

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

## Safilo puts lens on education with Parsons initiative

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*Safilo's Alessandro Mercer with Parsons student Olivia LeBlanc*

By STAFF REPORTS

Eyewear maker Safilo Group is encouraging the next generation of designers through a thesis competition in partnership with The New School's Parsons School of Design.

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The first edition of the Safilo x Parsons Design Thesis Competition will give six senior BFA students from the New York school the chance to design eyewear as part of their thesis collection, with Safilo's atelier bringing their creations to life. An extension of Safilo's 2020 corporate plan, this initiative reflects the company's focus on craftsmanship and design.

### Course in craftsmanship

The six participating students were chosen based on applications submitted by senior thesis-level BFA candidates. Alessandro Mercer, vice president, creative director of Safilo USA, who leads the company's New York design studio, and Safilo's chief design product officer Vladimiro Baldin headed the screening process.

Throughout the process, Mr. Mercer will mentor the students. Safilo designers and faculty from Parsons will also provide oversight as the prototype is turned to reality.

Students will work on Safilo CAD engineering through early December to ensure that their eyewear is not only fashionable but also functional. The eyewear prototype will then be finalized at Safilo's atelier and delivered in March, ahead of the students' thesis submissions.



*Alessandro Marcer with Parsons students*

Safilo, along with a panel of fashion experts, will select one of the participating students to win a cash prize of \$5,000. An added benefit for the recipient, their design will be displayed during Parson's benefit in May.

The eyewear manufacturer has shown its support for education within its own organization, having launched the Safilo Product School in 2015. This program trains apprentices in the art of eyewear.

Safilo also scouted out new design talent through a mentorship program in partnership with Vogue Italia and L'Uomo Vogue.

"A Forward Vision for Eyewear Heritage" claimed to be the first tutoring project of its kind dedicated to the tradition and craftsmanship of eyewear. The three winners were given the chance to experience the inner workings of Safilo, which produces the eyewear for licensees including Dior, Jimmy Choo and Givenchy ([see story](#)).

Safilo's 2020 Strategic Plan, announced in 2015, seeks to create an environment that fosters 6 percent sales growth year on year, building on the company's existing growth.

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