

RETAIL

Nordstrom spotlights up-and-coming talent in incubator program

February 21, 2017



Nordstrom's The Lab

By STAFF REPORTS

Department store chain Nordstrom is launching a dedicated retail space for emerging design, giving young labels exposure in a scalable format.

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Kicking off Feb. 21, The Lab is housed within the retailer's Space concept in-store boutiques at five Nordstrom locations ([see story](#)), with a corresponding ecommerce presence. Through this initiative, Nordstrom is able to highlight its ability to scout talent while also giving back to the design community it relies upon.

Talent search

The Lab is the brainchild of Olivia Kim, Nordstrom's vice president of creative projects, who is a strong supporter of new talent.

"A brand has to be relatively established in order to support a substantial wholesale business," Ms. Kim said in a brand statement. "We wanted to find a way to show the truly new brands just starting out, and to recognize the great, raw talent out there. To say we see you, and we want to support you.

"There are incredible demands on a young designer trying to grow their business, and we wanted to say, You may not be able to produce enough of a collection for eight stores right now and that's okay," she said. "The Lab is for the designers who have just launched their collections, did their first show, maybe used their friends as models and showed in a basketball court in the Lower East Side.

"It's true, authentic and they're creating beautiful collections that we want to share with our customers."

Five labels were chosen for the launch. These include the London-based Dilara Findikoglu, whose first runway show was a guerilla performance. The Central St. Martins alum is currently stocked in high-end boutiques.

Parsons grad Eric Schlosberg is known for his sexy designs, while Eckhaus Latta designers Zoe Latta and Mike Eckhaus, who met at Rhode Island School of Design, aim to make garments suitable for either gender.



Image courtesy of Nordstrom

A.W.A.K.E., which stands for All Wonderful Adventures Kindle Enthusiasm, was founded by Natalia Alaverdian, who came to design after first styling and doing fashion photography. Her work since she began her label in 2012 has infused garments with elements of Japanese culture.

Finally, Vejas won the LVMH Special Jury Prize in 2016.

The Lab will be displayed at Nordstrom's Space boutiques at its stores in downtown Seattle, The Grove in Los Angeles, Michigan Avenue Chicago, CF Pacific Centre in Vancouver and CF Toronto Eaton Centre. It will also retail online.

After the first class, The Lab will be an ongoing series in Space, with new designers added each season.

Establishing a retail presence takes resources that many young labels do not have. Initiatives are stepping in to provide support through monetary aid and mentorship.

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

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 ([see story](#)).