

eugenie Designer Grant, 2026

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A Spotlight on the Winners

May 19, 2026

eugenie is a Detroit-based boutique working to cultivate a future of sustainable fashion through their support of brands and designers whose practices are innovative and environmentally conscious. The shop was founded in 2020 by husband and wife, Gretchen Valade and Kevin Steen. This entrepreneurial duo also founded RATHAUS, a production company with offices in Brooklyn and Detroit, and a newly announced vintage workwear brand called Wylie Welling. Their work with eugenie offers a collection of carefully curated garments and accessories, with a particular focus on independent and women-led labels. Visitors of eugenie have the opportunity to browse through products made with natural materials, equitable labor practices and circular design. eugenie's dedication to sustainability is also realized through regular in-depth brand training sessions and cross-team discussions about the nuances of sustainability in the fashion industry. This push of accountability extends into their community through their initiative to share information and infographics about brands and designers, publish interviews with artists and designers about their sustainable practices, and hold pop-up events that benefit local non-profit organizations.

In 2023, the team launched the eugenie Designer Grant in an effort to elevate local creators through financial and professional support. This grant is a natural extension of their commitment to nurturing a sustainable future through conscious design, seeking to support early or emerging designers from Detroit who work in the fashion, textile, and accessory industries. Panelists look for applicants who have a clear vision, professional experience, and a compelling brand story.



Image by Destany Maddox of The Kismet Collective @thekismetcollective



eugenie Designer Grant Finalists and Panelists. Image by Destany Maddox of The Kismet Collective @thekismetcollective

Designers who have been selected as finalists have proposed a wide range of projects, from developing innovative bio-materials to creating interdisciplinary textile books and ethically sourced capsule collections. The recipients of the eugenie Designer Grant so far include Timothy Clark of ROUGH-DRAFT (\$10,000 in 2023), Mariah Ruff of RUFF CUT (\$10,000 in 2024) and Fernando Gutierrez of Foreign Objects (\$5,000 in 2024). In 2026, eugenie partnered with Song United in order to increase the total funding to \$20,000 and expand the award to three recipients. A group of seven Detroit-based design professionals delved into the portfolios of over 60 applicants to make selections based on specific criteria:

Design: *Is the project thoughtfully designed? How is innovation incorporated into the proposed project? What audience is this project desirable for?*

Quality & Care: *Is the project functional and aligned with its intended goal?*

Impact: *How does the project create a positive impact? What does that impact look like? Is it environmental, social, sustainable, etc.?*

Feasibility: *Can the project be completed within the proposed timeline and financial budget?*

Out of seven finalists, Mollie Decker and Michael Sklenka of Object Apparel were granted \$10,000 and a year of 1:1 mentorship opportunities with this year's panelists, Donovan Dewberry of Donovan Dewberry Bridal received \$6,000, and Emily Sioma of KIP Studio received \$4,000.



Images courtesy of Object Apparel

First place winner, **Object Apparel**, is an all-gender clothing brand rooted in North Corktown, Detroit, where design and production exist under one roof. Founded in 2015, the label works exclusively with organically grown and ethically produced materials, shaping them into adaptable, enduring garments. Each piece is cut, sewn, and naturally dyed in their self-designed studio. The work reflects the founders' architectural training, grounded in material integrity and endless adaptability.



Portrait of
Mollie Decker & Michael Sklenka





Images courtesy of Donovan Dewberry

Inspired by couture, second place winner, **Donovan Dewberry**, is known for bold, voluminous silhouettes. The work reimagines the gown as a site of imaginative world-making, amplifying personal narrative through form and scale. Dewberry has brought this vision to runways and exhibitions across the country, including the Gucci Changemakers Initiative here in Detroit. His unique contribution to sustainable bridal design marries romantic memory with intentional making.



Portrait of Donovan Dewberry





Portrait of Emily Sioma



Images courtesy of KIP Studio

The third place winner, **KIP Studio**, is a multi-faceted brand based in Detroit, Michigan, focused on altering, sewing, and innovating with textiles. Best known for its upcycled stem bags, KIP gives discarded textiles new life as thoughtful carriers for flowers. Each stem bag, bouquet cover, and floral charm is hand-sewn and designed for daily use. Whether at the market or in a meadow, KIP Studio keeps the earth close at hand.

2026 eugenie Designer Grant Finalists:

Ali Evans, GODNII Eyewear

Brynn Michel, Poppy Workwear

Donovan Dewberry, Dewberry Bridal

Emily Sioma, Kip Sewing Studio

Marc Mamon, IAmTheWorld Threads

Mollie Decker & Michael Sklenka, Object Apparel

Phillip Hebert & Samantha Pohlen-Hebert, Dos Jefes

2026 panelists:

Aki Choklat

Linda Dresner Endowed Chair in Fashion Design, College for Creative Studies

Eric Hardin

Founder, Today Clothing

Roslyn Karamoko

Retail Strategist & Founder, Détroit is the New Black

Tracy Reese

Founder & Creative Director, Hope for Flowers by Tracy Reese

Monika Sinclair

Professor of Teaching, Fashion Design & Merchandising, Wayne State University

Ken Walker

Founder & Head of Design, K. Walker Collective®

Jonathan West

Product Innovation Senior Manager, Carhartt Global Product Innovation

2024 eugenie Designer Grant Finalists:

Candelaria Nazar, C.NAZAR

Fernando Gutierrez, FOREIGN OBJECTS

James Adams, CON AMOR SANTIAGO

Lia Massey, LIA GABRIELLE ATELIER

Mariah Ruff, RUFF CUT

Nadia Boone, BIOSPOKE

2023 eugenie Designer Grant Finalists:

Alorē Niemi, WORST LADY

India Solomon, FLUID.SPACES

Mollie Decker & Michael Sklenka, OBJECT APPAREL

P.J. Herbert & Samantha Pohlen, DOS JEFES GARMENTS

Timothy Clark, ROUGH-DRAFT®

Every year, eugenie publishes information about their upcoming grant opportunities several months before the application deadline via their social media platform and email list. For those preparing to apply next cycle, they keep all of the necessary information viewable on the “Grant” page of our website, linked here. This page also hosts information about past recipients, enabling prospective applicants to get a feel for the type of work that has been chosen in the past.

eugenie’s flagship store is located on the corner of Agnes and Van Dyke in West Village, and their sister store, ARCHIVE by eugenie, is located in the Core City neighborhood of Detroit. ARCHIVE by eugenie functions as a space for timelessness, sustainable fashion and industry design knowledge, blurring the boundaries between store and studio to promote community collaboration as part of the shopping experience.

Learn more about eugenie here:
<https://www.eugenedetroit.com/>

Learn more about Song United here:
<https://www.song.us/>

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