2023 Changemaker Award

IIDA Rocky Mountain Chapter
How do we integrate EDI into Rocky Mountain Chapter? What does it mean for our chapter?

In October of 2022, we held our largest premier event, Prêt-à-Porter (where ‘finish meets fashion’), with a focus on EDI. The theme for the 2022 Collection was “Common Stitches: weaving culture, diversity and design together in a modern fashion show.” This was intended as a framework to encourage teams to draw inspiration and build a story around their garment with a fashion forward approach, in both design and use of materials.
Our goal was to push ourselves to expand the boundaries of this event by thinking about what EDI means for the Rocky Mountain Chapter. The selected judges were creatives from the local BIPOC community, but also known nationally and internationally. The event committee chose to work with local minority and BIPOC owned businesses, allocating over 21% of the total event costs to these businesses. In total, 11 BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ were supported and 6 of those businesses were women-owned. A portion of the evening’s proceeds were also provided to IIDA RMC's long-time charity partner, Colorado CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates), who provide support for children and families of all backgrounds.

Being designers and architects we find inspiration from various places. This year we want to encourage you to draw inspiration from the LGBTQIA+ BIPOC and BIPOC community of Artists, Musicians, and Culinary Artists whose voices may not be heard as much as others. Each team will be randomly paired from pre-determined artists from one of the aforementioned categories. Each design team will then need to create a ready to wear garment inspired by their artists’ cultural heritage, work, lyrics, fashion, cuisine, activism, etc.
This year we wanted to do something completely different than what we have done in the past. There was a clear direction, but there were no previous examples to follow.

We partnered with Equity in the Built Environment: a Colorado Coalition (EBECC) to help with the execution of an EDI focused theme. This select team of design community members reviewed submissions to make sure every team was held accountable and was not appropriating their inspiration. They were also a resource to anyone who needed more information on equity, diversity and inclusion.

We wanted to execute an inclusive accessible event that represented everyone in our community. Here’s how we did it:

- ASL interpreters
- Inclusive seating for the deaf community
- Accessible seating
- Reserved seating for expecting mothers
- Seating for those who can’t stand for long periods of time
- Designated gender neutral restroom
- Mother’s room

Planning & Goals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Committee Members</th>
<th>Volunteers</th>
<th>Student Volunteers</th>
<th>Months of Planning</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
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Vendor Partners:

- Olive & Finch
- Cleo Parker Dance
- TL Professional Services
- DCPA
- Denver Print Company
- John Miller Photography
- Red Rocks Media Group
- Julianna Photography
- Black + Blossom
- Walia Creamery
- Country Club Liquors
- Grand Salon
- dj stat

11 BIPOC & LGBTQIA+ businesses supported
6 Women-owned businesses supported
Meet the Inspiration:
Alicia Cardenas | Tattoo Artist
Brittany Howard | Musician
Bun Lai | Culinary Artist
Dana Rodriguez | Culinary Artist
Frank Martinez | Acrylic Artist
Janelle Monáe | Musician
Yuna | Musician
Using various means of communication was crucial to spreading the message behind Common Stitches. From local media outlets, such as 303 magazine and Colorado National Public Radio, to all social media platforms. IIDA (national) supported us by including it on their website and we personally contacted each IIDA Chapter to extend an invitation to the virtual livestream. The planning committee also spread the word through their own networks; the end result was a diverse attendance and participation that represented the entire spectrum of the Western Region design community.
In the weeks leading up to the event, this is what our Instagram grid looked like. 12 out of 15 posts were centered around Prêt to help drive interest around the Common Stitches theme, with focus on the artists, the judges and the vendors.

When we released the winners upon receiving the final photography, Instagram Reels were released with trending audio in order to align with the algorithm and get visibility to our event outside of our followers.

This was carefully planned, starting with Most Wearable and ending in Best in Show.

Our chapter utilized highlights for Prêt 2022 to get members to be more interactive and see easily see the winners Reels. A few examples are above… note the likes and engagement!
The Making of: Prêt Documentary

Perhaps one of the most fun (and craziest!) undertaking for marketing materials was the choice by Rocky Mountain Chapter to create a professional documentary to highlight the process of not only the day of Prêt-à-Porter, but all of the months leading up to it.

5 high level chapter sponsors, 2 vendors, 2 judges and the 2 Pret Co-Chairs were interviewed about their involvement and what this event meant to them. Not only did the videographers set up the interviews along with the RMC Communications team, they also filmed the model coaching and behind-the-scenes on the day of the show. The result is a heartfelt masterpiece that showcases the work and the love for community from all who participated in this event.

We would like to thank our visionaries Mei-Ling Krabbe and Brent Otsuka for envisioning and directing the 2022 Prêt-à-Porter Show. They could not have done this without the support of the executive IIDA RMC Board, 2022 Common Stitches IIDA Committee and volunteers.

Click to watch the full documentary on YouTube. We promise it’s worth it.
By using Eventbrite and Google forms our attendees were able to anonymously submit information about themselves and the event. This data allowed us to learn and share information on our chapter’s demographics, EDI initiatives from various firms, and insight on the pros and cons of the event. From this survey we learned the importance of inclusive events and supporting our local AEC industry.

- **700** Attendees
- **53** Attendees who work at minority owned businesses
- **38** Attendees who identify as BIPOC
- **311** IIDA Member attendees who work for companies with EDI initiatives
- **27** Attendees who identify as LGBTQIA+
Even though Prêt-à-Porter did not make a profit, the event was still a huge success as we made the decision to invest in EDI awareness and in our community. From Common Stitches, we saw the values that our members and community represent and uphold. We learned our design community wants to celebrate one another and see events planned inclusively. This outcome has set us out to inform our chapter’s goals and content for events to come and we hope it may inspire other chapters and organizations.

Representation matters and we have the power to do more and be more.