



Australian footwear design student Kira Goodey has won the fifth 'Craft the Leather' prize in an annual outreach competition organised by Tuscany's Consortium for Genuine Italian Vegetable-Tanned Leather. A particular piece of Tuscan art was the main inspiration for her entry, a shoe design that swept the panel of judges away.

Inspired by art



Tuscany's Consorzio Vera Pelle Italiana Conciata al Vegetale (Consortium for Genuine Italian Vegetable-Tanned Leather) has announced the winner of its fifth Craft The Leather programme. Craft The Leather is an outreach project in which the Consorzio invites teachers and students from leading fashion schools around the world to come to Tuscany and experience vegetable-tanned leather first hand. Launched a year ago, the fifth competition in the series started with students from nine fashion schools in Europe, the US and Asia travelling to the Consorzio's home territory of San Miniato, Santa Croce, Fucecchio and Ponte a Egola in May 2016 to visit tanners, technicians and designers and learn about vegetable-tanned leather and how to incorporate it into their work.



Australian footwear design student, Kira Goodey, describes the experience of taking part in, and winning, Tuscany's Craft the Leather competition as "absolutely exquisite".

Participants then had most of the rest of 2016 to put together collections that used veg-tanned leather for an expert panel of judges to evaluate. The judging process also took into account online votes and votes from visitors to the Lineapelle exhibition in Milan at the end of this February. The Consorzio announced at Lineapelle that the winner was Kira Anne Goodey, a student at the Royal College of Art (RCA) in London for a collection of footwear she has called Orlandi's Opera. Although based in London (for a number of years now), Kira Goodey hails originally from Perth in Western Australia.

Transfixed

Ms Goodey, who is in the final months of a Master's course in shoe design at the RCA, explains that her award-winning entry is named after Deodato Orlandi, a

Ms Goodey's Orlandi's Opera collection, inspired by the work of Tuscan painter Deodato Orlandi.

CREDIT: CONSORZIO VERA PELLE ITALIANA CONCIATA AL VEGETALE



Tuscan artist, most famous now for his painting of frescoes and of crucifixes (with the paint going directly onto wall or wood) which he completed in the early part of the 14th Century. One of his most famous works is a crucifix that hangs in a former convent in San Miniato. The building now serves as a hotel and, by chance, is where the Consorzio chose to accommodate the Craft the Leather participants during their 2016 stay in Tuscany. Transfixed by the crucifix, Kira Goodey named her project after this work ('opera' means 'work' in Italian) by Orlandi and based her design on the element that impressed her the most. She explains: "The depiction of Christ on the cross has him wearing a sort of loin-cloth, as is typical, but in Orlandi's case, it looks like it's made from lace or gauze. You can see it's there, but it looks so soft and delicate

— it's almost see-through. And this is painted onto something as solid as the wooden cross, and yet it's still so fluid. That's what I sought to imitate in the shoes I designed for the competition."

Caught by the breeze

Orlandi's Opera comprises three styles of women's shoes: one with a high-heel, one with a block-heel and one with a wedged heel. In each case, the upper is made from Tuscan vegetable-tanned leather (of course), laser-cut to produce a mesh or lace effect. In each of the three designs, an excess of leather sweeps behind or piles upwards from the footbed, "as though caught in a gust of wind", as the designer describes it, the way lace or gauze would be.

She explains that as soon as she heard from her tutors about the Craft the Leather

programme, she knew immediately that she wanted to take part. She explains: "I come from a craft background and am super-interested in traditional craft practices. Everyone knows Tuscan leather is the best in the world and to be immersed in that world, seeing everything from the arrival of the hides from the abattoir, to the tanneries, to the wastewater treatment plant, the landscape, the workshops and meeting all the people there, was absolutely exquisite. It was a dream come true."

The international panel of judges assessed each participant's work, basing the result on five criteria: innovation, aesthetics, craftsmanship, story-telling and the ability to show that the candidate's design was inspired by "qualities intrinsic to veg-tan leather". Kira Goodey didn't come top in every



category, but in this last one she stood out for the judges as the clear winner.

Work experience

Kira Goodey has lived, worked and studied in London for a number of years. Having worked previously in clothing, she moved into footwear simply because of her love of shoes. She spent time working with independent bespoke men's shoe craftspeople in London and the knowledge and skill-level she built up was enough to convince the Royal College of Art to take her on as a Master's student, working with senior tutor in footwear, accessories and millinery, Flora McLean. Approaching the end of the course, she now has her sights on a career that will allow her to introduce "a new system of footwear production" that she is already mapping out, inspired by the artisans she has worked for and by her Craft the Leather experience.

