Designer of the Year, Indigenous Designer of the Year and Sustainable Innovation of the Year. The Carla Zampatti Award for Excellence in Leadership celebrates contributions to advancing the position of women in the Australian fashion industry. The industry's pinnacle honour, the Australian Fashion Laureate Lifetime Achievement Award, celebrates persons who have, over time, made a significant contribution to the growth and development of the Australian fashion industry.
- **Ragtrader's Australian Fashion Industry Awards 2025.** The Ragtrader Australian Fashion Industry Awards are annual awards that celebrate excellence across Australia's fashion sector, recognising achievements in design, retail, sustainability, marketing, and innovation. Run by Ragtrader, they bring together brands, retailers, and industry leaders to showcase best practice and spotlight game-changing contributions to the industry.
- **The National Designer Award (formerly "New Designer Award")** is a long-running fashion award established in 1996 as part of the Melbourne Fashion Festival. It showcases emerging Australian fashion designers (originally



within their first five years in business; more recently, eligibility has extended to labels up to eight years old) by recognising excellence in design, creativity, sustainability, manufacturing & business vision.

- **National Graduate of the Year**, recently founded as part of the Melbourne Fashion Festival, recognises the standout designer from PMFF's National Graduate Showcase—spotlighting the most promising final-year talent across Australia.
- **We the Makers Sustainable Fashion Prize**. The National Wool Museum based in Geelong, Victoria, in 2020 launched the prize to champion emerging designers with less than 10 years of industry experience. The 2025 initiative received over 150 applications with 20 extraordinary finalists showcasing bold creativity, innovation and commitment to sustainability.

## Industry Campaigns

### WeWearAustralian<sup>14</sup>

- WeWearAustralian is a collaborative initiative launched in April 2020 by Richard Poulson and Kelly Atkinson, co-founders of the fashion platform Showroom-X. Born from a moment of collective disruption, initially a social media movement, WeWearAustralian quickly evolved into a broader platform promoting Australian fashion both domestically and internationally. By 2023, the initiative had facilitated over \$1.7 million in retail sales for participating brands and had dressed more than 10,000 disadvantaged Australians through its charitable efforts.
- In 2024, WeWearAustralian expanded its reach by partnering with Australia Post to send 12 fashion brands to New York for a week-long residency on the sidelines of the city's fashion week in February 2025. The space will feature Ti trees and red earth – for an immersive Australian experience – and consumers will be able to shop directly from the brands, which encompass some of Australia's best emerging, established and sustainable fashion talent. The 12 brands are Viktoria & Woods, Acler, Bond-Eye, Jac & Jack, Wah-Wah Australia, Van Der Kooij, Christian Kimber, Re/lax Remade, Mariam Seddiq, R.M. Williams, Morrison and Ngali.

- Atkinson hopes the We Wear Australian residency in New York, if successful, can be replicated in other cities, too. "This is an opportunity for [brands] to dip their toe in [to the US] without getting burnt," she says.



KIMBERLEY REGION | 2021

Amid nationwide lockdowns, #WeWearAustralian transformed into a national photographic campaign. Shot in the remote Kimberley region, Western Australia, it celebrated the resilience of Australia's fashion industry and the striking beauty of Miriwoong Gajerrong Country.



THE GREAT SOUTH WEST | 2023

Venturing deep into Western Australia's Great Southern Region, capturing the raw beauty of Menang Country. Among the turquoise waters of Greens Pool and the ancient forms of Elephant Rocks, WeWearAustralian staged its most ambitious shoot to date, a visual reflection of an industry and a world re-examining its relationship with fashion in a post-pandemic era. A narrative of resilience, renewal, and reconnection.



BONDI, SYDNEY | 2024

Exploring the heart of Sydney city and capturing the quiet poetry of urban life in Australia. Against the backdrop of Bondi's shoreline and Sydney's ever-shifting skyline, the shoot reflected on the beauty found in our everyday spaces.

## Government Initiatives

### Australian Made

- A marketing and certification initiative
- The Australian Made, Australian Grown logo is administered by Australian Made Campaign Limited (AMCL), a not-for-profit public company established in 1999 by the Australian Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ACCI) and the network of state and territory chambers of commerce, with the cooperation of the Federal Government.<sup>15</sup>
- The Australian Made Week, took place from 19–25 May 2025. The 2025 campaign was themed “Go for Gold”, with three-time Olympic gold medallist Ariarne Titmus OAM as ambassador encouraging Australians to support local producers and products from “Team Aussie”.

“Reports that the next federal budget is set to have an ‘Australian made’ focus is encouraging, highlighting the importance of Australia’s sovereign manufacturing capability.

Australian Made chief executive, Ben Lazzaro, said a strategic approach to ‘buy local’ initiatives, incorporating consumers, businesses and all levels of government is needed, as it will provide much need support for Australian manufacturers and help bolster the local economy.

“Improving government and business local procurement policies can benefit all Australians,” said Lazzaro. “It can help strengthen the local economy and enhance the reputation and resilience of businesses, all the while creating local jobs, promoting innovation, and reducing the environmental impacts associated with long-distance transportation.

“Given that federal government contracts were estimated to be valued at \$100 billion last financial year, a refocussing on Australian-made suppliers has the potential to have an enormous impact.”<sup>16</sup>



## Australian Fashion Now

- Australian Fashion Now, showcased in New York in November 2024, was an initiative by the Australian Consulate General in New York in collaboration with Qantas. The exhibition, curated by Dr. Matthew Linde, a lecturer at Parsons School of Design and an RMIT graduate, selected a diverse group of eight Australian designers to represent the country's innovative fashion scene.
- The event took place at the Harbour NYC Showroom on November 13, 2024, and included Grace Lillian Lee, Iordanes Spyridon Gogos, Scanlan Theodore, Kyha, Collective Closets, Cosmetics and Gauntlett Cheng. Also included are sister design duo Laura and Deanna Fanning, the London-based womenswear creative directors of cult label Kiko Kostadinov. Each contributed a handful of custom-made looks to embody a cross-section of Australian creativity for an international audience.



## Victorian Government

- Strategic Partnership between Victoria and Lombardy signed 2022.
- In partnership with **Global Victoria** in Europe, RMIT's European Innovation Hub has launched a thought leadership series, Future Europe Series, to shed light on the skills, innovation and digitalisation needs as we transition our businesses and our society. The 2024 'Future Europe Series – Italy: Building for the Future' was supported by the Lombardy Region through its longstanding strategic partnership with the State of Victoria. The event also aligned with the 20th anniversary of the Sister City relationship between Milan and Melbourne. Hosted at the Pirelli Tower, the panel discussion brought together senior leaders from companies with Italy-Australia interests for a conversation on skills, innovation and sustainability opportunities and challenges.



## City of Melbourne Sister City

- The City of Melbourne has developed valued relationships with sister cities around the world, as well as other important international alliances and cooperative arrangements. The first sister city partnership was formed with Osaka in 1978 and has since expanded to include four more cities: Tianjin China, Thessaloniki, Greece, Boston, USA and Milan Italy.
- In 2024, the Milan-Melbourne Sister City partnership supported two RMIT fashion students, Kane Turner and Laura Heron, to show at the 2024 Talent to Talent – Fashion Graduate Italia runway in Milan. In reviewing the student's collection development and discussing the opportunity, it was a truly transformational experience by all accounts. Wonderful to hear this initiative continues for 2025.

Honours Collection shown at the Fashion Graduate Italia Runway. Presentation, Milan, Italy 2024. Photographed by Daniele Schiavello.

With the initial idea of respecting materials and creating a new life for unwanted goods, Laura scoured the markets and found a unique couch with a floral print. She unpicked the fabric to use as much as possible basing the collection around this find.

A zero-waste philosophy included custom made knitwear and laser cut embellishments to complete the collection.

The key takeaway was trying to elevate her work to a higher quality, putting it on an international stage and really learning a lot about refining the detail of the garments.



## 4.3 The Italian Context

At the heart and soul of the Italian fashion industry are small - medium sized family-based businesses steeped in generational expertise and innovation. Alongside this, are heritage brands that are strategically evolving their businesses to secure their future.

Whilst Australia and Italy have similar challenges based on 40 years of globalisation with an ageing workforce and skills development largely skipping a generation, Italy is not in the same dire predicament as Australia. As outlined in a recent Reuters article “Italy accounts for half the world’s production in the luxury fashion industry.”

With global markets shifting and a concerted effort to protect the “Made in Italy” brand, new government initiatives are being implemented, brands are making strategic purchases to ensure resilience, exclusivity and security of supply, investing in sharing their artisanal story, and sometimes elevating the storytelling with AI inspired creativity.

The Fellowship learnings are shared through five key themes that emerged from the investigations.

### 4.3.1 Craftsmanship as Contemporary Relevance

### 4.3.2 Italy’s Success Model

### 4.3.3 Preservation of Skills and Capabilities

### 4.3.4 Strategic Initiatives

### 4.3.5 Partnerships and Australia’s Role

### 4.3.1 Craftsmanship as Contemporary Relevance

At the heart and soul of this exploration is the unanimous insight that artisanal craftsmanship is centred in cultural identity, connection and continuity. It is how as a culture Italians, learn, trade and flourish. With roots in Medieval times and a real awakening during the Renaissance, Italians have a sacred connection to art and culture. The loss of valuing artisanal craftsmanship diminishes society and the very reason for living.

What’s more, with the current world climate calling for a more transparent, responsible industry, without a doubt, the future of luxury is artisanal. This vision provides opportunities for deep connection with artisanal craftsmanship and meaningful storytelling.

Following are some inspiring examples of businesses valuing artisanal craftsmanship at the heart and soul of who they are.

### Brunello Cucinelli

Brunello Cucinelli is founded on providing dignified work as a way of life. In an interview, he recounts the story of how as a child, his father sold the family farm and moved to the city to provide a better way of life for his family. One day, he found his father returned from work in the factory with tears in his eyes. He had lost his independence and his sense of dignity... this then informs Brunello’s future.

As of December 31, 2024, Brunello Cucinelli, the company employed 3,326 individuals, comprising 3,165 full-time and 161 part-time staff, and operates a global network of 157 stores, including 130 company-owned boutiques and 27 franchises. These stores are located across Europe, North America, Asia, and other regions.

Brunello Cucinelli founded his eponymous company in 1978, driven by a passionate vision for timeless elegance and quality. What began with the noble ambition of transforming cashmere into a symbol of contemporary luxury has today expanded into a global business of refined Italian craftsmanship, expertly blending traditional values with modern innovation.

From the serene, picturesque village of Solomeo in Umbria, the company has grown into a first-class global enterprise, offering comprehensive lifestyle collections that include ready to wear clothing, footwear and accessories for men, women and children. All products are crafted in Italy, underscoring the brand’s commitment to preserving Italian artisanal traditions.

Brunello Cucinelli advocates for “humanistic capitalism,” a philosophy that emphasises the dignity of labour, fair treatment of employees, and sustainable growth. This includes initiatives like paying employees above industry standards (40%) and fostering a work environment that balances productivity with personal well-being.

It is inspiring. The Forum of the Arts in Solomeo, conceived in 2001, is centred around the Cucinelli Theatre (inaugurated in 2008), an Amphitheatre that hosts lively summer festivals and shows, the Garden of Philosophers which offers a tranquil retreat for mediation and contemplation and the Aurelian Neo-Humanistic Academy which enriches the



environment with its library and thoughtful dialogues on philosophical, historical and artistic themes.

