

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

Tod's commissions artist for unique artcycling initiative

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Tod's Mosaic pattern on a collection of handbags. Image courtesy of Tod's

By NORA HOWE

Italian fashion house Tod's has tapped American contemporary artist Willie Cole, who is known for his three-dimensional pieces made of existing materials, to create unique sculptures using the brand's recycled leather.

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The artwork celebrates Tod's Mosaic initiative, which aims to shed light on the innovation, creativity and craft linked to recovered, unused materials with a patchwork technique seen on a series of handbags. Through a series of static and dynamic imagery, Tod's has introduced its audience to the world of "artcycling."

"We have been really impressed by the philosophy behind all the works done by Willie during his career," said Carlo Alberto Beretta, brand manager at **Tod's**, Milan.

"To transform waste material into objects with a new shapes and stories is the same approach that guided our Mosaic collection project," he said. "Attention to environment, reduction of leftover materials and creation using the existing."

Art of recycling

The Mosaic initiative was inspired by the Italian women in leather and shoe factories who handmade grocery bags using overstock or unused material.

With the sustainable project, Tod's hopes to take the creative aspects of this custom by repurposing materials that would have otherwise gone to waste and transforms them into new sustainable items.

In line with this mission, Mr. Cole collaborated with Tod's artisans by using leathers, semi-finished products and recovered pieces from different productions as raw materials for artistic innovation.

Contemporary artist Willie Cole is driven to use art as an agent of environmental change

With this, both manual work and craftsmanship are celebrated.

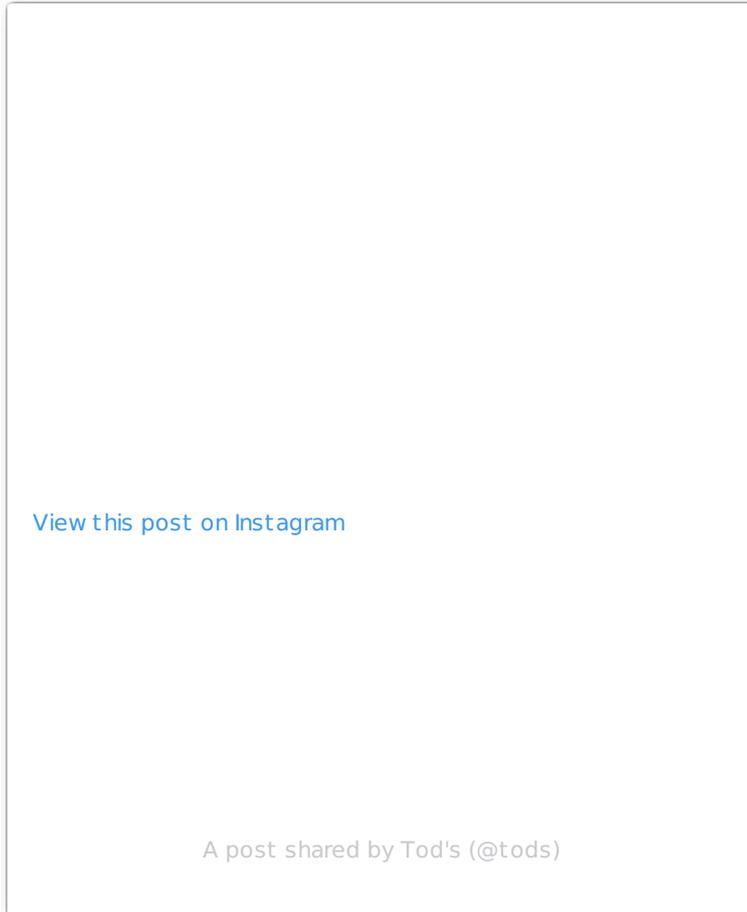
"I've worked with found materials almost exclusively for decades, so upcycling is nothing new to my work," Mr. Cole says in the film. "There is an ethos to making something that lasts beyond a lifetime."

In the short film, Mr. Cole is shown working in a studio at Tod's Academy, where he sorts materials into groups. From there, the audience watches as the artist executes his creative and sustainable vision.

"I think about minimizing the amount of waste and excess in the world, and through my art I try to communicate that as an educational tool to anyone who sees my work," Mr. Cole says.

The sculptures created for Tod's will be unveiled in Milan during a presentation event for the Mosaic bag collection, and then will be exhibited in Paris, London, New York and Miami.

The Mosaic collection consists of a limited number of shopping totes and pouches, and a selection of home accessories, all made using the same upcycling process.



"We strongly believe that art and creativity could add a new point of view to sustainability," Mr. Alberto Beretta said. "Combine the beauty and the craftsmanship to such a positive and ethical value as sustainability, could be the mission of fashion brands."

Secondhand wave

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, luxury shoppers are continuously seeking certain elements from brand offerings, with sustainability, value alignment and circularity at the top of the list.

Although the pandemic adversely affected all areas across the luxury sector, many consumers are continuing their frequent ecommerce practices and are excited to return to stores. Global analytics company Analytic Partners highlighted how the continued rise of the secondhand market and sustainability are crucial to luxury's recovery in a recent report.

Forty-four percent of respondents said they would rather repair broken items than replace them, while 32 percent said they buy sustainably produced items ([see story](#)).

Earlier this year, U.S. department store chain Nordstrom collaborated with secondhand clothing platform Goodfair to launch a monthly vintage clothing shop.

The first installment of the monthly shop went live on Jan. 28, selling out within hours. The collaboration is the latest way Nordstrom and other retailers are finding innovative ways to implement and maintain sustainability ([see story](#)).

"The younger generation of consumers across the world are more sensible to environmental problems and social responsibility values," said Mr. Alberto Beretta. "These have been pillars of Tod's since the beginning and guided

our evolution in the last few years.

"Giving back to the society part of the value that we created is our mantra. And more must come especially talking about sustainable fashion."

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