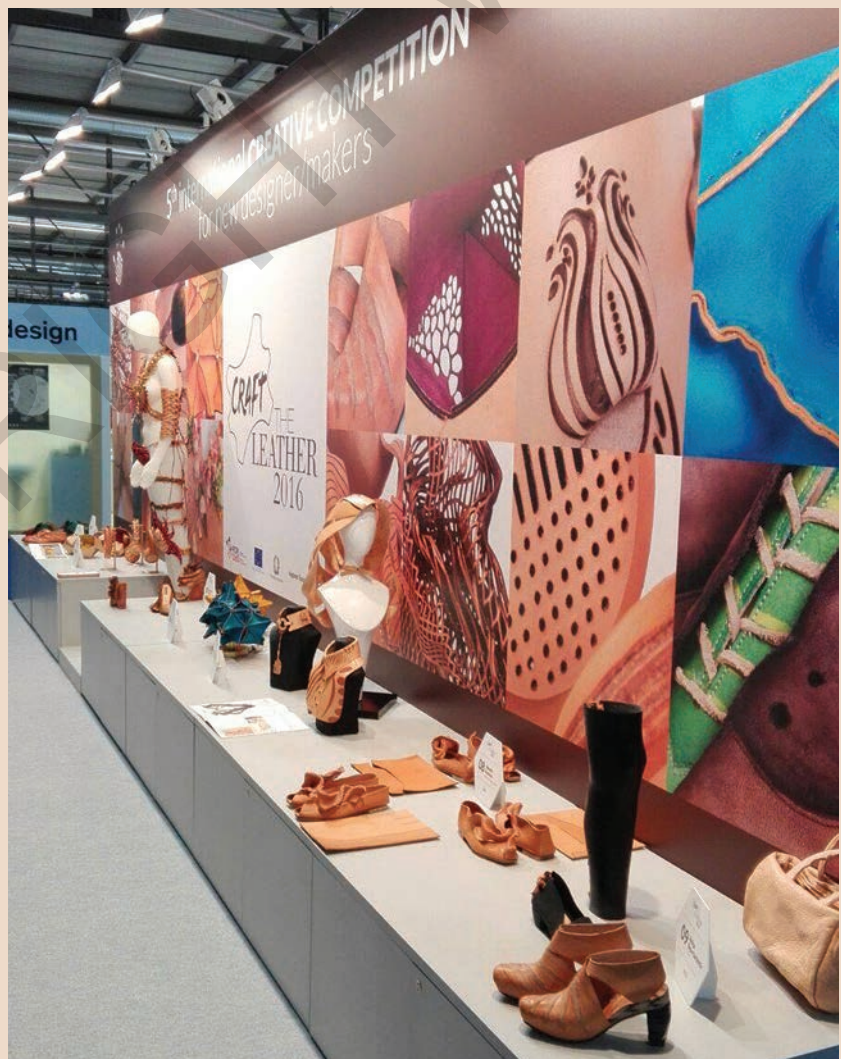
New system

The Australian designer doesn't really agree with the concept of ready-to-wear. "Coming from the bespoke end of things, I don't think ready-to-wear works for shoes anyway," she says. "Sizing doesn't work and there's far too much waste." She accepts that bespoke means expense, along with all the beauty and heritage she loves. Her idea is to take the best of this bespoke world and make it as available as possible. Expanding on her idea, she says: "The most beautiful thing about bespoke is that the customer develops a relationship with the product through being part of the process. This is important because a lot of people have entirely lost the connection to the products they consume and don't seem to care where the product came from, who made it or how they made it."

She believes that manufacturers of handmade shoes can attract more customers by giving people insight, understanding and knowledge. Kira Goodey has increased her own insight, understanding and knowledge of Tuscan vegetable-tanned leather as a result of taking part in and winning the Craft the Leather programme. Now she wants to share it. 🌐



All the Orlandi's Opera uppers are made from laser-cut vegetable-tanned Italian leather.



The entries from all nine participants in the most recent Craft the Leather competition went on display at Lineapelle in Milan in February. Exhibition visitors had the chance to vote for their favourite entry.