

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

Prada announces inaugural design lab class

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The Dorchester Industries Experimental Design Lab was designed to provide opportunities for designers of color. Image credit: Prada Group

By LUXURY DAILY NEWS SERVICE

Italian fashion company Prada Group and artist Theaster Gates have announced the first cohort of designers as part of the Dorchester Industries Experimental Design Lab program.

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Launched in September 2021, the program aims to support and amplify the work of designers of color across the creative industries ([see story](#)). Fourteen international talents have been selected by a committee of design industry leaders, including Prada co-CEO and co-creative director Miuccia Prada, writer and director Ava DuVernay, late designer Virgil Abloh and architect Sir David Adjaye.

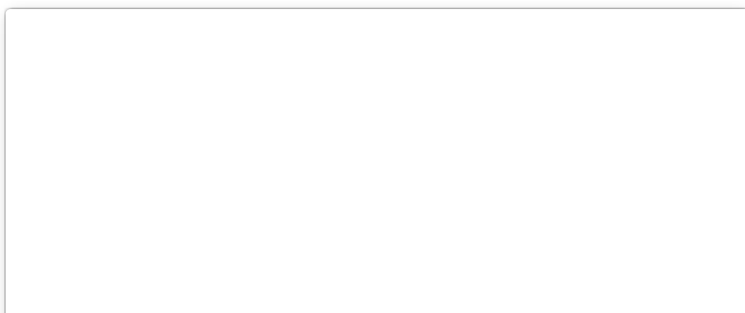
"Prada has always been synonymous with striving for the pursuit of ground-breaking design and creativity, championing innovation and developing extraordinary talent," said Lorenzo Bertelli, marketing director and head of corporate social responsibility at [Prada Group](#), in a statement.

"This initiative gives these singular creatives, masters in their individual fields, the tools to achieve their full potential and their work the platform it deserves."

Dorchester designers

Awards will be granted to participants, guaranteeing financial support as well as creative opportunities to foster relationships with leading global companies interested in collaborating with talents.

The awardees were selected through an extensive review process, having demonstrated creative potential in their respective practices.



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A post shared by Prada (@prada)

The program, which was unveiled in September 2021, will last three years

"For too long, there has been an evident pipeline and visibility barrier for designers of color working across the creative industries, and the Dorchester Industries Experimental Design Lab not only challenges the notion that Black talent is hard to identify but also serves as an inescapable answer to it," Mr. Gates said.

In early March, the awardees got to know one another in Chicago, sharing reflections on their work, discussing the current challenges within the design industries and exploring opportunities for collaboration.

This gathering marked the first of three retreats that will take place during the three-year program.

The inaugural cohort was presented during a public presentation with Mr. Gates, Prada board member Pamela Culpepper, activist Kimberly Drew, professor Sarah Lewis and Dr. Louise Bernard, founding director of the Obama Presidential Center's museum.

The group announced Ms. Culpepper and Anna Maria Rugarli as the newest additions to its board of directors, as it looked to prioritize corporate responsibility.

In accordance with Prada's diversity policy, the two women were chosen due to their respective backgrounds in environmental and social governance. These appointments bring the board to a total of 11 members, increasing the number of independent directors to five and contributing to greater gender equality with five women and six men ([see story](#)).

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