

EVENTS/CAUSES

Cadillac, CFDA partner to drive retail growth for emerging labels

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Ads promoting the Retail Lab

By STAFF REPORTS

U.S. automaker Cadillac is furthering its relationship with the Council of Fashion Designers of America with the launch of a retail mentorship program.

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Through the Cadillac funded Retail Lab, emerging designers will have the opportunity to set up shops in a store located on the ground floor of the automaker's headquarters in New York. This initiative will enable Cadillac to further prove its dedication to the fashion industry, as it gives young designers a support system to help their business develop.

Fashion forward

In its inaugural 2016/2017 term, Retail Lab will take on six labels. The first, Timo Weiland, will open its shop in July.

The brand was founded by Timo Weiland, Alan Eckstein and Donna Kang in 2010 and has since developed a celebrity following.

For younger labels, this offers an opportunity at retail space without the financial implications. Cadillac is covering costs for everything, including mannequins, signage, display units, the point of sale systems and the real estate.

Additionally, Cadillac is giving each participating label a \$75,000 grant that they can use for wholesale, sales support and marketing.



Cadillac's Melody Lee introducing the program with Steven Kolb and the Timo Weiland designers

The designers will also be assisted in key areas that help foster retail success, including business development, public relations and marketing.

An advisory board will offer guidance through a specially developed curriculum and mentorship. Included in the fashion, retail, business and technology experts are Barneys New York's Simon Doonan, Hudson Bay Company's Liz Rodbell and Marigay McKee, the former president of Saks Fifth Avenue who is now running her own firm, MM Luxe Consulting.

Cadillac's director of brand strategy & planning Melody Lee will also serve on the board.

"Our ongoing partnership with the CFDA represents Cadillac's unwavering commitment to the fashion community and its growth," Ms. Lee said in a brand statement. "Retail Lab will give designers a space in the heart of Cadillac's headquarters, along with the tools, training and inspiration to take their business to the next level."

Designers can submit applications between April 6 and May 6 to be chosen as one of the five other labels in the first class. The opportunity is open to menswear, women's wear and accessory labels with demonstrated sales growth that have been in business for at least three years.

Interested designers should also be able to prove interest through editorial coverage. Applicants are expected to be able to stock the store space for a three-month period, but they must not currently have a freestanding store of their own.

"The CFDA is always looking for meaningful programs that help strengthen the impact of American Fashion," said Steven Kolb, president and CEO of the CFDA. "Every designer aspires to a freestanding retail experience that allows them to tell their brand story and connect directly with consumers."

"Cadillac's commitment to the industry will help the selected designers make this a reality."

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