

MillerKnoll and Ok Mentor Partner to Launch Programme Aimed at Increasing Sector Diversity in Europe

MillerKnoll is partnering with women-led charity Ok Mentor to develop **#DesignYourFuture**, a unique programme aimed at reaching out to and fostering young talent from varied backgrounds in Europe. The programme will help students understand the design sector and the opportunities it offers and provide them with the resources they need to succeed. It will last from November 2022 through early 2023.

The **#DesignYourFuture** programme includes several initiatives: a school programme, a 1:1 mentoring programme, as well as apprenticeship and hands-on work experiences.

Together, Ok Mentor and MillerKnoll will partner with Harris City Academy Crystal Palace (HCACP) on the school programme, a secondary school in Croydon, South London, that is setting standards in providing high-quality education and training for students of all abilities and backgrounds.

“At MillerKnoll, our collective of brands is pushing design forward to build a brighter future. Throughout our 100 years of history, embracing diverse perspectives has shaped us into the innovative company we are today. More voices and more perspectives lead to greater outcomes for everyone,” said Andi Owen, CEO of MillerKnoll. “We’re looking forward to partnering with Ok Mentor and Harris City Academy Crystal Palace to inspire the next generation of designers to **#DesignYourFuture**.”

Through its research, launch, and management of the [Diversity in Design \(DID\) Collaborative](#) in the US in 2021, MillerKnoll believes that it is possible—and necessary—to create a diverse and equitable work environment with greater opportunities for the Black community and other underrepresented groups. With over 50 companies part of the Collaborative, DID has come together to foster systemic change by increasing diversity and improving conditions for Black creatives across the design industry.

“At HCACP we believe all can achieve and we couldn’t be happier to be joining up with MillerKnoll and Ok Mentor to ensure this continues to be a reality for all our students,” said David Marillat, Vice Principal at Harris City Academy Crystal Palace. “With this innovative industry-leading partnership, we will be able to offer students an opportunity that they wouldn’t necessarily get and subsequently inspire a new generation of young people to take up a career in design.”

Diversity, equity, and inclusion are crucial to the vitality of the design sector. To spark creative new ideas and continue to grow as an industry, it is important to draw on and develop the broadest possible talent pool.

Concurrently, only 14% of employees in the UK’s design sector are from Black, Asian, and underrepresented ethnic backgrounds, according to a recent (2022) survey by the Design Council.

School Programme

The **#DesignYourFuture** school programme aims to increase interest in design and reduce the knowledge gap around prospective careers amongst students from underrepresented communities.

The programme will consist of a series of six monthly workshops to provide inspiration and advice to students, shining a light on career options within the sector. The series will feature presentations and talks, a career session, a day in the Herman Miller showroom in London, and a final lab for students to play with their creative potential.

Guest speakers will include designers such as Ini Archibong and experts from the design sector as well as mentors from MillerKnoll and Ok Mentor’s network.

The programme will start at the end of November with 20 students.

Mentoring Programme

Alongside these events, Ok Mentor will develop and implement a 1:1 mentorship programme aimed at empowering students to thrive while enabling mentors to share experiences and inspire others.

The workshop *"How to be a great mentor"*, delivered to associates from MillerKnoll by Ok Mentor, will help mentors feel confident, share experiences, and inspire others to thrive.

Students will be provided with guidelines and best practices to make sure they can benefit as much as possible from the mentorship experience.

"This project embodies everything that Ok Mentor is about: commitment, mentoring, diversity, and creativity. We are extremely proud to be standing alongside industry leaders in acknowledging the global deficit in diversity within the design sector and to play an active role in the change," said Laura Colapietro, Head of Partnerships at Ok Mentor. Our aim is to set a precedent, encouraging other companies to take real steps to increase diversity and inclusion in other sectors."

A final survey will be conducted to measure the overall impact of the programme.

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About MillerKnoll

MillerKnoll is a collective of dynamic brands that comes together to design the world we live in. MillerKnoll brand portfolio includes Herman Miller, Knoll, Colebrook Bosson Saunders, DatesWeiser, Design Within Reach, Edelman Leather, Fully, Geiger, HAY, Holly Hunt, KnollTextiles, Maars Living Walls, Maharam, Muuto, NaughtOne, and Spinneybeck|FilzFelt. MillerKnoll is an unparalleled platform that redefines modern for the 21st century by building a more sustainable, equitable and beautiful future for all.

MillerKnoll will bring in sector knowledge through the company's heritage and leadership as well as associates' experience as they provide mentoring and placement opportunities.

www.millerknoll.com

About Ok Mentor

Ok Mentor is a social enterprise providing crash 1:1 mentoring for any woman, anywhere, to help young talent break into the creative industries. Their aim is to help women succeed faster by reducing the gender gap and increasing diversity and inclusion within the sector. The company also offers initiatives including talks, workshops and bespoke mentoring programmes. Partners include Bonhams, BBC, Adobe, Innocent drinks, Headspace, Audible and Oxford University.

Ok Mentor is responsible for the concept, development, management and evaluation of the initiative, building on its expertise in bespoke mentoring and training events and programmes.

www.okmentor.me

<https://news.millerknoll.com/2022-12-19-MillerKnoll-and-Ok-Mentor-Partner-to-Launch-Programme-Aimed-at-Increasing-Sector-Diversity-in-Europe>