The School of Contemporary High Craftsmanship and Arts envisioned by Brunello Cucinelli in 2013, is dedicated to rediscovering, promoting and passing on ancient crafts to future generations. The Universal Library of Solomeo announced at the end of 2021, aims to nurture the ethical, spiritual and cultural growth of the community and beyond.

Brunello Cucinelli believes upholding artisanal craftsmanship is vital as it represents the pinnacle of human creativity and skill, combining the beauty of manual labour with artistic expression. This tradition celebrates the harmony between the hands, mind, and heart. It not only preserves cultural heritage but also enriches the economy with products of unparalleled quality and individuality. Moreover, it deeply instils pride and dignity in artisans, upholding the noble values of honesty and dedication.

Brunello Cucinelli believes in these principles, fostering a renaissance of craft that unites tradition with innovation, ensuring these sacred skills inspire future generations in an ever-evolving world.

Content crafted with Solomei AI, the Brunello Cucinelli AI platform.

*«I dreamed of a company that would be profitable while upholding ethics and dignity, without causing any harm to people or offence to Creation, or at least, as little as possible.*

*I liked imagining slightly more beautiful workplaces, where workers could feel better while admiring the landscape and I wanted people to earn slightly higher than average wages, because we are all 'thinking souls' and because we can no longer turn our backs on poverty. »*

*Brunello Cucinelli*



Students and teachers at work at the School of Men's Tailoring.



## Italian Artisan

David Clementoni, from the Le Marche region of Italy, is the founder of Italian Artisan, a B2B platform that connects fashion brands with Italian manufacturers. Launched in 2014, the platform aims to simplify the process of sourcing high-quality, Made in Italy fashion products by facilitating collaborations between brands and skilled Italian artisans.

Clementoni's background includes a master's degree in international management from IE Business School in Madrid and experience working in his family's educational toy company, Clementoni S.p.A. His exposure to international markets, particularly during his time in New York, highlighted the global demand for Italian craftsmanship and the challenges small Italian manufacturers faced in reaching these markets.

Recognising this gap, Clementoni established Italian Artisan to bridge the divide between Italian artisans and international brands. The platform not only connects these entities but also supports Italian small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in digitising their operations and expanding globally. By 2025, Italian Artisan has grown to include over 100 Italian manufacturers across 16 Italian regions and 24 manufacturing districts and serves more than 1,000 international companies across 29 countries.

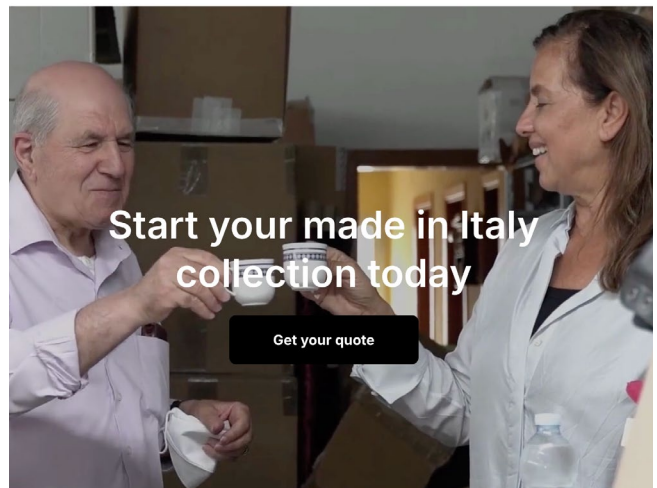
Italian Artisan's evolution reflects Clementoni's vision of preserving and promoting the rich heritage of Italian manufacturing while adapting to the digital age. They helped the artisan community have a different vision, and to start to collaborate with each other, to create more engagement among the different sectors of the manufacturing processes. The real value, especially for Made in Italy, has been this connection, they've translated this emotional connection, into the different processes which is more structured and more aligned to international standards.

Clementoni believes preserving artisanal craft and craftsmanship matters because making things by hand fosters learning, growth, and problem-solving in a way that machines and computers cannot. When people engage in craft, they evolve through overcoming mistakes, an essential part of human and community development. These skills build value that machines cannot mimic.

Further, craftsmanship plays a vital role in maintaining generational continuity, passing knowledge and values from older to younger generations. This intergenerational connection is something we're

increasingly losing, and craftsmanship helps to restore and preserve it.

The platform serves as a testament to the enduring appeal of Made in Italy products and the potential of technology to enhance traditional industries.



### Key Insights

**Artisanal craftsmanship not only preserves cultural heritage but also enriches the economy** with products of unparalleled quality and individuality. Moreover, it represents the pinnacle of human creativity and skill, combining the beauty of manual labour with artistic expression.

**The future of luxury is artisanal**, providing opportunities for deep connection and meaningful storytelling.

**Artisanal craftsmanship is both cultural and economic capital** - not a nostalgic relic, but a future-oriented capability.



### 4.3.2 Italy's Success Model

At the heart of Italy's success is a long textile heritage and regional specialisation enabling family-based businesses with deep generational expertise cherishing the 'know-how'. An artisan thrives creating hands-on work, sometimes at the expense of the workshop. This research uncovered having an entrepreneurial mindset is invaluable, alongside having the ability to adapt the business to suit modern times.

Here we meet some companies valuing heritage and retaining high-skill stages of the supply chain supported by reinvestment in infrastructure and we're introduced to the new government initiatives supporting Made in Italy into the future.

#### Museo del Tessuto (Textile Museum)

Located in the heart of Prato's historic textile district, the Museo del Tessuto (Textile Museum) is Italy's largest museum dedicated to the history, art, and technology of textiles. Housed within the beautifully restored Cimatoria Campolmi, a 19th-century wool finishing mill, the museum is a symbol of Prato's enduring identity as one of Europe's oldest and most innovative textile centres. Its setting - an industrial building once integral to the city's wool trade - allows visitors to step directly into the legacy of Prato's artisan and industrial past.

The Museum plays a vital role in preserving and presenting Italy's rich textile heritage, with a collection spanning more than 6,000 historical textile fragments, machinery, garments, and archival documents. It traces the evolution of cloth from ancient fibres and medieval guilds through to Renaissance luxury fabrics to Prato's global leadership in regenerated wool with the 'cencaioli' or 'Ragman' to the development of modern fabrics and circular fashion. Through exhibitions, educational programs, and collaborations with universities and contemporary makers, the museum not only tells the story of Italy's textile artistry but also highlights the resilience and ingenuity of its artisans.

What is remarkably present is how Italy's textile traditions are profoundly shaped by regional identity - where geography, climate, history, and local know-how converge to influence what is made, how it is made and why it is possible. From Biella's alpine wool mills, drawing on pristine water sources for fine finishing, to Como's silk ateliers, rooted in centuries of trade and craftsmanship, and Prato's leadership in recycled wool, born of necessity and ingenuity,

each district reflects a unique synthesis of place-based knowledge and material culture.

This regional distinctiveness is not just a hallmark of Italian artisanal excellence; it is a driving force behind the country's continued innovation in textiles. Understanding these deeply embedded local traditions is essential to preserving the authenticity, adaptability, and sustainability of craft into the future.

The Prato Textile Museum is an essential institution for understanding the cultural, economic, and environmental significance of textile craft in Italy - past, present, and future.



## Piacenza 1733

Piacenza 1733 is one of the oldest wool mills in the world, founded in 1733 in Pollone, in the Biella region of Piedmont, Italy - a region renowned for its high-quality textile production. The Piacenza family has been at the helm for over ten generations, with the business evolving from a local wool workshop into a symbol of Italian excellence in fine textiles.

### 18th–19th Century: Origins and Early Craftsmanship

The company's foundation traces back to the wool crafts of the 18th century, deeply embedded in the Biella territory's artisan traditions. Initially producing cloths for local markets, the mill steadily embraced the values of meticulous craftsmanship and technical refinement, laying the groundwork for its future renown.

### 20th Century: Exploration and Expansion

In the early 1900s, the family's adventurous spirit led Mario Piacenza, a mountaineer and explorer, to travel to the Himalayas and the Caucasus, where he discovered exotic fibres such as yak wool and cashmere. These discoveries significantly influenced the company's material library, establishing Piacenza as a leader in luxury natural fibres.

Throughout the century, Piacenza continued to refine its production, combining traditional wool

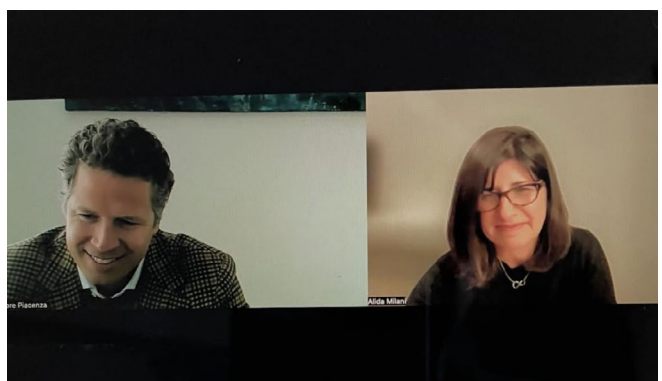
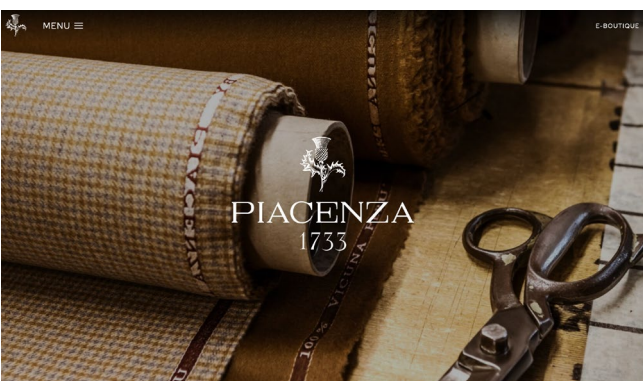
processing methods with industrial-scale innovation, all while maintaining a close relationship with nature and the territory.

### 21st Century: Sustainability and Technological Leadership

Now led by Ettore Piacenza, the family's fourteenth generation, the company operates with a clear vision: blending heritage with innovation. The brand has embraced sustainability as a core principle - from sourcing raw fibres responsibly to investing in renewable energy, circular economy practices, and water conservation.

But their approach to innovation has gone much further than that, the uncertainty that occurred due to Covid strengthened their resolve to control their supply chain. Buying a small spinning mill and Lanificio Cerruti, a respected Italian brand, in 2022 was part of Piacenza's strategic plan to consolidate excellence and secure their future.

With quality at the heart of everything they do, a skilled workforce is critical. Growing to a team of 550, Piacenza has been active in research collaborations such as the COALA AI training assistant project as an innovator in textile training whilst at the same time streamlining processes.





