

2021

STUDENT DESIGN COMPETITION

CLOTHING | FOOTWEAR | ACCESSORIES

**REAL
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Introducing our design competition



Showcasing a new generation of designers...

Leather is one of the most durable, adaptable, fun and challenging materials a designer can work with.

- Light enough to make the most intricate ballgown, tough enough to be the barrier between skin and Tarmac.
- It has been used for thousands of years in thousands of roles and remains iconic to this day.

Real Leather. Stay Different. Student Design Competition gives the next generation of designers a chance to explore the material and to push their work.

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- It attracted 1,000+ entries from 30 colleges from the UK, Italy, China and Taiwan.
- Designs ranged from the Avant Garde to the practical and the beautiful to the pragmatic.
- Competitors have appeared in fashion shows and international showcases.

A man wearing a green flat cap is focused on working on a sneaker. He is using a wooden mallet and a white block to shape the sole of the shoe. The shoe is covered in white tape and has a black strap. The background is a dark wooden wall.



“Real Leather. Stay Different. promotes great design from new design talent. Students who look at leather as a sustainable and responsible material to use.

Neither cheap, nor throw away, we work with those thinking about ‘Slow Style’; investing in select items that reflect an individual’s style, that will be cherished and that last several lifetimes.

In a world with limited resources we should use what we have and use it well. We hope that this competition fulfils our ambitions and helps you fulfil yours. And that it encourages fresh and individual thinking.”

Stephen Sothmann. President.

L&HCA: Competition organisers

Career kickstart...

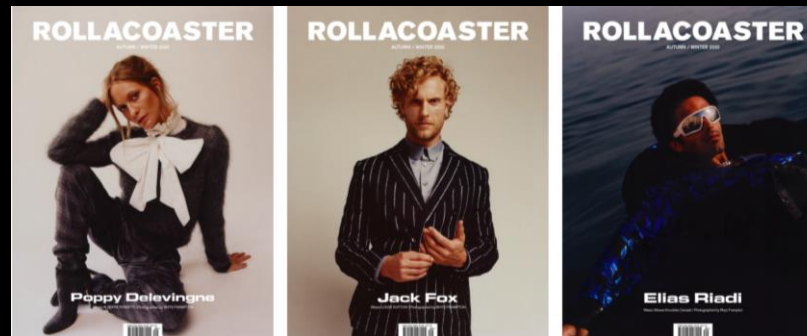
The national competition is open to our fashion and design students.

- **Three categories:** apparel, footwear and accessories. Your design should be at least 50% leather plus other natural materials.
- **Round one:** supply visuals, description and short video for judges.
- **Round two:** judges invite finalists in each category to make their design.
- **Round three:** judges choose category winners and overall competition winner

The overall winner appears in a competition feature in international fashion title Rollacoaster.

Reaching 250,000 readers around the world and millions more online, this kind of exposure can launch a career.

To find out more about Rollacoaster visit:
<https://rollacoaster.tv/>



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A new take on leather...

We want your designs and they can form part of your coursework. We want to showcase your talent, re-imagining a material that's been used for thousands of years.

To get started you will need to submit a drawing of your design, a written description and summary of the creative process and finally, a video to introduce yourself and your design to the judging panel.

Please discuss your entry with your tutor. Entries can be submitted here [\[Entry mechanic\]](#) with the closing date for submissions of [\[date\]](#).

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Leather for our Future?



Charting human evolution

Leather dates back to the Palaeolithic, a time when all materials were precious. It has been in use for more than 15,000 years.

Bone tools for preparing leather are commonly found at Palaeolithic sites. Cave paintings in Lerida, Spain, show people in leather clothing.

Leather has been used for protection and decoration with the techniques for production evolving over time.

Armies used it as a key part of their armour. Designers fashioned items from water vessels to saddles and harnesses.

That story extends beyond our planet - with leather protecting the first man in space, Yuri Gagarin, whose suit used leather for boots, gloves and the radio headset cover.

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Leather is natural, adaptable and durable...

80% of the world's leather comes from cattle, a by-product of the dairy & meat industry. Other hides used include sheep, pig and goat.

Leather is a natural, adaptable material created by the tanning of animal hides to make them more durable and easier to work with.

There are two main types of tanning, after which leather can be polished or dyed:

Chromium tanning uses non-toxic chromium III, an essential element in humans.

Vegetable tanning uses natural materials such as tree bark from pine or oak.

Chromium tanned leather tends to be soft, flexible and suitable for footwear and clothing.

Vegetable tanned leather is better for sturdier products such as saddles, harnesses and moulded furniture.

Always source leather from accredited and independently audited tanneries.

This ensures best practice environmental management, responsible use of chemicals and zero run-off waste water management.

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Retaining natural characteristics

After tanning, three main types of leather are produced. It is important to choose the right type of leather.

Full grain: the thickness of the hide. It retains its natural look and is used for high-quality footwear and furniture

Top grain: the top of the hide sanded and treated. It is more pliable than full grain and is used for clothes, footwear and furniture

Split grain: the lower part of the hide after the top grain is removed. Suede is made from the underside of the split and often used for boots and jackets.

