

Responsible Fashion Series

Call for Contributions

Responsible Fashion Series: Innovation, Bio-design and Technology

October 27th – November 7th 2025, West Coast of the United States

The Responsible Fashion Series (RFS) is a sequence of events promoting the potential of a responsible approach to fashion studies around the world – past events include: India, China, Netherlands, UK, Italy, Brazil, Belgium, Macedonia, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. These events have always been free in order to reduce barriers for people to attend and to encourage participation and topics of local significance.

www.responsible-fashion-series.com

For our next RFS event, we will visit the West Coast of the United States of America. This is an amazing region, perched on the Pacific Rim, facing the largest wilderness on the planet: the Pacific Ocean! Known for its boom-and-bust pioneering spirit, design culture and innovation and its close proximity to vast natural landscapes, arguably the most industrialized agriculture in the world and displacement of indigenous peoples. This region is home to many innovative enterprises driving responsible fashion forward. By combining visits to local projects and businesses with workshops, exhibitions, paper sessions, and panel discussions, we aim to share insights, expertise, and creative ideas. We will examine the potential of responsible fashion generated across this region and want to explore leading edge innovation including an examination of what we can learn from indigenous producers in order to find new ways to expand sustainable initiatives.

The fashion industry uses large amounts of natural and – finite – mineral resources, and therefore the focus for this event is on slowing the flow of materials through the fashion system and radical material innovation that vastly reduces extraction rates. While the production of natural materials draws on replenishable resources, this, too, is fraught with issues due to mono-cultivation and economic pressures. Does the bio-economy hold the promise of material production for textiles grown responsibly from renewable resources and that are also compostable? Can the circular economy truly convert fashion's waste into new inputs? For this event, we explore how technology, digital tools and know-how push these approaches to innovative sustainable production and invention of materials. But we also ask what lessons can be learned from existing technologies and from traditional and indigenous production methods to inform a responsible fashion system.

We invite contributions that explore the future of fashion and textiles at the intersections of biodesign, sustainability, and old and new technologies. We welcome original research, reviews, case studies, and critical perspectives that address, but are not limited to, the following topics:

- Innovations in sustainable materials and bio-fabrication
- The role of biotechnology in creating biodegradable or regenerative textiles
- Smart textiles and wearable technology for enhanced functionality and user experience
- Circular economy models and strategies for reducing waste in fashion production
- The impact of digital tools, AI, and machine learning on sustainable fashion design
- Ethical considerations in the application of technology within the fashion industry
- Case studies of companies integrating biodesign with scalable production
- Cross-disciplinary collaborations driving sustainable innovations in fashion
- The role of education & policy in fostering new thinking, new business models & biodesign practices in fashion.

We encourage submissions that push the boundaries of traditional fashion practices and offer insights into the evolving landscape where technology and sustainability converge to shape the future of the apparel

industry. We want to maximize the learning experience for all (through a variety of modes – from workshops, paper presentations and panel discussions etc).

This event is divided into three parts to maximize flexible attendance and encourage diversity of participation across three principal locations:

PART A: Monday 27th to Friday 31st October 2025 in San Francisco

We start in San Francisco and its surrounding area, in technology's epicenter, Silicon Valley and the San Francisco Bay Area by exploring the latest topics in innovation and technology. This section will focus on explorations of biodegradable, bio-based materials, biofabrication and bio design in textiles and fashion as well as smart textiles and clothing design in particular. We will visit the research centers at UC Davis and a variety of iconic and start-up brands in San Francisco including UNSPUN, Mango Materials, and Hue. We will also organize an exclusive visit to Levi Strauss and Co headquarters.

West Valley College Cilker School of Art & Design fashion program instructor Anthony Murray will host a panel discussion on biodesign on their campus with panelist Garrett Benisch followed by a visit to OurCarbon, a biodesign company.