## Ermenegildo Zegna & Figli

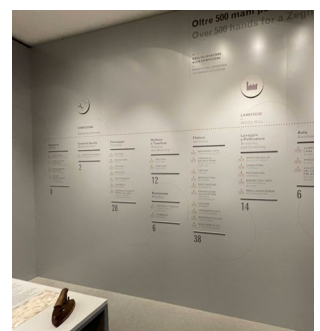
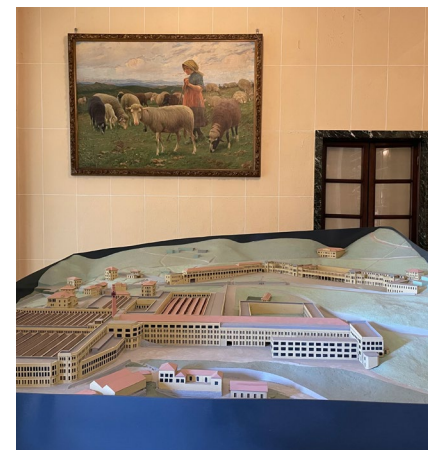
The story of the Zegna family business is one deeply rooted in values - a rare and enduring balance of quality, vision, and care. Founded by Ermenegildo Zegna in 1910 at just 18 years of age, the company emerged not from wealth, but from ambition guided by principles. From the outset, Zegna set out to differentiate himself from the producers of his region by committing to exceptional quality in textiles, inspired by the high standards of English fabrics at the time. His goal was never simply to make cloth, but to produce the finest wool fabrics in the world - and to do so with integrity, purpose, and innovation.

What truly sets Zegna apart, however, is that this pursuit of excellence extended beyond product and into the fabric of community life. Ermenegildo understood that it was not enough to create beautiful materials if the lives of the people making them lacked dignity. To retain skilled workers in the mountainous town of Trivero, he began investing in the wellbeing of his community - building a hospital, a professional school, public housing, and even a swimming pool. He planted over one million trees to restore the barren mountain landscape and constructed the Panoramica Zegna road, not just as a functional route but as a symbol of connection and vision.

Continuing building a vision for the future, Ermenegildo Zegna wrote to the woolgrowers of Australia, urging participants to seek out the softest, finest wool fibres. This quest, he emphasised, was about more than just wool; it was about building a legacy for the woolgrowers themselves. In 1963, history was made. Ermenegildo Zegna established the Wool Trophy Awards in Australia – a cherished tradition celebrating extraordinary quality and craftsmanship.

At Zegna, cherished above all is the 'know how'. The deep generational learning of skills and capabilities that ensure the brand stays globally competitive. In recognition of the people involved in creating a Zegna suit, they have mapped how many hands it takes from wool growing to manufacturing – over 500!

This holistic approach - where business success and social responsibility were inseparable - remains part of Zegna's DNA. The Zegna business is not just about garments - it was, and continues to be, about crafting a world where quality in product mirrors quality in life.





#### Framework Law

### Promoting sustainable excellence

The Made in Italy Framework Law aims to support and foster country's manufacturing excellence and cultural heritage.

A commitment to the enhancement of the Made in Italy brand that stands for quality, innovation and tradition.

The objective is to create an environment where Italian creative skills keep flourishing and are appreciated worldwide.

[→ Learn more](#)



#### Beauty and Innovation

### Italy: where quality is an enduring tradition

More than five hundred years after the birth of Leonardo da Vinci, the creativity of Italy-based workers still represents the spirit of the Made in Italy brand.

[Learn more →](#)

## Made in Italy

Made in Italy is more than a label - it is an all-embracing idea that represents Italy's cultural identity and enduring commitment to excellence in craftsmanship, design, and production. Rooted in centuries of artisanal tradition and elevated through post-war industrial and creative resurgence, Made in Italy has become a globally recognised mark of quality. Today, it continues to embody a distinct way of making that blends heritage with innovation and remains central to Italy's national brand and economic strategy. However, it has not been without its challenges, especially within the globalised fashion industry.

Since taking office, Georgia Meloni, Italy's first female Prime Minister and centre right government has focused on various initiatives, including economic reforms and policies aimed at promoting Italy's national interests. Notably, in November 2022, the Ministry of Economic Development was renamed the Ministry of Enterprises and Made in Italy (MIMIT), reflecting a strategic emphasis on enhancing the global reputation of Italian-made products.

MIMIT founded several initiatives to support this new direction with the first celebration in 2024:

- Made in Italy Framework Law was created with the aim of protecting this heritage and providing several initiatives to enhance and promote it
- A fund was established to develop industry
- New training opportunities were activated, and
- A special National Day was created on April 15 every year (the birthdate of Leonardo Da Vinci)

It must be noted that the integrity of 'Made in Italy' has recently been challenged and with our globalised system it is acknowledged that unethical practices have existed. During Covid, these stories and conjecture filtered through on social media. Recently, the Milan courts put four brands (Armani, Valentino, Dior and Alveiro Martini) under 'judicial administration' to clean up their supply chains. The outcome, as outlined in a recent Reuters article, is an industry program for the Lombardy region only at this stage. It is the creation of a platform for brands to register their supply chains, encouraging their suppliers to register too, to receive a 'Certificate of Transparency' which will remain active for 6 months.

These initiatives will be further outlined in Key Initiatives.

### Key Insights

**Regional distinctiveness is a driving force behind the country's continued innovation in textiles.**

Deeply embedded local traditions are essential to preserving the authenticity, adaptability, and sustainability of craft into the future.

To Piacenza blending heritage with innovation is the future. For Zegna, the pursuit of excellence is applied holistically as Ermenegildo understood that it was not enough to create beautiful materials if the lives of the people making them lacked dignity.

**The Italian Government, aimed at promoting Italy's national interests, created the Ministry of Enterprises and Made in Italy (MIMIT),** reflecting a strategic emphasis on enhancing the global reputation of Italian-made products.

**The Region of Lombardy has created of a platform** for brands and suppliers to register their supply chains, receiving a 'Certificate of Transparency'.

**Innovation and tradition are not opposites** - they thrive together through place-based ecosystems and supportive policy.



### 4.3.3 Preservation of Skills and Capabilities

Ultimately, the future of artisanal craftsmanship will be shaped by our ability to marry heritage and innovation with a genuine commitment to human dignity.

#### Mindset Change: Value

The key to preserving artisanal fashion skills, is the understanding that to continually evolve and elevate artisanal craftsmanship a whole system mindset change is required. The artisans need to value their contribution; industry needs to value the artisans and consumers need to value artisans.

Many artisans lack an entrepreneurial mindset, and they are more focussed on the art of making, not marketing or technological innovation.

#### Polimoda

Polimoda is one of the world's leading fashion schools, based in Florence, Italy. Stemming from an initiative designed and funded by the Municipalities of Florence and Prato in collaboration with the Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT), the first Politecnico Internazionale della Moda, now known as Polimoda, was established in 1986.

In New York, 1986, FIT representative Shirley Goodman and City of Florence representative Marquis Emilio Pucci signed the founding agreement. Looking to the future in 2006 Polimoda brought in Ferruccio Ferragamo, former vice chairman and leading light of Italian fashion, as Chairman, together with Linda Loppa, currently Strategy and Vision Consultant and former Director of the school.

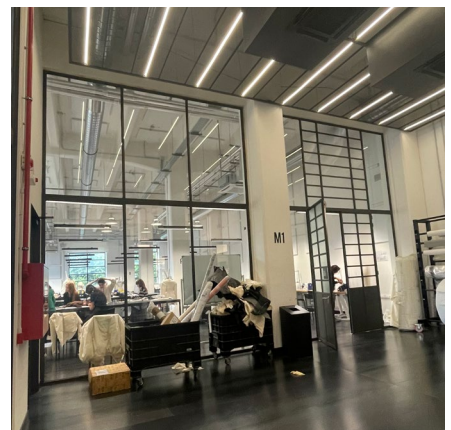
Renowned for its rigorous academic programs, central location to artisanal craftsmanship and close ties to the fashion industry, Polimoda nurtures creative excellence across design, business, and

communication, producing graduates who are both visionary and industry ready. Its faculty of international professionals and its emphasis on hands-on experience make Polimoda a dynamic place for the next generation of fashion leaders.

Polimoda's fashion course is structured over 4 years. Developing hands-on skills at the core, Polimoda has a novel approach: the first two years focus on challenging the students to look within and consider what they have to offer a world where we don't need any more clothes, whilst the last two years are centred around learning how to collaborate. Central to the program are the following ideas:

- There's value in failure and experimentation - students are encouraged to take risks.
- Education must balance technique and concept: students need to "know how" to make. Some students say they want to be a designer, so they don't need to know how to make. This is vehemently refuted with the question – how can you create anything of value without knowing how to make?
- Students work on acquiring technical techniques from knitwear, pattern making, every form of graphic printing, embroidery, and discover themselves.
- Emphasis on shared learning and working within a community of creativity.

Whilst Polimoda champions the building of skills and capabilities, it is noted there was a criticism of the Italian education system for lacking in manual skills training and structured pathways for craft transmission. It was felt more skills building was required and that most artisanal knowledge was traditionally passed on through family or direct apprenticeship.



## Industry-led Artisanal Schools

The School of Contemporary High Craftsmanship and Arts as founded by Brunello Cuccinelli in response to this, “At least until a few years ago, a young man or woman would be reluctant to tell their friends that they were employed in a field that required manual work. Something was preventing them from seeing and realising the true value and the creativity of their hands and eyes, despite the fact that all young Italians have one essential quality in common: a rare spirit of adaptation, both in Italy and abroad.

To prevent our youth from forsaking our heritage, Brunello Cucinelli decided to establish the School of Contemporary High Craftsmanship and Arts in Solomeo, drawing inspiration from the great visionaries John Ruskin and William Morris, with their Arts and Crafts movement.”

Courses include Fashion Master: Pattern Making and Women’s Tailoring (three-year course), Men’s Tailoring (three-year course), Linking (one-year course), Knitwear Mending (one-year course), Knitting (one-year course), Ironing (one-year course). This is a unique dedication to artisanal craftsmanship.

A further discovery has been the industry-led artisanal schools preserving craftsmanship.

- **Bottega Veneta** founded an artisanal school, Accademia Labor et Ingenium in 2006, which has become the centre of innovation and experimentation elevating the brand, only thirty minutes from their production area near Vincenza in the Veneto. The previous Creative Director of Bottega Veneta, Belgian Matthieu Blazy has been elevated to Creative Director at Chanel.
- **Gucci Artlab**, Launched in 2018, it was a strategic initiative that continues to play a central role in the brand’s design, craftsmanship, and innovation efforts. ArtLab has been pivotal in enhancing Gucci’s production capabilities and sustainability initiatives, enabling the brand to test products for durability and longevity. The facility also houses the École de l’Amour, Gucci’s education program designed to perpetuate the skills associated with the house’s artisanal craft and production. Artlab employs over 950 people just outside of Florence.
- **Prada** is expanding its production footprint in Italy, including dozens of new jobs at its knitwear factory in Umbria, leaning into “Made in Italy” as integral to the brand’s ethos and developing new

artisanal talent to ease the luxury group through a generational shift in its workforce. At Torgiano, Prada has added 30 new jobs this year, alongside 65 last year, bringing the workforce to some 220 employees, mostly women, to create knitwear for Prada and Miu Miu brands, a key category for the group. The site had just 39 employees when Prada bought it in 2001.

## Key Insights

Preserving artisan skills requires a mindset change: artisans need to value their contribution; the industry needs to value artisans, and consumers need to value artisans.

It is critical to develop the ‘know-how’ so something of value can be created.

True mastery comes from applying yourself with a persistent and relentless pursuit of excellence. True mastery takes time.

