

BUSINESS

Renzo Rosso's Red Circle Adds Investment in App, Web Site

- Rosso invests in Ubooker Worldwide Ltd., an app and web site allowing clients to choose models and help models gain exposure.

BY LUISA ZARGANI

MILAN — Renzo Rosso is no stranger to runways, photo shoots and the modeling world — and keeps an eye on innovative technologies.

The founder of OTB, which includes brands from Marni to Maison Margiela, is taking his experience a step farther by investing in Ubooker Worldwide Ltd. through his family investment company Red Circle Investments. Financial details were not disclosed.

Ubooker is an app and a web site launched in February 2017 by models Diana Gaertner and Claudia Wagner that allows clients to choose professional models and where models can gain exposure, control their rates and schedules directly, and be selected for available jobs anywhere in the world.

"I like the idea of bringing to our industry a bit of that game-changing mentality that



Renzo Rosso with Diana Gaertner and Claudia Wagner.

technology generated, for instance, in hospitality with Airbnb, or transportation with Uber," said Rosso, who is president of Red Circle Investments. "I am particularly happy to help two women in tech empower new generations of models in a more transparent and sustainable way."

Rosso's investment comes at a time when the safety and well-being of models

is increasingly under scrutiny, in the wake of the #MeToo movement. But the idea behind Ubooker dates back years, when Gaertner and Wagner saw an acceleration of the industry, with the increase in direct bookings and e-commerce projects.

"After working as professional models for 20 years, we knew it was time for our industry to tap into the sharing

economy," Gaertner said.

"We believe models and clients deserve more choice and control, that models can succeed when they understand the market better, and when they can play a more active, balanced role in building their careers," Wagner said.

They described Rosso, who will sit on the board of the company, as "a true innovator."

Fashion entrepreneur Nicola Scagnolari, and product development expert Andrea Losso also joined as investors and cofounders "to ensure the creation of a platform built with the best technology to address the industry needs of digitalization, efficiency and cost saving. Ubooker allows clients to find and book models on a single platform worldwide, faster and with low commissions. It grants models equal job opportunities worldwide, the guarantee of certified clients, quick communication between the parties, faster payments, and overall more control over their work," the company said.

Red Circle's investments span from a 5.7 percent stake in the Yoox Net-a-porter Group to digital start-up incubator H-Farm and Depop, the peer-to-peer social shopping app. It has also invested in organic food by entering in 2013 the capital of Ecor NaturaSi, Italy's biggest producer and distributor of biodynamic, natural products.

Red Circle has also acquired a minority stake in Tomorrow London Holding and its founder and ceo Stefano Martinetto has invested in Ubooker as well and will sit on its board.