

Prada shelves 'blackface' figurines decried as racist

NEWSWATCH: Luxury fashion label Prada has been lambasted for selling monkey-like figurines with overly large red lips in a style reminiscent of racist caricatures of black people.



Image credit: Chinyere Ezie via Twitter

The \$550 keychains, on display at a Soho boutique in New York, was noticed by human rights lawyer, Chinyere Ezie, who subsequently took to Facebook and Twitter slating the fashion house for its racist tropes.

The display included one style that recalled a Golliwog, the 19th-century blackface character with big round eyes and large red lips. It also resembled the title character from *Little Black Sambo*, a children's book of the same era.

“ Thanks to [#blackface @Prada](#), now you can take [#sambo](#) home with you for the holidays [#StopRacism](#)
[#StopBlackface](#) [#StopPrada](#) [pic.twitter.com/5t2cvosLIF](#)— Chinyere Ezie (@lawyergrrl) [December 13, 2018](#) ”

According to an [AFP report](#), the problematic custom of blackface dates back to about 1830 and so-called "minstrel shows," when white performers caked their faces in greasepaint or shoe polish and drew on exaggerated lips in a caricature of blacks.

The high-end Italian brand had been using the image on items such as keychains and corresponding marketing as part of its Pradamaglia collection, reports [AdAge](#).

After criticism from the public, the Prada Group issued a public apology, dismantled the display and announced that it would recall the offending charm from circulation.

The Group responded to backlash saying: "the Pradamalia are fantasy charms composed of elements of the Prada oeuvre. They are imaginary creatures not intended to have any reference to the real world and certainly not blackface."

"The Group never had the intention of offending anyone and we abhor all forms of racism and racist imagery."

“ [1/2] [#Prada](#) Group abhors racist imagery. The Pradamalia are fantasy charms composed of elements of the Prada oeuvre. They are imaginary creatures not intended to have any reference to the real world and certainly not blackface.— PRADA (@Prada) [December 14, 2018](#) ”

“ [2/] [#Prada](#) Group never had the intention of offending anyone and we abhor all forms of racism and racist imagery. In this interest we will withdraw the characters in question from display and circulation.— PRADA (@Prada) [December 14, 2018](#) ”

The company has since publicly pledged to improve its diversity training, and announced the formation of an advisory council to guide efforts on diversity, inclusion and culture.

Prada also said it would donate any proceeds from Pradamalia already sold to a New York-based organisation committed to fighting racial justice, "which is a value that we strongly believe in".

“ We are committed to creating products that celebrate the diverse fashion and beauty of cultures around the world. We've removed all Pradamalia products that were offensive from the market and are taking immediate steps to learn from this.

Full press release attached. pic.twitter.com/rKhNkjasDz— PRADA (@Prada) [December 16, 2018](#) ”

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[Prada to set up diversity council after racism accusations](#)

[Prada apologises after products spark accusations of racism](#)

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