Skill preservation hinges on mentorship, education, and real, paid opportunities for the next generation.



#### 4.4.4 Strategic Initiatives

The strongest initiatives emerge where education, industry, and government intersect. A great deal of progress has come from industry-led or privately funded efforts, and the recent government initiative 'Made in Italy' is central to Italy's national brand and economic strategy.

Central to every initiative are dedicated people, some you have already met in this report, while others are celebrated here.

### Education

#### Polimoda Highlights

Initiatives include a dual focus of education and industry collaboration:

- **Applied Projects** - creating continuous experimentation in collaborating with fashion industry houses such as Gucci, Max Mara, Loro Piana.
- **Deep industry engagement** with ongoing mentoring and involvement in The Graduate Show 2025
- Creating specialist courses such as From farm to fabric to fashion led by one of the world's most respected trend forecasters, Lidewij Edelkoort

**Post-graduate innovation support** include an incubator and accelerator program:

- **Polimoda Talent.** Established in 2016, the program is designed to assist alumni in launching innovative startups within the fashion, lifestyle, and luxury sectors. Each year, up to two selected projects receive a €20,000 grant, which includes €10,000 in financial support and €10,000 worth of professional consultancy. Additionally, Polimoda provides workspace and services for a six-month period. Applicants must be between 18 and 30 years old and have completed an undergraduate or master's program at Polimoda. The selection process involves a evaluation by an external panel of industry professionals
- **Style.it.** Polimoda serves as the educational partner for a FashionTech accelerator launched in 2023 by CDP Venture Capital. This three-year program supports approximately 10 startups annually that are developing technological solutions for the fashion market. Selected startups receive a pre-seed investment of around €113,000 and may be eligible for additional post-acceleration funding up to €200,000.

#### Monash University Prato Centre

The Monash University Prato Centre is beautifully located in an 18th-century palazzo in the historical centre of Prato. Opened in 2001, the Centre aims to develop Australia's links with Europe through research, collaboration, seminars and conferences, and as a centre of study for Australian students.

The Monash University Prato Centre has been honoured to count Sir James Gobbo and Carla Zampatti among its Patrons and continues to build on this legacy through strong partnerships - including its relationship with The Woolmark Company- fostering connections that celebrate artisanal craftsmanship, skill-building, and the advancement of fashion.

#### The Woolmark Company Prato Study Scholarship

This scholarship supports students to further their academic development through studying at the Prato Centre in Italy and by undertaking an Industry Experience with Woolmark allied creative industries. The Australian Woolmark Company is a research and development institute and is involved in the commercialisation of wool technologies now recognised as a global authority on Merino wool.

There are two scholarships offered each year, to the value of \$5,000 each. Additional funds can be applied to support the scholarship.

### Industry



These industry-led initiatives supporting the elevation of artisanal skills and capabilities involve new business models, technology adoption, awards and large-scale exhibitions.

Following are new business models that have emerged with the artisan at the heart of the model.

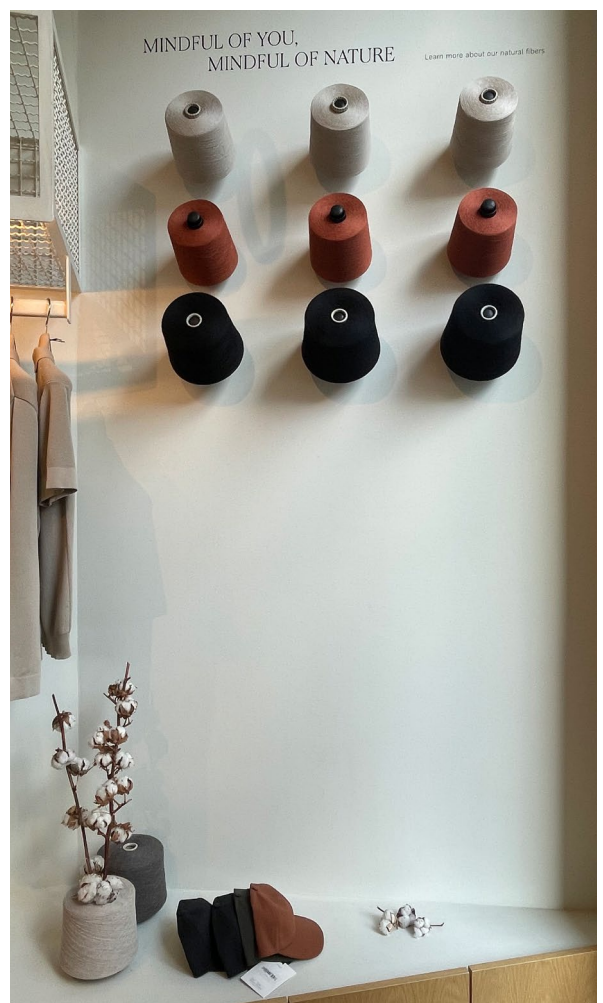
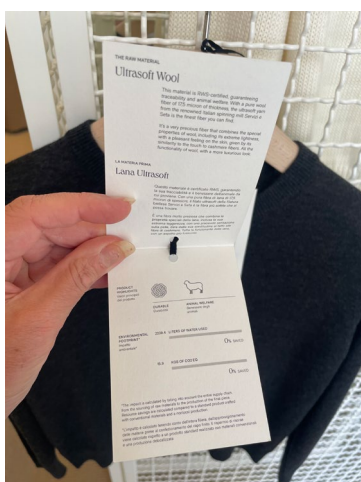
### Artnit Studios

Artnit Studios is an Italian knitwear brand founded in 2018 by Alessandro Lovisetto in Biella, a city renowned for its rich textile heritage. Lovisetto, an alumnus of the prestigious ESCP Business School, previously gained experience at companies like Google and Rocket Internet. Motivated by a desire to merge traditional Italian craftsmanship with modern digital innovation, he established Artnit Studios to create sustainable, high-quality knitwear that honours Italy's artisanal legacy while embracing contemporary practices.

The brand operates on a direct-to-consumer model, eliminating intermediaries to offer premium products at accessible prices. By collaborating closely with local artisans and utilising natural, biodegradable materials, Artnit Studios emphasises environmental responsibility and product longevity. Their approach includes made-to-order production, reducing waste and ensuring each piece is crafted with care.

### Highlights

- Quality products from the finest textile regions
- Community engagement raising funds and support through a crowd funding campaign
- Artisan recognition. Swing tags on each garment include colour options in thread and share the artisan maker including factory, e.g., the ultrasoft merino cardigan was crafted by artisan Andrea in Sogliano al Rubicone in Emilia Romana (it melts in your hands) and a cotton gillet, crafted by their artisan, Deborah in Lesce, Apulia.





## Rifò Lab

Rifò Lab was founded in December 2017 by Niccolò Cipriani in Prato, Italy—a city renowned for its historic textile recycling tradition. The inspiration for Rifò came to Cipriani during his time in Vietnam, where he worked on a United Nations program and witnessed firsthand the environmental impact of overproduction in the fashion industry. Motivated to create a sustainable alternative, he returned to his hometown to establish a brand that merges ethical fashion with local craftsmanship.

With skilled artisans being a challenge in the area, Rifò Lab created Nei Nostri Panni to shift a challenge to an opportunity. With other local partners, Rifò Lab

created a program of great social value, a training program for textile sorters, spinners and new artisans aimed at people from reception programs and new migrants in the area. They fund it by allocating 1% of their annual revenue to make positive change.

## Highlights

- Based on the 'Cencaioli' recycling of textiles to make new garments
- Nei Nostri Panni, with other local partners, Rifò have created a training program for textile sorters, spinners and new artisans. The comprehensive partnership support for the program is impressive. <https://rifo-lab.com/en/pages/nei-nostri-panni>





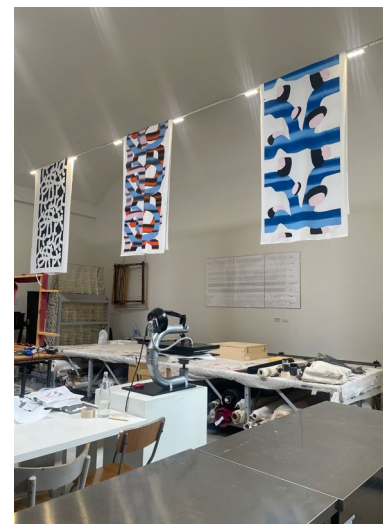
## Lottozero

Founded in 2016 by sisters Arianna and Tessa Moroder, Lottozero is a creative hub and a design studio, with a textile laboratory, a shared studio space/coworking and an exhibition area. Lottozero's mission is to create a fertile environment for textile research and experimentation in design, fashion and art, and an international base for people operating with textiles.

They support the development of designers, artists, brands and institutions through residencies in their headquarters in Prato, one of the main textile districts of Europe. They facilitate the exchange and collaboration with local textile companies. They offer a fully functioning in-house textile laboratory which allows for constant experimentation, creation and prototyping of new ideas. They provide personalised services to anyone operating in the world of textiles, textile art and fashion.

## Highlights

- Community engagement raising funds and support through a crowd funding campaign
- Having a space dedicated to exploring ideas, connected to industry and being a consultancy is unique.
- The connection to creativity and experimentation alongside makers is invaluable encouraging textile designers and artisans from all over the world to be in residence.



## Ermenegildo Zegna Wool Trophy Awards

In 1963 Ermenegildo Zegna established the Wool Trophy Awards in Australia, a cherished tradition celebrating extraordinary quality and craftsmanship.

The finest wool fleece is collected, and Vellus Aureum is created. The name Vellus Aureum was inspired by the mythical story of the Golden Fleece represented as a winged ram. It reflects the Founder's ambition and quest for the extraordinary. Zegna make garments out of this fibre, all fully traceable. To date, the Vellus Aureum world record for a single wool fleece was reached in 2023 with a fineness of 9.4 microns.

## Italian Artisan

Italian Artisan is a production platform dedicated to empowering and enabling artisanal workshops across Italy. **Highlights:**

- Creating a platform that provides marketing, sales, and project management support to artisans
- Providing on-the-job coaching through structured, practical workflows that align with artisans' hands-on learning styles.
- Elevating the industry through coaching, supporting digital adoption, and building trusted networks.
- Standardising and digitalising 35+ key processes within the artisanal process

## Piacenza 1733

Fratelli Piacenza 1733 participated in the European COALA project (COgnitive Assisted agile manufacturing for a Labor force supported by trustworthy Artificial Intelligence), which aimed to develop a digital intelligent assistant to support training and operations in the manufacturing sector, particularly in the textile industry. The project was conducted in collaboration with Città Studi Biella and other European partners.

## Objectives of the COALA Project

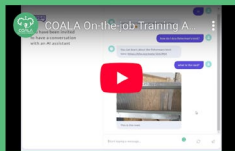
The COALA project focused on implementing a Digital Intelligent Assistant (DIA) to support textile machine operators. This digital assistant provides proactive and flexible support for training, education, problem-solving, and monitoring of company production. One of the main goals is to address the shortage of qualified labour in the textile sector, reducing the time and cost of operator training and improving product quality.