PART B: Saturday 1st November to Tuesday 4th 2025 in Los Angeles

From San Francisco, we travel along the coastal freeway through California's great central agricultural valley to attend a cotton farm tour. From there, we will travel to Los Angeles, America's West Coast fashion capital, where we will arrive just in time to experience Dias de los Muertos celebrations at Hollywood Forever cemetery. Based at the ASU FIDM campus in the heart of the fashion district, we will tour design studios and manufacturing sites and hear industry leaders discuss California's Responsible Textile Recovery Act that is set to lead the way in addressing the environmental impacts of "fast fashion." Circular approaches, eco-friendly design and production processes, and strategies for reducing environmental impacts in the textile and fashion industry are the main research focus, here.

PART C: Tuesday 4th – Friday 7th November 2025 in Phoenix

For our third location, we travel to Phoenix, Arizona to observe the sublime beauty of the American Southwest where mindful craft methodologies have been embedded in the culture for centuries. Here, we will investigate the creation of environmentally friendly e-textiles, energy-efficient smart clothing, and wearable technology that balances functionality with sustainability. This includes biodegradable sensors, renewable power sources, and sustainable design practices of smart textiles. At Arizona State University, we will experience workshops and demonstrations at the fashion studios, Fashion Fabrication Lab, and Wearable Technology Lab at ASU FIDM. Experience indigenous creativity and traditions with a workshop about traditional dressmaking in the life of the Apache and a visit to the Heard Museum, a vibrant museum dedicated to American Indian art. Discover the Sonoran desert's unique magic at the Desert Botanical Garden and its lure to creatives at Taliesin West, Frank Lloyd Wright's desert laboratory. At the end of the event, there will be options to visit Sedona and the Grand Canyon.

Participants must register to join us. Registration is essential in order for us to calculate numbers attending. Please, write to mail@responsible-fashion-series.com and let us know, if you intend to attend all three parts (or less). (PART A: Monday 27th to Friday 31st October 2025 in San Francisco, Part B: Saturday 1st November to Tuesday 4th 2025 in Los Angeles or PART C: from Tuesday 4th to Friday 7th November 2025 in Arizona).

Please be advised that certain costs will have to be carried by the attendees. This includes transportation and accommodation and other supplementary costs (i.e. participation in the excursions).

We invite and encourage your participation and welcome a variety of proposals including: exhibitions, paper presentations, panel discussions, workshops... we like to encourage as much participation and sharing of knowledge as possible. At each location we will facilitate sharing of the local and international experience. Please send your proposals of max. 300 words to mail@responsible-fashion-series.com by 31st December 2024 – specifying which location you would like to present at.

About the Responsible Fashion Series

Since 2011, the Responsible Fashion Series has organized several conferences on **cultural management, the creative industries and entrepreneurship**.

The Responsible Fashion Series emerged from the Fashion Colloquium series that ran from 2012-2019. Four core network institutions, connected by their residence and involvement in the four big 'Fashion Weeks' across the globe. These institutions were the London College of Fashion – University of the Arts, London; Domus Academy – Mila; Institute Francais de la Mode – Paris; and Parsons, the New School for Design, School for Fashion, New York.

The success of these first four events led to a second series exploring 'new emerging locations' and after five very successful years and a further ten events around the world in places such as: Amsterdam, Shanghai, Ho Chi Minh City, Sao Paulo, Arnhem, Rome, etc. We felt that a change was necessary that supported a new era for fashion across the world demanded a new 'responsible' approach to supporting fashion.

Our value system...

- Fashion has the potential to act as a catalyst for change and support at all levels – locally, nationally and internationally.
- Responsible fashion requires all participants to act in a positive way that invests creatively, ethically in a non-gender biased way to build a sustainable and ethical future for the wearing and possession of dress.
- Responsible Fashion events are 'free' and 'accessible' (subject to registration) in order to remove any barriers for local people (regardless of their background) to attend and contribute.
- There is no one template for how an event is organized, rather we work with local organisers to develop a programme which meets their needs within this value system.

