

## About Town

People, Places,  
Preoccupations

# The L.A.-Based Gucci Exec Boosting Fashion's Next Gen

How Antoine Phillips is working to lift up 'creatives of color' through the luxury label's scholarship program and an impact fund supporting nonprofits in 12 cities across the U.S. By Vincent Boucher

**B**eing a male of color from Los Angeles, I can tell you it's really about empowering the next generation of creatives of color in different cities [and] to amplify opportunities," says Gucci's **Antoine Phillips** of the initiative Gucci Changemakers North America, which he jump-started in 2019 after joining the luxury label as its L.A.-based vp of brand and culture engagement. Its focus is on increasing inclusion and diversity in the fashion industry, particularly in 12 major U.S. cities, including L.A. The two-pronged program includes a \$5 million impact fund — to support nonprofits that benefit communities of color — and a need-based scholarship program for undergraduates from diverse backgrounds who are planning on fashion-related careers.

Though diversity efforts had been ongoing at Gucci, the brand went through its own period of reckoning two years ago when it faced controversy over a sweater that some thought portrayed blackface. It was pulled off the market with an apology and a promise to do better.

Phillips joined Gucci after holding PR positions at YSL, Armani and Coach, where he played a part in taking their fashion shows to HBCUs. He also worked on creating a Changemakers Council to help guide the effort; it includes fashion veterans like **Naomi Campbell** and stylist **June Ambrose** as well as activists such as **DeRay Mckesson**.

On July 8, Gucci announced 22 new Changemakers scholars who will each receive a scholarship of up to \$20,000. "We landed on \$20,000 because we saw in

the research that most students of color are not finishing school because of those last dollars, \$15,000 to \$20,000," Phillips, who got his start as a salesman at Giorgio Armani on Rodeo Drive, explains. Another program goal is to bring "visibility on some of the roles outside of the design room," says Phillips. "A lot of students think if you want to work in fashion, you can only be a stylist or designer, but you can do store design, you can be a fashion lawyer, you can do marketing."

On the other side of the coin, the impact fund supports nonprofits such as We Are R.I.S.E., a social-emotional workshop program started in 2017 in South Los Angeles by elementary school teacher **Ebone Smith**. Grant money will allow the program to continue and provide for field trips to places like the California African American Museum. "I had never been able to take them outside their communities because I just did not have the funding," says Smith.

Other nonprofit groups that are benefiting include Atlanta's Weir Enough Productions, which uses diverse comic book heroes to foster greater youth self-esteem, and SocialWorks, the Chicago-based initiative founded by **Chance the Rapper**.

Changemakers also is a backer of the film Academy's Gold Rising internship program, which is focused on helping students of color, young women, those who identify as LGBTQIA+ and people with disabilities to succeed as the next generation of storytellers.

"Oftentimes people look at the Academy and don't understand that we have an entire foundational arm and that we depend on grants because so many of our members are below-the-line members and not the big stars," says AMPAS COO **Christine Simmons**. "The grants that we're able to receive just extend that work further." **THR**

## 3 New Boutiques Show L.A.'s Retail Upswing

**L**ast year, amid the downturn, L.A. seemed awash in "for rent" signs. Now, says broker **Jay Lucho** of Newmark, "there are a lot of deals in the works, and fashion brands are coming back to the market. The last month has been crazy and we're seeing multiple offers on prime blocks." Here are three fresh spots to shop.



### Colette Jewelry

Jewelry designer **Colette Steckel** has moved her flagship store from Melrose Place to Santa Monica, where offerings include French chocolates and curated home and fashion items; 250 26th St., [colettejewelry.com](http://colettejewelry.com)



### Farm Rio

The Brazilian brand has opened a pop-up (through November) in Venice that showcases its resort-style prints. With every purchase, Farm Rio will plant a tree in the Amazon through a partnership with One Tree Planted; 1360 Abbot Kinney Blvd., [farmrio.com](http://farmrio.com)



### Stan

In his first entry at retail, designer **Tristan Detwiler** of sustainable label Stan has opened a pop-up (through Aug. 31) at Culver City's Platform that includes his pieces made from repurposed antique quilts; 8850 Washington Blvd., [stanlosangeles.com](http://stanlosangeles.com)



Top: Gucci's Antoine Phillips. Far left: In 2020, Satchel Lee directed a short about Changemakers. Left: Oscar-winning costume designer Ruth Carter (left) on a Zoom with AMPAS Gold Rising intern Lashell Gibbs, who's now on the costume team for *Black Panther: Wakanda Forever*, out in July 2022.

PHILLIPS, CHANGEMAKERS: COURTESY OF GUCCI; MASTERCLASS: COURTESY OF AMPAS; COLETTE, FARM, STAN: COURTESY OF BRAND