## Highlights


- Addresses the shortage of qualified labour force with an innovative solution that will reduce the time and cost of machine operator trainings
- Supports the machine operators, who use their skills and knowledge to prepare and supervise machine operations under strict consideration of the product quality.
- Assists to train the new generation of workers to face the requirements of the market
- Expected Impacts: increase of productivity of new employees involved in the quality detection and repair, reduction of undetected defects delivered through improved training and quality of work, reduction of human-caused defects not possible to fix through better operator training

INDUSTRY SCENARIO – TEXTILE


AI-assisted on-the-job training for textile workers




Objectives and Background



Reduce the time and cost of machine operator trainings



Maintain the worker's autonomy vs. unquestioned execution of instructions



Exploit and spread the concept and solution



COALA  
Your Business Assistant

COgnitive Assisted agile manufacturing for a Labor force supported by trustworthy Artificial Intelligence

## Vision

To develop human-centered digital assistant in manufacturing to shape collaboration between the AI-based assistant and the human with COALA's AI-focused education and training concept

## Solution

A cognitive assistance that consists of a composition of trustworthy AI components with a voice-enabled digital intelligent assistant as an interface



## The Woolmark Company

“Australia was built on the sheep’s back” not just because of wool’s scale, but because of its quality. The Woolmark Company plays a central strategic role in the global promotion and advancement of Australian Merino wool and operates as the marketing and R&D arm of Australian Wool Innovation (AWI). Here’s a concise breakdown of its key strategic functions:

### 1. Global Brand Stewardship

Woolmark is the most recognized textile quality mark in the world, with the ‘mark’ first introduced in 1964. It ensures consumer trust by certifying products that meet strict quality and performance standards for wool. The brand acts as a symbol of excellence, innovation, and natural sustainability.

### 2. Market Development & Education

Woolmark works to expand global demand for wool by educating designers, brands, manufacturers, and consumers about the fibre’s benefits - such as biodegradability, breathability, thermoregulation, and renewability. Through programs such as:

- The International Woolmark Prize
- The Emerging Designer Incubation Lab
- DLab Milan

### 3. Innovation & R&D

Through The Wool Lab and various technical collaborations, Woolmark supports innovation in fibre processing, yarn and fabric development, performance applications (e.g. wool in sportswear, outerwear, and circular fashion).

### 4. Strategic Industry Partnerships

Woolmark partners with global fashion, performance, and lifestyle brands - like Zegna, Adidas, Prada – to integrate Merino wool into high-profile collections and campaigns. These partnerships reinforce wool’s relevance in contemporary design, performance wear, and responsible fashion.

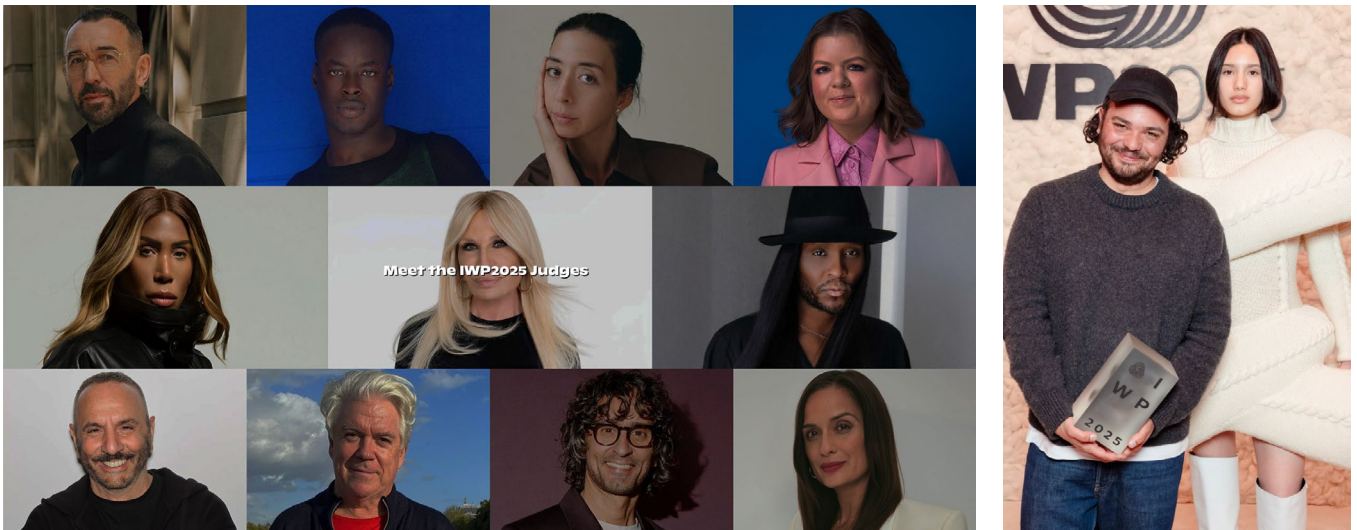
### 5. Supply Chain Development

Woolmark supports supply chain partners from fibre to finished garment, especially in regions with advanced wool processing capacity (like Italy). They act as a connector across growers, spinners, mills, designers, and brands — enabling better collaboration and product development.

### 6. Sustainability Leadership

Woolmark advocates for the natural and circular qualities of wool, framing it as a low-impact alternative to synthetics. It supports transparency, traceability, and lifecycle innovation — particularly in eco-certification, regenerative agriculture, and closed-loop systems.





### The International Woolmark Prize

The International Woolmark Prize was founded in the 1950s and is recognised as the world's most prestigious award for rising fashion stars, investing in creativity and nurturing talent to positively shape the fashion industry.

The Prize connects an astonishing list of industry legends, both past and present, such as Yves Saint Laurent (1953), Karl Lagerfeld (1954), Ralph Lauren (1992), Christian Wiljnants (2013).

The 2025 International Woolmark Prize judges included:

- Donatella Versace, Versace, Chief Brand Ambassador from 01.04.25, Chair of Judges
- IB Kamara, IWP2025 Guest Artistic Director
- Law Roach, Image Architect
- Alessandro Sartori, Artistic Director, Zegna
- Tim Blanks, Editor-at-Large, Business of Fashion
- Sinéad Burke, Educator, Advocate and Founder of Tilting the Lens
- Honey Dijon, DJ, Producer and Artist
- Alessandro Dell'Acqua, N21 Founder and Creative Director
- Simone Marchetti, Vanity Fair European Editorial Director & Vanity Fair Italia Editor-in-Chief
- Roopal Patel, SVP, Fashion Director, Saks Fifth Avenue
- Danielle Goldberg, Celebrity Stylist and Brand Consultant

The 2025 International Woolmark Prize marks its first biennial edition, with Duran Lantink receiving AU\$300,000 and the opportunity to be featured with some of the world's leading retailers.

Regenerative design, heritage craftsmanship and contemporary innovation merge in Duran Lantink's International Woolmark Prize designs. Based between Amsterdam and Paris, the brand is known for fusing pre-loved pieces, deadstock and innovative materials into unexpected reimagining's. The collection expands on Duran's previous work with Merino wool, with a playful interrogation of "bad taste", where human and animalistic motifs collide.

Through a wool-centric lens, each design blends the ordinary with the extraordinary, inspired by historical Dutch knitting techniques. Meticulously hand-knitted by a team of 12 Dutch artisans, Duran's designs revive time-honoured craftsmanship through a collaborative, community-driven process. With innovations such as 3D reconstructed knitwear, hats crafted from recycled army sweaters and uniquely designed woven check patterns, Duran's designs are a manifesto for the future of fashion, where craftsmanship, sustainability and innovation unite to reshape wool for the future of fashion.

## Homo Faber

Homo Faber is a cultural movement centred on creative artisans. Homo Faber showcases the skills of artisans and craftspeople, embodying the foundation's belief in the power of human hands to create meaningful, lasting objects. Organised by the **Michelangelo Foundation. The Michelangelo Foundation** for Creativity and Craftsmanship itself was founded in 2016 by Johann Rupert and Franco Cologni.

### Johann Rupert

Born in 1950 in Stellenbosch, South Africa, Johann Rupert is a prominent entrepreneur and philanthropist. He began his career in banking in New York before returning to South Africa to establish Rand Merchant Bank in 1979. In 1988, he founded Compagnie Financière Richemont, a Swiss-based luxury group that owns prestigious brands such as Cartier, Montblanc, and Van Cleef & Arpels. Beyond his business ventures, Rupert has been instrumental in various philanthropic initiatives, including the Peace Parks Foundation and the Laureus Sport for Good Foundation, reflecting his commitment to environmental conservation and social development.

### Franco Cologni

Franco Cologni, born in Milan in 1934, is an esteemed Italian entrepreneur, author, and cultural advocate. He holds a degree in philosophy and letters from the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore. Cologni's career began in academia and cultural criticism before he joined Cartier in 1969, eventually becoming Managing Director and Chairman of Cartier International. He played a pivotal role in integrating Cartier into the Richemont Group. In 1995, he founded the Fondazione Cologni dei Mestieri d'Arte to support and promote the heritage of master craftsmanship in Italy. Cologni has also been instrumental in establishing the Creative Academy in Milan and the Fondation de la Haute Horlogerie, furthering his dedication to preserving and celebrating artisanal excellence.

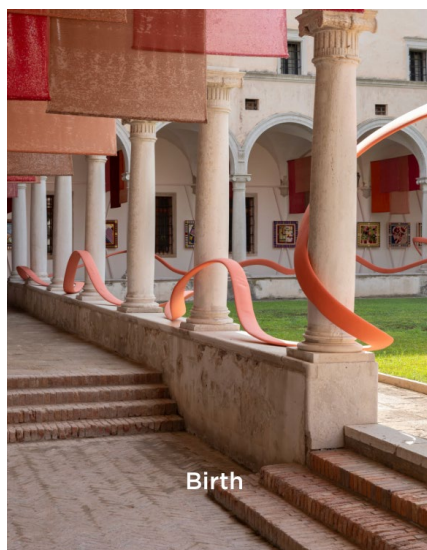
Together, Rupert and Cologni established the Michelangelo Foundation in 2016, aiming to preserve and promote fine craftsmanship globally. Their combined efforts have significantly contributed to the recognition and support of artisans worldwide.

## Highlights

- Its signature projects are education programmes for the next generations, an international biennial celebration and an online guide.
- The Homo Faber Biennial was officially launched in 2018. This inaugural event, titled Homo Faber: Crafting a More Human Future, took place at the Fondazione Giorgio Cini on the island of San Giorgio Maggiore in Venice. It marked the beginning of a biennial celebration dedicated to showcasing excellence in craftsmanship from around the world.
- The most recent edition, Homo Faber 2024: The Journey of Life, was held from September 1 to 30, 2024. Curated by film director Luca Guadagnino and architect Nicolò Rosmarini, the exhibition featured over 800 handcrafted objects from more than 400 artisans from over 70 countries, organized into 11 thematic sections reflecting various stages of human life. The event included immersive installations, live artisan demonstrations, and culinary experiences, attracting over 50,000 visitors. Australian artists were included.
- The education programs bring together master's and emerging artists pairing them to collaborate over a 7-month program. The works have been showcased as part of Milan Design Week and London Craft Fair.
- The online guide is a wonderful tool to discover local artisan makers.

"Homo Faber" is an expression that was first coined during the Renaissance, and it captures and celebrates the infinite creativity of human beings.

