

PRESS RELEASE

ARTIST THEASTER GATES AND PRADA GROUP ANNOUNCE INAUGURAL COHORT OF DORCHESTER INDUSTRIES EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN LAB AWARDEES

Theaster Gates Studio, Dorchester Industries and Rebuild Foundation, with the support of Prada Group, deepens their commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion through significant endowments to diverse designers from Chicago and around the world working across the fields of art, design, and fashion.

Chicago and Milan, April 6th 2022 – Yesterday, along a dedicated event, world-renowned artist Theaster Gates and Prada Group announced the inaugural cohort of the **Dorchester Industries Experimental Design Lab**. The Design Lab, a partnership between Theaster Gates Studio, Dorchester Industries, Rebuild Foundation and Prada Group, is a three-year program curated to support and amplify the work of designers of color working across the creative industries. Fourteen designers and artists from around the world have been selected by a committee of design industry leaders to form the program's first-ever cohort.

Nominated by luminaries across the creative industries including Prada S.p.A. Co-CEO and Prada Co-Creative Director **Miuccia Prada**, writer and director **Ava DuVernay**, the late designer **Virgil Abloh**, architect **Sir David Adjaye**, and other dignitaries, the awardees were selected through an extensive review process, having demonstrated extraordinary creative potential in their respective practices. The designers and artists selected as part of the inaugural cohort are:

[Tolu Coker](#), Fashion Design (London, UK)
[Germane Barnes](#), Architecture (Miami, FL)
[Norman Teague](#), Product Design (Chicago, IL)
[Kyle Abraham](#), Dance (New York, NY)
[Mariam Issoufou Kamara](#), Architecture (Niamey, Niger)
[Kendall Reynolds](#), Footwear (Chicago, IL)
[Yemi Amu](#), Agriculture (New York, NY)
[Kenturah Davis](#), Visual Art (Los Angeles, CA)
[Salome Asega](#), Art, Technology & Design (New York, NY)
[Damarr Brown](#), Culinary Arts (Chicago, IL)
[Maya Bird-Murphy](#), Architecture (Chicago, IL)
[Brandon Breaux](#), Fine Art & Design (Chicago, IL)
[Summer Coleman](#), Graphic Design (Chicago, IL)
[Catherine Sarr](#), Fine Jewelry Design (Chicago, IL)

“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,” said Theaster Gates, artist and Chairman of Prada Group’s Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Council. *“I’m so proud of this cohort, and it is a tremendous honor to be able to celebrate, support, and amplify the work of these designers working to enrich our collective understanding of and interactions with*

design. I'm grateful for Prada's belief and investment in this program, and I'm thankful for the nominators and selection committee for helping us identify this impressive group."

In addition to receiving financial support to launch new, innovative projects or continue working on existing creative endeavors, the awardees will have unique opportunities to foster relationships with each other, global corporations, and design leaders. Anchored on Chicago's South Side with annual activations in New York City and Los Angeles, the first-of-its-kind program will provide a platform for artists of color to connect, convene, and collaborate while presenting their work to top organizations.

During a weekend in early March, the awardees gathered on Chicago's South Side to get to know one another, share reflections on their work, discuss the current challenges within the design industries, and explore opportunities for collaboration. This gathering marked the first of three retreats the awardees will participate in during their three years as part of the design lab.

Lorenzo Bertelli, Prada Group Marketing Director and Head of Corporate Social Responsibility said: *"Prada has always been synonymous with striving for the pursuit of ground-breaking design and creativity, championing innovation, and developing extraordinary talent. 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."*

Theaster Gates and Prada Group presented the inaugural cohort on April 5th, 2022, during a dedicated event at the presence of Theaster Gates, Pamela Culpepper, newly elected to the Prada S.p.A. Board of Directors and member of the Prada S.p.A. Sustainability Committee and design practitioners, at Rebuild Foundation's Stony Island Arts Bank on Chicago's South Side. For more information on the Dorchester Industries Experimental Design Lab, please visit dorchesterindustries.com and pradagroup.com.

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Dorchester Industries

Dorchester Industries is the design and manufacturing arm of Theaster Gates's Studio. Dorchester Industries has a dual mission: to create beautiful products with meaning, and to train employees to pursue careers in the building trades and creative industries. Dorchester Industries fellows harness the power of their craft to contribute to culture based, artist-led, neighborhood-driven community revitalization in traditionally underserved neighborhoods.

Theaster Gates

Theaster Gates (b.1973) lives and works in Chicago. Gates creates work that focuses on space theory and land development, sculpture and performance. In all aspects of his work, he contends with the notion of Black space as a formal exercise – one defined by collective desire, artistic agency, and the tactics of a pragmatist. Gates is a professor at the University of Chicago in the Department of Visual Arts and the Harris School of Public Policy and serves as the Senior Advisor for Cultural Innovation and Advisor to the Dean. He has recently exhibited and performed at TANK Shanghai, Shanghai, China (2021); Prada Rong Zhai, Shanghai, China (2021); Palais de Tokyo, Paris, France (2019); Sprengel Museum Hannover, Germany (2018); Kunstmuseum Basel, Switzerland (2018); National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C., USA (2017); Art Gallery of Ontario, Canada (2016); Fondazione Prada, Milan, Italy (2016) and Whitechapel Gallery, London, UK (2013). Gates has been the recipient of numerous awards and honors including the Arts Mundi 6 Prize (2017); the Légion d'Honneur (2017); the Nasher Prize for Sculpture (2018); the Urban Land Institute, J.C. Nichols Prize for Visionaries in Urban Development (2018); the World Economic Forum Crystal Award (2020); and an Honorary Fellowship from the Royal Institute of British Architects (2021). Gates was inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Letters in 2021.

About Rebuild Foundation

Rebuild Foundation is a platform for art, cultural development, and neighborhood transformation. Our projects support artists and strengthen communities by providing free arts programming and creating new cultural amenities. Rebuild's mission is to make art accessible by demonstrating the impact of innovative, ambitious, and entrepreneurial arts and cultural initiatives. The work is informed by three core values: black people matter, black spaces matter, and black things matter. Rebuild leverages the power and potential of communities, buildings, and objects that others have written off. Founded and led by artist Theaster Gates, Rebuild Foundation extends the social engagement of Gates' studio practice to the South Side of Chicago and beyond.

Prada Group

Pioneer of a dialogue with contemporary society across diverse cultural spheres and an influential leader in luxury fashion, Prada Group founded its identity on essential values such creative independence, transformation and sustainable development, offering its brands a shared vision to interpret and express their spirit. The Group owns some of the world's most prestigious luxury brands, Prada, Miu Miu, Church's, Car Shoe and the historic Pasticceria Marchesi.

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