

EDUCATION

Burberry gifts \$3.8M to Royal College of Art to spur materials science innovation

June 22, 2017



Burberry February 2017 collection. Image credit: Burberry

By STAFF REPORTS

British fashion house Burberry has established a materials research group as part of its new five-year responsibility agenda.

Subscribe to **Luxury Daily**
Plus: Just released
State of Luxury 2019 **Save \$246 ▶**

The Burberry Material Futures Research Group came to be thanks to a 3 million pound, or \$3.8 million at current exchange rates, grant from The Burberry Foundation to London's Royal College of Art. Burberry's grant will also work to expand the Burberry Design Scholarship Fund.

Where material science meets technological innovation

Through its Royal College of Art grant, the Burberry Material Futures Research Group will be the first science, technology, engineering, art and mathematics (STEAM) research center at an art and design university.

At the STEAM research center, students will apply radical thinking to invent sustainable materials, transform consumer experience and advance manufacturing. Burberry's goal is to use innovative thinking to benefit the luxury industry and community at large.

Through the Burberry Design Scholarship at the Royal College of Art, students from the United Kingdom and European Union will be able to reach their potential regardless of personal finances. The grant has been expanded by 750,000 pounds, or \$950,000.

In addition to spurring innovative thought, the Burberry Foundation is dedicated to tackling educational inequality and supporting social and economic development.



The Burberry Foundation's research group and scholarship grant is dedicated to materials innovation. Image courtesy of Burberry

The Burberry grant program is part of the brand's new responsibility agenda, which will enhance its approach to responsibility issues.

In the next five years, Burberry aims to support 1 million people in the communities that sustain its business and luxury in general.

Burberry will work to ensure that 100 percent of its products have at least one element that drives positive change.

To do so, Burberry will strive to invent new ways to revalue waste generated during manufacturing. Doing this will help Burberry become carbon neutral in its operations.

"I am thrilled that the Burberry Foundation can support the establishment of the Burberry Material Futures Research Group at the Royal College of Art," said Christopher Bailey, chief creative and CEO of Burberry and trustee of the Burberry Foundation, in a statement.

"The group will cover a broad scope of work, from researching and developing more innovative sustainable materials to designing new manufacturing methods, as well as nurturing and supporting even more British-trained design talent," he said.

"This new partnership also reflects Burberry's heritage. The company's founder, Thomas Burberry, was himself a material innovator. He invented the breathable, water resistant and hardwearing gabardine fabric in 1879 that is still the cornerstone of our brand today."



Burberry February 2017 collection featured in British Vogue The 100; photo by Philip Sinden

The Burberry Material Futures Research Group will deliver upon the Royal College of Art's academic vision of a research program that melds materials science and technology as it outlined in its 2016-2021 strategic plan.

At launch, the Burberry Material Futures Research Group will operate as a virtual center until moving into its new home at the Battersea building, designed by Herzog & de Meuron on the Royal College of Arts' campus in 2020.

"It is an honor to be partnering with the Burberry Foundation in the field of materials and advanced manufacturing," said Dr. Paul Thompson, rector of the Royal College of Art, in a statement. "The establishment of the Burberry Material Futures Research Group is an exciting step in incorporating the future of materials science into our research

and teaching.

"From its founding days, Burberry has pioneered high-performance materials, becoming one of Britain's most successful and dynamic global companies," he said. "Over the last six years the Burberry Design Scholarships have been invaluable in supporting students, and the expansion of these scholarships will ensure the Royal College of Art can continue to generate outstanding creative talent in the U.K."

Burberry is not alone in its sustainability and education commitments. LVMH, for example, launched a program at London's Central Saint Martins ([see story](#)) and Kering Group works with Parsons School of Design in New York ([see story](#)), to field innovative manufacturing methods with next-generation talent.

© 2020 Napean LLC. All rights reserved.

Luxury Daily is published each business day. Thank you for reading us. Your [feedback](#) is welcome.