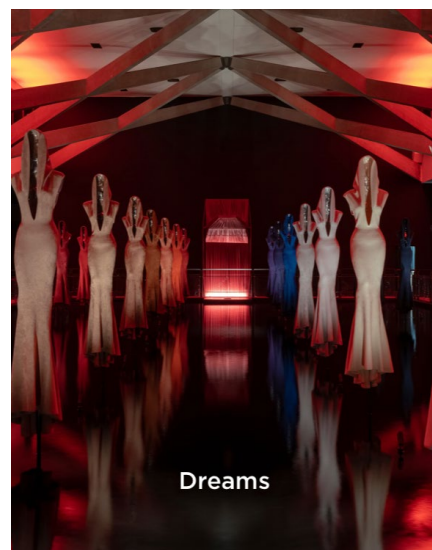




Birth



Childhood



Dreams



Afterlife



Dialogues



Inheritance



Journeys



Nature



Love



## Dolce&Gabbana: Dal Cuore Alle Mani (From the Heart to the Hands)

The exhibition “Dal Cuore Alle Mani: Dolce&Gabbana” (“From the Heart to the Hands”) is a remarkable showcase of Italian haute couture, currently on display at Palazzo delle Esposizioni in Rome from 14 May to 13 August 2025. This exhibition offers an immersive journey into the creative universe of designers Domenico Dolce and Stefano Gabbana, highlighting their inspirations drawn from Italian culture, art, and craftsmanship.

### Highlight

- The exhibition features more than 200 pieces from Dolce&Gabbana’s Alta Moda (High Fashion), Alta Sartoria (High Tailoring), and Alta Gioielleria (High Jewellery) collections
- Experiencing the brand’s dedication to exquisite craftsmanship and design – each item is breathtakingly thoughtful.
- Understanding the deep connection to Domenico Dolce’s Sicilian roots and how that has influenced the creative vision for Dolce&Gabbana and each initiative they have designed.









## Government

### National

The Ministry of Enterprises and Made in Italy (MIMIT), program encompasses a comprehensive framework aimed at:

- **Supporting Key Sectors:** Focusing on industries such as fashion, food, furniture, and mechanical engineering, which are emblematic of Italian craftsmanship and innovation.
- **Cultural Preservation:** Ensuring that traditional Italian manufacturing techniques and cultural heritage are maintained and celebrated.
- **Economic Growth:** Stimulating economic development through initiatives that enhance competitiveness and foster innovation within Italian enterprises.
- **International Promotion:** Enhancing the visibility of Italian products abroad, reinforcing the global perception of quality and authenticity associated with the "Made in Italy" label.

A cornerstone of this initiative is the Made in Italy Framework Law, which coordinates promotional and support actions to develop an industrial policy for the Made in Italy brand. This law aims to create an environment where Italian creative skills continue to flourish and are appreciated worldwide.

According to Edotto, an Italian company based in Foligno, Perugia, that specialises in providing information and training services for professionals and businesses, the Relaunch of Made in Italy 2025 includes:

### The Relaunch of Made In Italy 2025

The Ministry of Business and Made in Italy (MIMIT) confirms its commitment to the relaunch of the fashion sector, with a significant allocation of 250 million euros to address the challenges of the ecological and digital transition. The decision was announced during the Permanent Fashion Table, which met on January 24, 2025 at Palazzo Piacentini, in the presence of Minister Adolfo Urso and institutional, trade union and company representatives.

### Fashion Funds: How They Will Be Distributed

The plan provides for a targeted distribution of resources to support innovation and sustainability in the sector:

- €100 million for Development Contracts.
- €100 million for Mini Development Contracts.

- €15 million to support the ecological and digital transition.
- €30.5 million to incentivise sustainability, with particular attention to natural textile fibres and recycled materials.

These allocations are part of the DDL on SMEs, which introduce innovative measures such as generational relay, incentives for business aggregation and the reform of the Confidi instrument. "The goal is to consolidate a sector that represents a cornerstone of the Italian economy and a symbol of the excellence of Made in Italy," said Urso.

### The National Plan and measures for 2025

The revival of fashion is part of a broader strategy, which in 2025 will see the Government allocate 22 billion euros to Italian companies in various sectors. Among the main initiatives:

- €9 billion for tax breaks in the Transition Plans 4.0 and 5.0.
- €7.5 billion for development contracts and mini-contracts.
- €1.7 billion for the New Sabatini.
- €3 billion for SMEs.
- €4 billion for companies in Southern Italy.

A crucial point of the plan concerns the tax credit for Research and Development, with an amendment to the Milleproroghe that provides an additional 250 million euros to help companies in the repayment of credits relating to the period 2015-2019. The measure aims to reduce the economic impact on companies in difficulty, although it is recognised as a partial solution.

### Challenges and requests of the fashion sector

Despite the allocations, the fashion sector is experiencing a critical phase. In 2024, the sector generated revenues of 96 billion euros, but many companies face difficulties related to energy costs, access to credit and the need for technological innovation.

Requests by companies are long-term structural interventions, such as a special redundancy fund for 2025, moratoriums on financing and measures that facilitate investments in sustainability and digitalisation. Furthermore, the introduction of a balance and cancellation for research credits could represent an important step to guarantee the survival of companies in crisis.

## Conclusions

The government's plan represents an ambitious step towards the relaunch of the fashion sector, with investments aimed at ensuring innovation, sustainability and international competitiveness. However, the need for structural interventions and long-term planning remains crucial to consolidate a sector that is a symbol of Made in Italy and a pillar of the national economy.<sup>17</sup>

## Lombardy Region

### Certificate of Transparency

The regional government of Lombardy, around Milan, has created a voluntary scheme whereby fashion brands must commit to raising awareness of the new platform among their suppliers and urge them to enter their data. Supply chain firms enter their data on the platform, including information on tax compliance, social security contributions and labour law compliance, with updates at least every six months. This will issue firms that sign up to the scheme with a six-month renewable certificate of transparency.

### Insights

- A critical step forward for the industry, demonstrating a collective recognition that sustainability must extend beyond environmental concerns to (finally) embrace social justice and fair labour practices throughout the supply chain.
- This initiative is aligned with the evolving demands of global brands and consumers who increasingly prioritise transparency, ethical production, and traceability.
- The real challenge lies in effective implementation. It will require robust monitoring mechanisms, stakeholder collaboration, and the integration of digital tools to ensure compliance without overburdening smaller manufacturers. Technology-enabled transparency, combined with education and empowerment for SMEs, can create a resilient and responsible manufacturing ecosystem.
- This accord offers a unique opportunity to redefine the narrative of "Made in Italy", not only as a mark of craftsmanship and quality but also as a symbol of ethical leadership and sustainable innovation.

- The future of fashion manufacturing will be shaped by our ability to marry heritage and innovation with a genuine commitment to human dignity.
- Initiatives like this can serve as a blueprint for other countries and sectors aiming to balance growth with responsibility.

### Key Insights

New businesses models are emerging with the artisan at the centre of creativity.

Innovation is not about abandoning tradition but using technology to elevate it, it is most powerful when it's layered on top of deep technical knowledge.

Technology can uplift, not replace - human creativity, storytelling, and emotional connection are irreplaceable.

Initiatives that ignite the consumers mind are critical to deepening artisanal connection.

A shift in Italian government policy is starting to invest in regional and SME-level initiatives.

The government has created a virtual cluster or think tank (name unclear) that shares best practices across sectors.

Government policies often lack practical insight and consulting firms offer theoretical plans that don't reflect the complexity of the industry. Instead, initiatives need to be rooted in deep, practical understanding.

### 4.3.5 Partnerships and Australia's Role

Australia is seen as a clean and ethical producer with untapped potential to build local capability through international exchange.

Some see strong parallels between Italy's regional structure and Australia's dispersed, fragmented industry. Australia could benefit from ecosystem models that connect small players through shared technology and centralised coaching - a strategy that has transformed Italy's micro and SME manufacturers. David Clementoni of Italian Artisans is open to consultancy to help Australia accelerate its next evolution.

Zegna demonstrates the long-term value of partnership through its enduring relationships with Australian wool growers. This kind of loyalty-based, values-driven partnership is a proven success model - combining excellence in raw material with heritage craftsmanship. Similarly, Ettore Piacenza points to opportunities for Australia to retain more value by investing in early-stage processing rather than exporting raw fibres alone. Further, their partnership with the COALA project could be of enormous interest to Australia.

Other voices, like Ariana Moroder, highlight Australia's openness to new business models and decolonised thinking, noting our potential to lead in ethical, experimental approaches that could inspire more traditional systems in Europe. Having Lottozero and the Australian Tapestry Workshop develop a cross-cultural program could be an immensely enriching initiative.

And for those wanting to master high-level textile or production techniques, experts like Fabrizio Servente recommend immersive learning experiences in Italian or French mills to build capacity from the source.

Together, these insights point to a future where partnership is not just trade-based, but values-led, knowledge-rich, and mutually empowering.



# 05

## Personal, Professional, and Sectoral Impact

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### Personal impact

This Fellowship has been transformative for the Fellow. In 2016, the Fellow started a journey of questioning which led to a reimagining of how she worked within the industry. In 2018, this opened opportunities to be involved in projects to advance change within the Australian fashion industry.

This Fellowship has enabled the Fellow to gain insights that have deepened her understanding. The critical insight has been the ability to have a balanced approach to investing in machines and humans.

### Professional impact

As a Founder and Consultant, this Fellowship opens future possibilities to meaningfully engage across education, industry and government initiatives and/or start a new business.

This research has enabled the Fellow to identify several business ideas that could elevate the artisan at the same time as provide solutions to some of the Australian industry challenges. The Fellow will explore these ideas with the appropriate people in time.

This Fellowship has provided a deeper understanding of a complex industry, a renewed focus on future opportunities and a firm dedication to bridging cultural heritage and contemporary innovation.

### Sectoral impact

The purpose of the Fellow's research is to have a sector approach to reimagining how we value the artisan, with the hope that we may elevate the artisan and the appreciation of artisanal craftsmanship in Australia.

With the AFC leading the development of the first ever National Manufacturing Strategy for the Australian fashion and textile industry to launching an initiative to evaluate the potential for a smart factory, this research seems timely.

The Fellow hopes that this research may inform strategic thinking in developing Australia's fashion and textile future.

# 06

## Recommendations

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### Why Artisanal Fashion Matters

Australia's fashion and textile sector isn't just about what we wear - it's how we show the world who we are. It reflects our connection to Country, our First Nations heritage, our migrant stories, and our design ingenuity. Fashion and textiles are cultural infrastructure - living expressions of who we've been, who we are, and who we want to become.

As we invest in the technologies shaping our industrial future, from smart factories to AI-enabled supply chains, we must not lose sight of our greatest and most enduring asset: human creativity. In a rapidly advancing technological world, artisanal craftsmanship offers something irreplaceable - meaning, memory, identity, and care.

These recommendations are presented as a launchpad for Australia's next chapter - practical, values-driven pathways to strengthen our cultural and economic identity through artisanal fashion, craft, and design. They are grounded in what this Fellowship revealed: that we are rich in potential, and the time to act is now.

### The Case for Change

#### The world is shifting.

There is growing global demand for authenticity, quality, and cultural depth, and with this, an opportunity to position Australia's unique story.

#### Fashion is both culture and commerce.

It's one of the few industries that unites creative expression, economic development, sustainability, and national identity. This is not niche, it's essential to building a culturally rich, economically vibrant, responsible and socially connected future.

