

# NEWS & FEATURES

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"Slowly, we are doing what has been assigned to us - to create fashion in the most simple and innovative way possible." (Marco Penazzi)

## From Ashes to Beauty: Progetto Quid Changes Lives and Fashion in Verona

ELISABETTA SANTI

A clothes peg may appear to be a very ordinary, domestic item but for Progetto Quid it symbolizes much more. It is their company logo, and the two sides of the peg represent the two sides of their work – the social value and the ethical value that is added to every single item of clothing and accessory they produce.

Progetto Quid is a social enterprise, founded in 2012 by 27-year-old Anna Fiscale and four of her friends in Verona. This co-op responds to issues of social disenfranchisement, waste and unemployment by employing and empowering disadvantaged women to create limited edition items of clothing

is going from strength to strength. They now employ 19 staff, who all come from difficult backgrounds of abuse or violence and have three workshops: one in central Verona, one in Verona prison and one outside of Verona. The workshop in Verona prison is where every single label is handwritten.

Their handwritten labels juxtapose the reality of what fashion has become – with Progetto Quid, the buyer knows where their item of clothing began, its journey and how it has helped someone. The great chasm between buyer and maker is lifted. It's this project's personal and careful approach, which distinguishes the business as different from others.

Marco Penazzi, Research &

services, charities and associations. Unlike other fashion businesses, the tailors did not all attend top fashion schools and are integrated into the association with varying abilities: some have very basic sewing skills some more advanced, some, none at all. However the Phoenix cycle continues, as now, the newly employed are trained by the women who were first employed two years ago.

Penazzi, whose job it is to source excess fabrics and establish partnerships for co-branding, said that their mission is to make "cose semplici fatte bene" whilst providing education and training to people to whom society does not usually entrust and marginalizes. Penazzi explained how few businesses are willing to entrust, or invest in socially disadvantaged people. However they have found that companies want to partner with them, simply because, "è bene fare il bene" – it is good to do good. Progetto Quid now co-brands with the big Italian brands, Intimissimi and Calzedonia, and they are beginning to spread in stores across Europe.

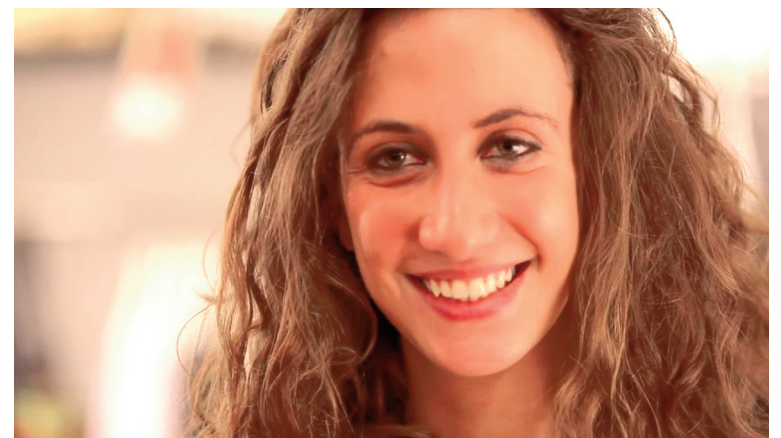
"Every partnership is unique and different – according to what we receive and what we need to make" Penazzi commented. This is certainly evident in their co-branding portfolio: they use scraps of denim accumulated from Den Store's alteration services to make limited edition bracelets for the company, they partner with Altro Mercato, an Italian ethical brand and use their donated sari's to create one-off collections and they partner with the Massimo Osti Archive to create limited edition backpacks and bags, from Osti's metres and metres of fabric that he famously experimented with. They are already in the process of pro-

ducing and designing a collection with a luxury fashion brand for the upcoming season, and

project," Penazzi said. "It's a Phoenix project because the beauty comes from ashes. The beauty comes from the ashes, from people's stories, people who stopped believing in themselves and also from the ashes of materials which would have been thrown out, but end up acquiring new life."

It is encouraging that times are changing in the fashion industry. The consumer is no longer content or at ease spending tuppence on a cotton t-shirt, made in India, and not knowing where or how or under what conditions the garment was made. The customer has become more concerned, more ethically conscious and so ethical fashion brands that are addressing social and ecological issues such as fair-trade fashion or waste-free fashion, are making great inroads. Progetto Quid, just like Los Angeles' Reformation store on Melrose Avenue which has the slogan "Change The World Without Changing Your Style" is addressing social, ethical and environmental issues with great impact, whilst not compromising on style.

Progetto Quid and Reformation both successfully testify the Made in Italy and Made in LA are back. All that



Anna Fiscale

have high hopes to become regular and consistent partners with the world's biggest designers.

"Our project is a Phoenix

remains for us, the consumers, is to make the right choices, and make each dollar count.

Progetto Quid's official website: [www.progettoquid.it](http://www.progettoquid.it)



An inside view from one of the workshops

and accessories. The organization was founded on the basis of using businesses leftover fabrics, and transforming them into one-off, limited edition items, hence their tag line for the EU Social Innovation Competition, 'from waste to wow!' They moved fast; by 2013 they opened their first store in Verona and in 2014 they won first place for the European Union's Social Innovation Competition.

A year on from their prize-winning victory, Progetto Quid

Development Coordinator said, "Progetto Quid is growing slowly. It's a delicate flower that needs to be protected and does not reason or grow the same way other standard businesses do [...] We respond nel piccolo because we are a small business; this follows the same model of Italy itself is – the simplicity, the smallness, the simple things that are made well."

The women employed as tailors are usually referred to the co-op through friends, social



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