

JEWELRY

Natural Diamond Council debuts emerging designer collections for sale

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Constance Polamalu of Birthright Foundry is a participant. Image courtesy of NDC

By KATIE TAMOLA

The Natural Diamond Council, in collaboration with jewelry designer Lorraine Schwartz, has launched the first collections from the inaugural class of the Emerging Designers Diamond Initiative (EDDI) at online retailer Moda Operandi.

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The EDDI program, which launched in January 2021 with \$1 million of diamond credit, supports up-and-coming BIPOC jewelry designers to promote a more equitable future for the diamond industry. On Oct. 15, the first round of participating designers debuted their collections on Moda Operandi, giving them exposure to the retailer's consumer base of affluent shoppers.

"The Natural Diamond Council's mission is to support the integrity of the modern diamond industry while inspiring and educating the consumer on all-things-natural-diamonds," said Kristina Buckley Kayel, managing director of **NDC**, New York.

"EDDI represents growth and modernization for the industry by setting out to level the playing field and dissolving barriers to entry for BIPOC jewelry designers."

Future surrounding diamonds

The first grantees of the EDDI program are Jameel Mohammed of **KHIRY**, **Dorian Webb**, Constance Polamalu of **Birthright Foundry**, Marvin Linares of **Marvin Douglas Jewelry**, Malyia McNaughton of **Made by Malyia** and Lisette Scott of **Jam + Rico**.

With the guidance of Ms. Schwartz, NDC experts and premium retailers, the six designers crafted their own diamond jewelry collections. Every participant personally selected diamonds of varying cuts, colors and shapes that spoke to their individual styles and aesthetics.



Malyia McNaughton of Made by Malyia. Image courtesy of NDC

Each designer was also paired with a diamond manufacturer to establish a line of credit.

The NDC analyzed how the program was unfolding while considering how to expand it, ultimately adding a grant to support design expenses and elements of the production process.

"The EDDI initiative has provided new opportunities and valuable resources to help open the door for BIPOC designers within fine jewelry which can take years to gain access to," Ms. Schwartz said in a statement.

"Their hard work and passion, paired with EDDI's mentorship, is helping to prepare and position these talented designers to be at the forefront of today's jewelry market."

Moda Operandi, which has exclusivity for this project, launched the digital EDDI trunk show on Oct. 15.

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A post shared by Only Natural Diamonds (@onlynaturaldiamo...

The collections are now available

Building off of the excitement of the inaugural class, the NDC and Ms. Schwartz also announced the next group of grantees: Casey Perez, Corey Anthony Jones, Halle Millien, Lana Ogilvie, Mckenzie Liataud and Ruben Manuel.

EDDI is continuing to accept applications on a rolling basis until the \$1 million credit runs out. Eligible jewelry designers can apply at [naturaldiamonds.com/eddi](https://www.naturaldiamonds.com/eddi).

A more inclusive industry

Several brands and figures within the luxury jewelry sphere are demonstrating commitment in making the industry more inclusive and equitable.

The COVID-19 pandemic, matched with the Black Lives Matter movement and various environmental crises, has led to a seismic shift in social behavior and consumption and a reexamination for the luxury sector.

During the closing fireside chat with *Luxury Daily* editor in chief Mickey Alam Khan at the Women in Luxury eConference on June 2, a top executive from De Beers Group shared insight on how the jewelry industry has evolved in the past year, ways consumer behavior has shifted and what corporate culture may look like in the future ([see story](#)).

Designers who do not currently work with diamonds are encouraged to apply to the EDDI. It can be an especially difficult industry to break into, as it is challenging to purchase diamonds for designs without established histories with suppliers or references ([see story](#)).

The NDC is hoping that the initiative fuels efforts to make the jewelry industry a more inclusive, expansive space.

"We designed a program with dynamism and growth potential, and it is a passion project that evolved through open conversations about how we could effectuate change within our industry," Ms. Buckley Kayel said.

"We wanted to ensure an open environment with the designers where they felt empowered to speak on the challenges experienced as emerging designers and what areas could actually help advance their business in a historically insular world."

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