

UNIVERSITY, MARIA LUISA FRISA'S WAY



“For a long time in Italy nobody worried about training creative people. It was enough to have talent, which unfortunately is just as delicate as it is valuable. So it must be nurtured if you don't want to see it disappear.” From her privileged viewpoint as director of the Degree Course in Fashion Design at IUAV, Maria Luisa Frisa examines the Italian and international context to identify the best kind of teaching to offer her students. “We select just 60 a year and require obligatory attendance from them in order to ensure excellence. There's been too much improvised fashion teaching in recent years,” she explains. “To be a top-level fashion designer you have to fit the bill. One mustn't underestimate creativity or think of watertight compartments. You need to be able to sew, but also know about the history of art and architecture. Clothes are the result of things going on around them.” Italy's schools are relatively young compared to their North European public counterparts, which may be 100 years old. If Italian schools have a communication gap, it will be closed principally by the distinction of students who, once graduated, will become the best overseas ambassadors. “While we were preparing the costumes for Arto Lindsay's opening show at the Venice Biennale, two of our first graduates left for London to do an exhibition with Judith Clarke,” remarks Frisa. In true glocal style she has set up relationships with schools in the UK, Spain and China, as well as initiatives in the Venice region. “Post-graduate courses need to be developed together with entrepreneurs, and in Venice there are plenty of them who are already producing the collections of graduates from UK schools. The Treviso Chamber of Commerce funds our degree course. The most sought-after professional profiles are the ones that come up with ideas. Companies in the area need designers able to conceive and realise complete collections, from garments to accessories. The practical side is crucial. And that's what we teach.” One criticism is inevitable when speaking about Italy's fashion system in relation to new talents. “It's stuck in the '80s,” says Frisa. “All the initiatives are commendable, from contests to runways dedicated to young designers, but they're impromptu and uncoordinated. To build a healthy system we need to be in touch with institutions and work alongside them.” The invitation goes to universities, but also to regional and state administrations. Young designers, meanwhile, are asked to roll up their sleeves. How? “For example by overcoming limitations and preconceptions. Italian creative talents have a lot of taste but they're not so good at taking risks.” **F.C.**