#### Craft reconnects us.

In an era of disconnection and automation, artisanal craftsmanship roots us in place, people, and purpose. It builds skills, pride, and belonging, particularly when aligned with Indigenous knowledge systems, migrant traditions, and future thinking.

#### Australia's natural positioning: a niche market with global appeal.

Our small scale, coupled with access to world-class fibres like Merino wool and cotton, naturally aligns us with the rising appetite for small-batch, quality-based, ethically made fashion. This is not a limitation - it's a competitive advantage waiting to be realised. By embracing our scale, we can lead in purposeful, high-value production.

#### Technology and humans are equally important.

The future of fashion lies not in choosing between tradition and technology, but in integrating both - where economic value is generated not just by scale, but by depth, beauty, and meaning.

## Six Recommendations

We know that the fashion industry is an intricate web of inter-connected as well as inter-dependent relationships and partnerships right across the value chain unlike any other. These opportunities simply cannot be addressed by one person, one organisation or one singular discipline alone, it will take a whole-of-sector approach.

### 1. Artisanal fashion to be positioned as cultural infrastructure

#### Why this matters:

Australia needs to frame artisanal fashion as cultural infrastructure. Artisanal fashion is a carrier of identity, creativity, and national story and integral to its success is taking consumers along the journey.

#### Suggestions:

- Position artisanal fashion and textiles as integral to Australia's cultural identity in government policy and national strategy.
- Artisanal production to be valued alongside digitally enabled manufacturing, circular supply chains, and Industry 5.0 smart factories within the AFC led National Fashion Manufacturing Strategy.
- Cultural programming which celebrates our artisans, and values craftsmanship, skills and capabilities:
  - Expand the Made in Australia campaign and introduce a "Made in Artisanal Australia" section
  - Introduce a new national artisanal program which celebrates local talent alongside international makers and engages new audiences.

### 2. Build the Flow / Set the target: Produce 10% of Fashion in Australia by 2030

#### Why this matters:

Currently, only 3% of fashion and textiles are produced in Australia. Setting a clear and ambitious national target aims to spark investment, stimulate demand, and create a coordinated roadmap for industry development. It aligns with the Seamless Clothing Stewardship Scheme<sup>18</sup>, supports sovereign capability, and encourages ethical, place-based manufacturing.

#### Suggestions:

- Establish a national ambition to increase domestic production from 3% to 10% by 2030.
- Build the infrastructure, incentives, and procurement pathways to support this transition:
  - Identify and address barriers to local manufacturing and ethical sourcing.
  - Champion innovation and collaboration to make "Made in Australia" easier, more visible, viable and a matter of national pride.
- Invest in a national platform to connect artisanal suppliers, improving access to markets and business services.

### 3. Create an Investment Fund for Industry Transition

#### Why this matters:

Forty years of offshore investment has eroded Australia's fashion and textile industry<sup>19</sup>. Small-scale makers and artisan producers, who now make up the majority, are often ineligible for large-scale funding mechanisms. Without targeted support, their survival and the knowledge they hold are at risk.

#### Suggestions:

- Taking inspiration from Italy's Made in Italy program, establish a fund to help Australia's artisan fashion sector adapt, modernise, and thrive.
- Use the fund to:
  - Modernise workshops with upgrades to equipment and resources
  - Support circular production
  - Build digital capacity
  - Support new ventures, storytelling and marketing initiatives

#### 4. Invest in Skills, Mentorship and Cross-Cultural Learning

##### Why this matters:

Mastery takes time, trust, and transmission. Without a deep understanding of material, technique, and process, innovation cannot flourish. With our ageing industry, Australia must act now to support intergenerational knowledge transfer and cultural exchange.

##### Suggestions:

- Review and implement recommendations from the Skills Institute collaborative report on A Changing Workforce.
- Fund the upskilling of our artisans and artisanal businesses to foster intergenerational learning through hands-on training and mentorship; pair experienced makers with emerging talent.
  - Partner with existing institutions to co-design long-term fellowships and apprenticeships.
  - Explore wage subsidies or tax incentives for small manufacturers to train skilled workers.
- Support learning pathways for international residencies and cultural exchange.

#### 5. Map Australia's Fibre-to-Fashion Ecosystem

##### Why this matters:

Without a clear understanding of our national capabilities and gaps, investment and policy remain fragmented. Mapping the system -from farm to fibre, maker to market - provides the insight needed to build a resilient and place-based industry.

##### Suggestions:

- Conduct national supply chain mapping to identify regional capabilities, gaps, and opportunities for strategic growth.
- Develop business case studies of valued industry players to understand what they need to thrive. The delight is in the detail<sup>20</sup>.
- Use this intelligence to guide investment, procurement strategies, policy development, and education planning.

#### 6. Champion Cultural Leadership through a National Working Group for Artisanal Futures

##### Why this matters:

Bold ideas need space, structure, and shared leadership. A national forum will support collective visioning, cross-sector collaboration, and long-term planning to strengthen Australia's position as a leader in values-led fashion, design and craft.

##### Suggestions:

- The industry-led working group can:
  - Host roundtables to connect fibre producers, designers, educators, policy leaders, cultural institutions and innovators to define and implement outcomes driven solutions.
  - Explore best practice programs, global partnerships, and collaborative initiatives that support innovation grounded in care, community, and creativity.
  - Lead the reimagining and apply to all areas of artisanship.



## **Moving Forward: Pathways to Implementation**

To progress these recommendations, the next steps will begin by engaging with the Australian Fashion Council (AFC) and Craft Victoria, both of whom are actively shaping the future of Australia's fashion and craft industries. The AFC's leadership on the National Manufacturing Strategy, alongside Craft Victoria's deep commitment to supporting makers and creatives, provides a strong foundation from which to continue building. These organisations, already engaged with industry and government, offer natural pathways to align this work with broader national conversations.

From this foundation, there is significant opportunity to broaden engagement through conversations with organisations such as the Australian Made Campaign, Creative Australia, the International Specialised Skills Institute (ISS Institute), cultural institutions, educational institutions, and aligned philanthropic partners. Potential pathways forward may include establishing working groups, convening roundtable discussions, and identifying shared opportunities to co-invest in initiatives that align with these recommendations.

As part of this process, the Fellow looks forward to contributing to this work through future partnerships, collaborations, and leadership opportunities as the sector continues to evolve.

The opportunity ahead is clear: to foster a more connected, sustainable, and meaningful future for Australian fashion - one that honours our stories, our skills, and our creativity. Technology will enable it, but only people can craft it.

# 07

## Conclusion

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### Crafting Australia's Future

This Fellowship has shown that Australia holds immense potential to reimagine its future with purposeful, creative, and culturally rich production - one that values both technological innovation and human ingenuity.

Across Italy, we saw how excellence in artisanship is preserved through bold investment, national pride, and systems that honour the role of the maker in modern society.

Now is the time for Australia to embrace the extraordinary talent within and act with similar intent.

By embedding artisanal skills into national policy, by investing in the people and places that sustain them, and by elevating fashion and textiles as expressions of identity and industry, we can build a future where meaning matters as much as scale — and where making is a national strength.

Let us craft a future that is not only economically viable, but culturally vital. A future where our stories, our skills, and our materials shape fashion that is proudly made in Australia with great quality and artistry.

# 08

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Appendices

Appendix 1 Fellowship Engagement – Australia + Italy

Australian Context

Company	Name	Description
Sustainable Fibres Symposium 2024	Industry Conference	The inaugural event hosted by the ARC Research Hub for Future Fibres (Deakin University), in partnership with RMIT and UTS, setting a strong foundation for ongoing innovation and collaboration in sustainable fibre development
Australian Fashion Council (AFC)	Members Forum	Designed to share the AFC's new strategy and upcoming member program and discuss key industry issues that would help shape the AFC's future pathways, policies, and projects.
Full Circle Fibres	Meriel Chamberlin	A Brisbane based textile scientist and founder of Full Circle Fibres, a company that builds fully transparent and ethical fibre-to-fabric supply chains beginning with Australian-grown cotton and wool and champions circular economy practices, including conducting a 2023 Churchill Fellowship on zero-waste textile systems.
MTK Australia (MTK)	Stephen Morris-Moody	At the heart of MTK Australia (MTK) is a deep commitment to craftsmanship, innovation, and care—a philosophy cultivated and carried forward by Stephen Morris-Moody, MTK's co-owner and creative director.
Top Knit Australia	Ralph and Pat Bonadio	Topknit Fabrics Australia is a 100% Australian-made knit fabric manufacturer located in Reservoir. Accredited by Ethical Clothing Australia, they specialise in knitted fabrics, from jersey to lycra, for apparel and industrial applications.

Company	Name	Description
	Jacqueline Stojanović	A Melbourne based multidisciplinary artist, weaver, and educator who works with historic and contemporary textile techniques; in 2022 she completed a research residency at Lottozero, and in 2025 she held an artist residency at the Australian Tapestry Workshop.
Australian Tapestry Workshop (ATW)	Sophie Travers, Co-CEO	Established in 1976 and based in South Melbourne, is a not for profit centre of excellence in contemporary tapestry. They collaborate with Australian and international artists, architects, and designers to create hand woven tapestries, cultivating innovation and mastery in textile art.
	Indigo Stuart	Emerging Fashion Designer who reengineered a loom to reimagine weaving, Winner of the AUSFF award, Winner of National Graduate Award, Melbourne Fashion Festival.
The Public Office	Dan Agdag	A Naarm / Melbourne based artist and filmmaker who works primarily in the medium of cardboard, a medium he manipulates and elevates to formidable heights through his impossibly intricate and exacting sculptures. Dan was invited to showcase at Homo Faber's 2024 Biennale, "A Journey of Life".
Craft Victoria	Nicole Durling	Craft, is Victoria's leading not for profit centre for contemporary craft and design, dedicated to supporting, showcasing, and empowering makers through exhibitions, professional development, public programs, retail galleries, and industry collaborations.
Creative Ballarat	Tara Poole	The City of Ballarat's Creative City Strategic Lead, overseeing the Creative City Strategy, public art programs, and the city's UNESCO designation as a Creative City of Crafts and Folk Art.
City of Melbourne	Shane McIlroy	A Senior Business Development Coordinator in the Economic Development and International team at the City of Melbourne, where he oversees Melbourne's sister city partnerships, including Milan, focusing on business, trade, circular economy and health collaborations.
	Angelo Pantalone	An education specialist - Programs Innovation Lead, Public Speaker, Researcher, Enterprise Growth Strategist Lecturer for the Master of Fashion (Entrepreneurship). The exploration centered around business models for the future.
RMIT University, School of Fashion and Textiles, College of Design and Social Context	Blake Barns	A Lecturer in Fashion & Textiles at RMIT University's City Campus in Melbourne, where he also contributes to collaborative design research, industry engagement and led the 2024 student showcase in Milan.