Event archive:

2023 - RFS Uzbekistan & Kazakhstan



Central Asia remains one of the most unspoilt and beautiful regions in the world. In terms of fashion, its history and influence in textiles is immense – from silk, wool, cotton, and leather – their impact stretches back centuries – but how much does the rest of the world know about this region? Do they understand its significance and legacy? Normally, our attention on fashion in recent years has focused primarily on the power struggles between the markets of North America, Europe and South-East Asia and thereby, largely overlooking this stunning area of flatlands, mountains and lakes. Of course, such avoidance has benefits. Not least, traditional crafts and heritage remain pure and unspoilt, but economically speaking it is a region that needs to expand and grow. Our claim with this event was that fashion can be the catalyst for change – but not growth at any price, rather it needs to be in a responsible way!

This is a region that possesses a huge potential – not only in terms of swathes of natural resources, but also with regards to skill levels amongst its people. Skills handed down generation by generation, and applied across wide areas stretching over thousands of miles through the centuries of nomadic roaming and local immersion, we see practices that will become the envy of the world. Here you can enjoy the experience of meeting people who possess a rich ethnic mix and multi-ethnic heritage ranging from Turkic, Arabic, Iranian, Slavic, Mongolian, Chinese and multi-religious mix of Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Zoroastrian, and Buddhism...

This responsible fashion event was a unique opportunity to appreciate the potential of this area – not in terms of exploitation and extraction but in terms of encouragement and support.

On this special occasion, we invited attendees to three parts of one event that stretched across two countries, and we did this by inviting you to follow in the nomadic footsteps of the forebears in the region. We wanted participants to experience some of the nomadic experience of journeying from Tashkent in Uzbekistan, through Turkestan and arriving nine days later in the exciting city of Almaty in Kazakhstan, to experience (amongst other things) its fashion week.

Our themes included:

- How important is identity in this post-pandemic world?
- Re-evaluating post-colonial impact in times of uncertainty and conflict?
- How can fashion enable the future for the silk road and its people?
- Empowering artisanship, craft and heritage
- Constructing new business models and unravelling supply-chain fractures for central Asia
- Unravelling the secrets of design and practice...contributions through education

2022 - RFS Antwerp: Can Fashion Save the World?



Central to the Antwerp edition was the question: Can fashion save the world? With COVID-19 we were in a crisis that was nothing like anything we had ever faced before and we were

reminded of our Antwerp experience from the beginning of the 1990s. Then, we were facing in Europe important societal changes, increasing globalization, an escalation in migration and the breakthrough of populist parties all over Europe. Antwerp became in 1993 the cultural capital of Europe and ran with the 'tagline': "Can the arts save the world?" What Antwerp 93 wanted to stimulate was a reflection and debate about the societal role that Arts and Culture (including fashion) could play and thereby offering innovative approaches through arts and culture as a utopic remedy. The crisis today might need something similar? Thus, accordingly, we updated our offer: can fashion save the world? We claimed that no other field of study and practice embraces change like fashion and in Antwerp fashion designers have for a longtime been known for their creativity and disruptive imagination. Therefore, we asked: "Might Creatives play a greater role in a changing world?" Back in the 1980s creativity was mostly understood as still based on the individual genius and/or practice of certain skills (craftsmanship).

Today, some forty years later, it might be more accurate to understand that creativity no longer resembles this guise, but rather, now has evolved into something that is no longer seen as exclusively individual, but rather something that draws for its inspiration from influences from new sources: sometimes from other disciplines, from other cultures or perhaps reevaluating our heritage, etc... Thus, we are witnessing a new birth and guise for creativity; perhaps one that is an interdisciplinary response? We need to think differently...more creatively perhaps in terms of new ways of working including forms of collaboration? New technologies and processes? What business models are necessary in order to survive and prosper? Perhaps what these observations lead to is a further question: do we need to break a few things down before we can re-build?