Not all leather is the same!



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A waste of materials

Sourcing is important. US leather is a by-product of the food and dairy industry. No US cattle are killed to produce leather.

There is value to farmers in hides, but it is small. Worth **just 1%** of a cow's value, unless used for leather, hides are thrown away.

The US recovers c **90%** of cattle hides. That means 3.3 million hides still go to landfill every year. Worldwide this figure is estimated to be 180 million per year.

Each hide weighs about 25kg. US leather used for clothes and products saves more than 800,000 tons of waste, every year.



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“Long hair minimizes the need for barbers; socks can be done without; one leather jacket solves the coat problem for many years; suspenders are superfluous”

Albert Einstein

Reduce, reduce, reduce

Not only does using leather cut waste, landfill and carbon, but it can be better for the environment – and a great leather item can change attitudes to ‘fast fashion’.

Reduce waste today... and tomorrow

Well cared for leather can last indefinitely. Many alternatives have a much shorter lifecycle.

Once thrown away plastics can take 500 years to biodegrade v. just 25-50 for the most resilient leather found in shoes. Leather is fully biodegradable.

Lifecycle of plastics: See eg WWF:
<https://www.wwf.org.au/news/blogs/the-lifecycle-of-plastics#gs.iox1n7>



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“The greenest thing you could do in fashion is to buy something you’re going to use for years.”

Michael Kors

Introducing 'Slow-Style'

Challenging 'fast fashion' with stylish items that can be trusted to last

Fast fashion with a tendency to low cost items tends to lead to more consumption; one leather item can last a lifetime.

Investing in leather means significantly fewer purchases and the related impacts on people and material in the supply chain.

Beautiful leather items represent what we call 'Slow-Style'.



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“A whopping two-thirds of our clothing is made from fossil fuel synthetics, and 85% of this material is sent to landfills, unable to decay or decompose.

In other words, we’re wearing fossil fuels, and the use of synthetic fibers has doubled since 2000. This year, we’re walking around in 60% synthetic. ”

Thinking Synthetics

Reduce reliance on fossil fuels. Leather is a natural by-product of the dairy and cattle industries.

Synthetics, increasingly used for mass-produced clothing, ultimately come from fossil fuels, whether drilled or fracked.

Production releases toxic compounds and some shed microplastics.

Natural products are not without problems. But sourced, and used, responsibly they provide a sustainable choice.

Fracking and fashion: www.industrialprogress.com/your-clothes-are-fracked/



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**“We have failed as an industry if we can’t find
a use for hides that are going to landfill.**

**And we can succeed if we can communicate
the sustainability benefits of leather to
consumers.”**

Stephen Sothmann. L&CHA

Cut your Carbon footprint

Slow fashion undoubtedly has a carbon benefit, with clothing lasting for life.

Using what would otherwise go to waste proactively cuts Carbon.

By reducing biodegradable landfill, the US leather industry saves an estimated 720,000 tons of CO2e emissions, every year.

But it could do better. 3.3 million hides are still thrown away every year.



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Improving reporting & accountability

We all want hard data, and to know best-practice is being followed. The US leather industry has embarked on a programme to provide up-to-date baseline data and reporting on environmental performance.

Sourcing:

Working with **The National Wildlife Federation** to promote zero-deforestation agricultural production in the tropics, ensuring no leather comes from deforested lands.

Manufacture:

Promoting independent tannery audits by the Leather Working Group working to **UN Sustainable Development Goals** and criteria developed by WWF.

Use:

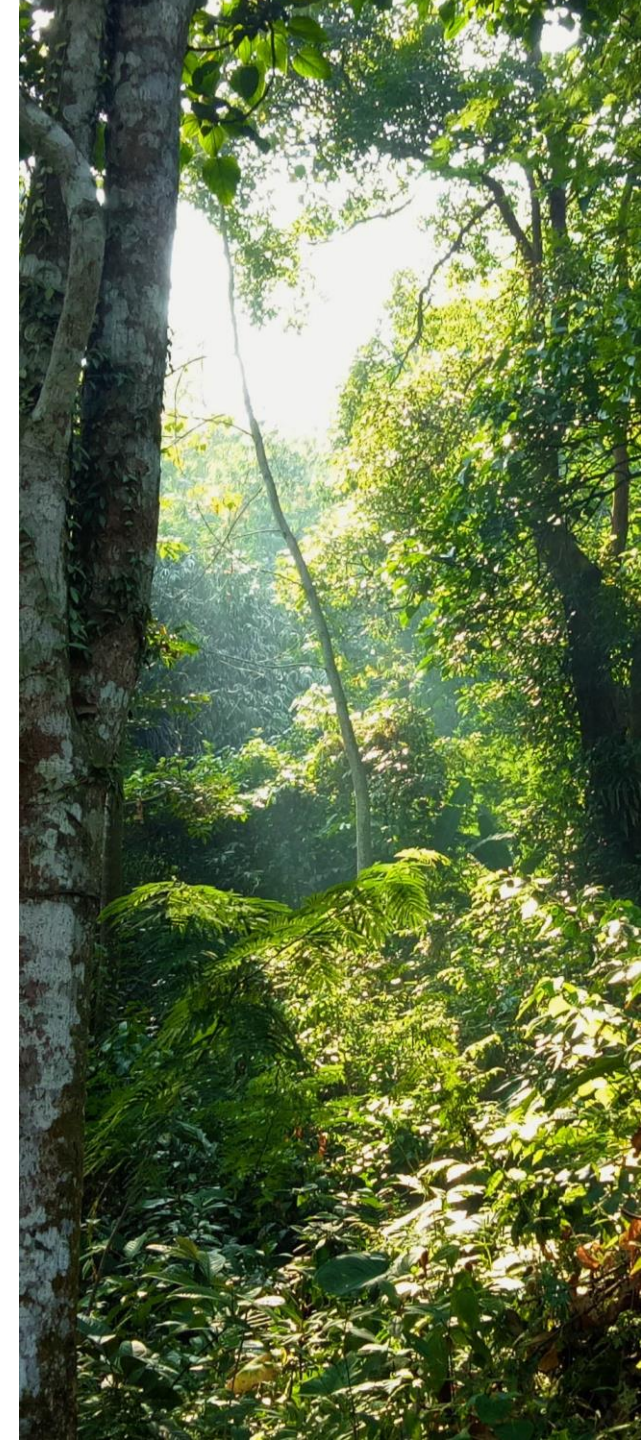
Baseline audit and **whole-of-life carbon foot printing** of leather products; assessment of water and chemical usage in US production.

Transparency:

Concerned about environmental impacts, the industry has called on the influential **Higg Index**, that ranks synthetics highly against sustainable criteria, for transparency on data sources and processes.

For more detailed information and updates visit [chooserealleather.com](https://www.chooserealleather.com)

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Always in Style



The ultimate symbol of rebellion

We say 'Stay Different'. Leather's lasting appeal and iconic status can be seen in just two items from last Century that remain as edgy today.

All versions of the classic leather biker jacket, still the ultimate symbol of rebellion, can be traced back to 1928's Schott Perfecto. It has been much copied, but never improved.

Leather trousers, originally designed to protect horse riders from long days in the saddle, were adopted as the uniform of the rock star, notably Jim Morrison of 1960s band the Doors.

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'Slow Style' or 'Fast Fashion'

By working in leather, like these great designers, you are moving away from 'fast fashion'.

Fast fashion depends on fast turn-around mass produced items that have no need to last.

Fast turnover is key, from factory to warehouse to consumer. Supported by a model that encourages discarding and replacing, regularly.

Leather items take time and patience. Every design and every item should value style and look to a long life!



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Gravity-defying avant-garde...

French-Austrian Designer Marina Hoermanseder specialises in moulded leather - which allows her to create the kind of avant-garde clothes that seem to defy gravity.

She has clothed celebrities including, Nicki Minaj, Rhianna, Katie Perry, Taylor Swift, Janelle Monet, FKA Twigs, Naomi Campbell, Kelly Rowland, Janet Jackson, Lil Kim, Poppy and Gigi Hadid.

Marina created her early collections from home:

‘This was incredibly important in understanding that great design doesn’t have to be met with the best machinery’.

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On foot: cult, craft & quality

The shoe industry in Northampton, England, dates to the 15th century. Companies including Cheaney and Barker have been producing classics such as brogues, Oxfords and monk shoes since the 19th century.

The **Doctor Marten** boot, launched in 1960 as an industrial shoe, was adopted by almost every youth cult since. The classic eight-hole is instantly recognisable.

The modern **classic Louboutin** stiletto has been instantly recognisable for nearly thirty years. The first glance will reveal their statement, red lacquered soles.

A closer look will reveal the quality.

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Beautiful objects for everyday life...

Johnny Coca is Leather Goods Director at Louis Vuitton.

Previously at Mulberry, with fans from the Duchess of Cambridge to Kendall Jenner, he set up Made to Last, a sustainability initiative allowing customers to trade in their leather bags for newer designs and refurbishments.

“Create beautiful objects for the everyday lives of men and women – bags, garments, shoes and accessories that are made to be worn and made to last.”

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On hand: bags of style

The Hermes Birkin must be the most famous and lusted-after handbag.

Actor Jane Birkin found herself in 1983 on a flight seated next to the Hermes Chairman. She complained she could never find the right bag. He designed one and it has been a classic in the finest leather ever since.

Whether to protect the hands of falcon handler, to warm the most stylish of fashionistas or steady the grip of a racing driver, leather's strength, fire retardant value and adaptability has made it the material of choice for glovemakers worldwide.



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Punk-influenced silhouettes...

‘King of Leather’ Michael Lombard is the one of the most original designers working with leather today.

At the cutting edge of fashion, the punk-influenced silhouettes of his styles are instantly recognisable.

“I was just tired of buying other people’s interpretations of leather. I wanted to create my own designs in styles that I found appealing.”

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