## Italian Context

Company	Name	Description
Artnit Studios	Ilaria	An Italian sustainable knitwear brand (founded 2018, Biella), producing timeless pieces in 100 % natural fibres through a short, transparent supply chain and championing zero waste craftsmanship.
Brunello Cucinelli		Renowned Italian luxury fashion house, launched in 1978, specializing in cashmere apparel and embodying “humanistic capitalism” through its high quality, ethically anchored business ethos
Australia–Italy Business Association (AIBA)	Diana Brock Negri, Vice-President	A non-profit organisation dedicated to strengthening trade, investment, business, and cultural links between Australia and Italy. Core activities include hosting high-level roundtables, seminars, and networking events - helping members connect with partners, access market opportunities, and foster innovation across sectors like sustainable infrastructure, circular economy, talent exchange, and digital technology
CoccaLab and CoFil Spinning Mill		Cocca Lab (est. 2023) offers home knit collections like blankets and pillows, while CoFil (since 1970) operates three advanced spinning mill plants in Prato to produce high quality yarns
Ermenegildo Zegna	Paolo Russo, Sales Director	A century old, family run Italian quality textile company founded in 1910, vertically integrated from fibre to fashion and globally known for its premium wool and menswear
H-earth	Emiliano Santi	Tuscany based eco underwear and hosiery brand made from botanical fibres like bamboo, eucalyptus, and castor, designed to be hypoallergenic, breathable and sustainably produced within 10 km.
Italian Artisan	David Clementoni, Co-Founder	A production platform dedicated to empowering and enabling artisanal workshops across Italy. They connect international brands with the heritage of Italian craftsmanship, by providing a centralised management system.
Joanna Lyle	Joanna Lyle, Co-Founder	Milan based luxury lifestyle designer, born in northern England, known for richly coloured fabrics, prints, embroidery and bespoke textiles and furnishings.
LoFolo	Beppe Allorca, Founder	A mini knitwear manufacturer and brand specialising in knitted wool accessories. Evolving from a knitwear company working for several international clients, this relatively young company, run with huge passion by Beppe Allocca and his family, manages to stay alive despite the strong adversities Italian manufacturing companies are facing.

Company	Name	Description
Lottozero	Arianna Moroder, Co-Founder	Prato based textile innovation hub and dye laboratory hosting artists-in-residence and collaborative R&D between makers, designers, and educational institutions.
Victory Café Museo	Fabio Giusti	A unique restaurant hosting the showroom of the company Trafi, specialised in wet and dry felting, space dyeing and other innovative dyeing techniques on hanks and cones, in addition to hosting a collection of antique textiles machines.
Rifò Lab	Chiara Cordaro	Sustainable textile start-up transforming post-consumer materials like cotton t-shirts into new fabrics through chemical and mechanical recycling.
Masion Barbagli Plisse	Guiliano Sennati, Founder	Renowned historic Tuscan atelier specialising in artisanal plissé fabrics - hand pleating textiles into elegant, three dimensional surface textures.
Monash University Prato Centre	Cathy Crupi, Associate Director	Monash's Italian campus in Prato, offering research, design, humanities and industry-focused residencies and fostering international creative collaboration.
Piacenza 1733	Ettore Piacenza, General Manager	Luxurious Italian textile mill known for its fine wool and cashmere fabrics, craftsmanship dating back to 1733, supplying high-end fashion houses.
Prato Textile Museum (Museo del Tessuto)		Italy's largest centre for the study, conservation, and exhibition of historic and contemporary textiles - showcasing a vast collection of fabric samples, textile machinery, archives, and industrial archaeology that trace the region's rich textile heritage from the Middle Ages to the present day.
Polimoda	Massimiliano Giornetti, Director	Florence based international fashion school specialising in design, business and promotion, focused on nurturing creative professionals for the global luxury and fashion industries.
Woolmark	Fabrizio Servente, Global Strategy Advisor	Iconic Australian not for profit brand under Australian Wool Innovation, supporting Merino wool through the internationally respected Woolmark Prize and global industry advocacy.
Palazzo delle Esposizioni	Dal Cuore alle Mani: Dolce&Gabbana exhibition	Stunning exhibition showcasing over 200 handcrafted couture creations inspired by Italian culture -art, architecture, cinema, and folklore - tracing the designers' journey "from the heart to the hands."

## Appendix 2 Fellowship Overview - Introduction Document



# Alida Milani

Director | 2024 ISS Institute Italian/Australian Fellow  
Melbourne, Australia


+61 410 317 043  
alida@amme.com.au  
linkedin.com/in/alidamilani  
alidamilani  
amme.com.au

Awarded an ISS Institute Italian / Australian Fellowship in 2024, I am travelling to Italy in 2025 to explore how artisanal fashion skills are evolving with innovation, modernisation, and technology and how Italy continues to be the world's leader of textile and fashion craftsmanship, strengthening Made in Italy as one of the world's most revered brands.

This research aims to guide efforts to maintain and modernise artisanal fashion skills in Australia to expand creativity and enrich our cultural identity. The focus will be on initiatives and educational opportunities supporting artisanal craftsmanship and how government and industry can support such programs.

### Key Investigations

- 1 Why does preserving artisanal craft and craftsmanship matter? What values do they encourage? Why should we care?
- 2 What has been at the heart of Italy's success story?
- 3 What are the key learnings related to preserving artisanal fashion skills and capabilities?
- 4 What initiatives are supporting the continued evolution of artisanal skills and capabilities across education, industry and government?
- 5 Are there partnerships or collaborations that could support the positive evolution of Australia's artisan fashion industry?



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### Italy Itinerary, 22 April – 15 May 2025

Italy's strength lies in its regional clusters and with my time there I'm exploring the depth of beauty, quality and craftsmanship in the following areas: Milan, Biella, Vicenza, Florence, Prato, Arezzo, Solomeo, Rome.

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## About

I have been working in and contributing to the fashion industry for over 20 years' operating across a diverse range of platforms and projects together with a multitude of partners – from government and education to Australian designers, fashion brands and retailers.

Following ten years working in fashion show production and event management – both in Australia as well as internationally – I founded amme in 2006. A boutique event and experiential marketing agency, amme partnered with clients to develop dynamic campaign content and memorable brand experiences. In 2018, after 12 successful years, I redirected the agency's focus from content and event creation to promoting and advancing a more responsible and circular fashion industry in Australia.

I now work with clients to identify and develop initiatives that not only respond to the sector's complex challenges but also, highlight its unique strengths. I take great care to build strategic opportunities that celebrate local excellence and support continuous innovation.

Creating enduring transformation, at scale, requires many perspectives and a multitude of diverse skills. And so, I bring people together to forge vibrant collaborations and partnerships that inspire change for one of the greatest opportunities of our time.

I believe that when we value and celebrate our local makers, designers, educators, and entrepreneurs, and when we work together as a collective, we can build a more innovative and future-focused fashion industry.

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## Fellowship Research Endorsement

Alida Milani has the depth of knowledge to undertake this research which will provide important insights into the value of specialised skills and their applications to support the burgeoning independent fashion sector in Victoria. Understanding the world leading eco-system, that Italy has created for artisan skills and applying it to a contemporary context is core to premium fashion's future success.

Karen Webster  
Senior Manager, Creative Victoria



## Appendix 3 – Highlight Artisan Meetings

### Joanna Lyle

Joanna Lyle is in one of Milan's most enchanting and stylish neighbourhoods, Brera. The streets of Brera are lined with independent boutiques, jewellery studios, antique shops, and design stores. It's a great spot for finding unique pieces.

Joanna moved from Yorkshire to Milan at the height of the Memphis design movement. Joanna loves colour – not that Milan is known for colour, but the Memphis movement, founded in Milan, was. Her parents were textile designers, so she grew up with colour and design all around her.

To differentiate herself, Joanna studied technical design. Winning an Alessi competition, she became part of the team and eventually designed her own signature collection called "Ovo". The designs are thoughtful and playful.

As life evolves, Joanna finds herself having a strong pull back to colour and textiles and starts designing

fabrics. Working with a colleague they create luxe furnishings for interiors which then morphs into her own label.

The beauty of Joanna's work?

- **The luxurious fabrics:** stunning silks, wool, velvet and cool cottons, and then you have the mixes: silk wool, silk linen, silk velvet. Stunning.
- **The hand painted design:** working with watercolours she creates the design and then prints onto the various fabrics.
- **The local connection:** with printing in Como and cut and sew on the outskirts of Milan, Joanna's production is all nearby working with highly skilled and beloved Italian family businesses.

A sneak peak of a divine cotton print fabric is her latest evolution. Interestingly, she's gone back to her family archives for inspiration. It's high summer for sure. The vibrant colours wish you away in some exotic place!





## Lofoio

In the heart of Prato, Tuscany's textile capital, there's a little gem called Lofoio, "I made it". Their workshop sits not far from the Duomo, tucked into a city where the hum of weaving looms and the whispers of recycled yarns have been part of daily life for centuries.

Lofoio is run by twin siblings, Sara and Beppe, who inherited not just their aunt's machinery but also the spirit of Prato's *cenciaioli* — the ragpickers who, since the 1800s, have transformed cast-off fabrics into something new. Their mother Matilde and aunt Alcenia are still part of the story, hands and hearts keeping the craft alive.

And what do they make? Scarves, ponchos, hats, stoles — pieces that are less about trends and more about character. They don't do collections (as they like to say, "we're not standard"). Instead, they let the regenerated yarns guide them. One day, a bold cashmere in emerald. Another, a recycled wool in stripes. Always playful, always rooted in their heritage.

## The beauty of Lofoio?

- **The materials:** regenerated wool, cotton, and cashmere — given a second life with surprising softness.
- **The designs:** quirky, colourful, full of joy. Think scarves that double as hoods, ponchos with hidden flair, and stoles that wrap you like a warm embrace.
- **The story:** Prato's recycling tradition, carried forward with humour, humility, and a touch of theatre (quite literally — Beppe sometimes performs monologues about the history of recycling at fairs!).

Visit their store in Prato and you'll find not just accessories but little fragments of the city's textile soul — vibrant, witty, and woven with care. Their motto feels right: artisans from (re)generations.





## Maison Barbagli Plissé

In the rolling hills of Tuscany, just outside Arezzo, lies a treasure called Maison Barbagli Plissé. Since 1983, Giuliano Sennati and his atelier have been bending, folding and coaxing fabric and leather into ripples, waves, origami-pleats, and shimmering geometries.

Every pleat begins with a mould: cardboard patterns that set the rhythm of the fold. The fabric is guided carefully by hand through presses and machines, while leather and eco-leather are coaxed into shape with heat and adhesive. At Maison Barbagli, pleating is a dialogue between material and maker, where precision and patience decide the outcome.

The results span from couture gowns with sharp sunray pleats and soft waves, to shoes and bags where leather is sculpted into unexpected forms, to furnishings — lampshades, cushions, decorative panels — that carry the same discipline of craft. Each piece shows how a single technique, mastered over decades, can adapt across fashion and design.

Step into their workshop and you find the marks of true craft: the hiss of steam, the weight of fabrics under tension, and a team of artisans working side by side to perfect each pleat.

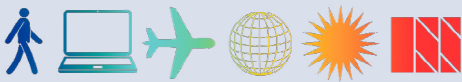
What sets them apart?

- **Variety of pleats:** fantasy, Arlecchino, organetto, laminato, origami-folds, sunray, even leather treated to behave like fabric.
- **Technical mastery:** adhesives, thermo-fixing, CAD patterning, custom moulds — so even a heavy leather tote can hold a pleat.
- **Versatility:** couture, accessories, interiors — all united by the same artisanal devotion to the fold.

Since 1983, Maison Barbagli Plissé has been proof that pleating is more than a technique. In the right hands, it becomes both craft and character — shaping the material and giving shape to ideas.







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