

Art World

## An Artist's Surreal Garden at Musée Rodin Sets the Stage for Dior Couture

Artist Rithika Merchant lends a mystic touch to Dior's haute couture runway.



Models in Dior Haute Couture Spring-Summer 2025 stand against a vivid backdrop by artist Rithika Merchant.

by William Van Meter • January 28, 2025 • [Share This Article](#)

Yesterday afternoon on the grounds of the Musée Rodin in Paris, creative director Maria Grazia Chiuri staged [Dior Haute Couture's](#) Spring-Summer 2025 collection against the backdrop of a surreal garden interwoven with a complex cosmogony, courtesy of the Mumbai artist Rithika Merchant. Celebrity attendees included Anya Taylor-Joy, Marisa Berenson, Venus Williams, Pamela Anderson, and a host of others. The immersive temporary show space, designed to captivate, is now open to the public through February 2, free of charge.



Visitors to the art pop-up can sit on the bleachers where fashion luminaries once perched to glimpse Chiuri's latest collection amid Merchant's vivid mythology. The artist's work features baying wolves, anthropomorphic birds of prey, growling lions, and all-seeing eyes. Other motifs included stars, comets, and flowers galore—an amalgamation of cosmic wonders and earthly blooms, creating a mysterious, hard-to-decipher narrative.

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An interior view of the Dior couture show with scenography designed by Rithika Merchant. Photo: Adrien Dirand, Courtesy of Dior.

Throughout her tenure at Dior, Chiuri has consistently focused on celebrating female artists and involving them in the creative process of her collections and shows. She commissioned Merchant, a graduate of New York's Parsons School of Design, to create nine paintings for the show. These were translated into large-scale textile panels by the Chanakya ateliers and their creative director, Karishma Swali, who has partnered with the luxury house [before](#). Merchant's newest series of paintings is also part of the [11th Asia Pacific Triennial](#) of Contemporary Art currently on view at the Queensland Gallery of Modern Art in Brisbane, Australia.



Models come out for the finale at couture. Photo: Adrien Dirand, Courtesy of Dior.

The show first sent out models elegantly clad in grounded sophistication. Neutral-toned haute couture—tailored topcoats and smart dresses—contrasted with dramatic proportions and gauzy, revealing tulle, which eventually gave way to pure fantasy. The show notes conjured a chic, worldly update of *Alice Through the Looking Glass*: “She can be a flower-woman, in a cape of petals or in a short dress showing off the corolla of a curvy bust, or a bird-woman and accomplice to the headpiece that exposes a punk Mohican reaching for the sky.” Even the lace-trimmed tulle culottes spoke volumes: “The buried memory of a child-woman capable of crossing as many boundaries as she wishes, adapting the world to her scale: immense or tiny.”



Two details of Rithika Merchant's scenography artwork. Photos: Adrien Dirand, Courtesy of Dior.

Merchant's enthralling backdrops heightened the défilé. She is inspired by 17th-century botanical prints, speculative fiction, as well as her own family. She draws narratives from her matriarchal lineage, transposing familial tales into her complex cosmogony. As she stated, “The seeds we plant in the past grow into the flowers of the present.”



The exterior of the Dior couture show. The temporary space is now open to the public. Photo: Adrien Dirand, Courtesy of Dior.

*The Musée Rodin is located at 77 Rue de Varenne, 75007 Paris.*

**a**

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