



Saks Launches Second Year of Emerging Designer Accelerator Program, The New Wave

The program supports the growth of up-and-coming brands and emphasizes BIPOC voices

NEW YORK, Sept. 21, 2022 - Saks, the premier digital platform for luxury fashion, has launched the second year of its emerging designer accelerator program, The New Wave, presented by Mastercard. This year's program features eight new-to-Saks brands, including Claude Kameni, KEEYAHRI, Ludovic de Saint Sernin, Nalebe, SUNNI SUNNI, Undra Celeste, Who Decides War and Zeynep Arcay. To celebrate the program, Saks will feature participating designers in a robust marketing campaign across its digital channels and in a special window installation at the Saks Fifth Avenue New York flagship on display now through Tuesday, October 11.

The New Wave program develops and supports high-potential independent brands in accelerating their growth at Saks, and ultimately across the greater fashion industry. This year, participating designers were sourced from all categories, including women's, men's and gender-fluid ready-to-wear, shoes and accessories. Participants were identified by the Saks leadership team as brands that possess significant growth potential and would benefit from additional support to scale their businesses.

The program also aims to amplify BIPOC voices and furthers Saks' commitment to increasing representation in its merchandise assortment. This year, six of the eight participating brands are Black-owned businesses, and Saks has ensured that at least half of the program participants will be BIPOC brands each year.

"We are excited to continue using our platform to uplift emerging brands and support BIPOC designers," noted Tracy Margolies, Chief Merchandising Officer, Saks. "This incredible program provides a unique opportunity for up-and-coming designers to accelerate their growth at Saks and across the fashion industry. At the same time, it furthers our commitment to increasing representation in our assortment and delivering fresh, compelling fashion to our customers."

2022 PROGRAM OVERVIEW

This year's New Wave program includes:

- Onboarding bootcamp at Saks' corporate headquarters in New York City.
- Cross-functional advisory sessions with leaders from key areas across the Saks business, including merchandising, marketing, public relations and business operations.
- Mentoring sessions with industry experts, including designer Joseph Altuzarra, Harlem's Fashion Row's Founder and CEO Brandice Daniel, and Executive Vice President at Purple PR, Andrew Lister.
- Roundtable discussion with NBA All-Star, entrepreneur, investor and Saks board member James Harden on entrepreneurship and style.
- Small business workshops and consulting led by program partners including Launch Collective, NuORDER by Lightspeed and SKYPAD.

- Deskside meetings with Vogue editors and access to professional development through the CFDA.
- Opportunity to receive a \$10,000 grant to support business operations and growth.

2022 PROGRAM PARTNERS

For the second year in a row, Mastercard is the presenting sponsor of The New Wave program. Mastercard will provide participating designers with [Digital Doors®](#) Toolkits, including exclusive tools and resources to help small businesses digitally transform, as well as one-on-one mentorship on digital enablement. This partnership builds on Mastercard's sustained commitment to build a more inclusive digital economy and to help close the racial wealth and opportunity gap for Black communities.

This year, United Airlines is also taking part in The New Wave program. United hosted a competition for this year's participants to design the refreshed Saks Fifth Avenue day blanket that will appear on board United flights in United premium cabins from April 1, 2023 through December 31, 2023. Following review by leadership teams at Saks and United, Claude Kameni was selected as the winner of the design competition. In addition to her design being featured on board United flights, Claude will receive a \$10,000 travel grant and a \$10,000 monetary grant for design services from United.

ASSETS

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ABOUT THE DESIGNERS

CLAUDE KAMENI

Claude Kameni is a contemporary fashion designer who sees her namesake label as a bridge between her culture and the global fashion industry. The colorful prints, bold patterns and unique designs found within Claude's work are inspired by her West African heritage in Yaoundé, Cameroon. As a child, she was extremely creative with a sharp eye for silhouettes and colors. Following her relocation to the United States at the age of 8, she was able to take her first fashion class in high school which sparked her design journey. Since then, Claude has studied patterns extensively to where she can manipulate them to create extremely eye-catching garments, which have caught the attention of celebrities such as Janet Jackson and Viola Davis. A master in African design, Claude Kameni also works on taking traditional rigid African print fabric and transforming it into an array of breathable pieces meant for any and every body.

KEEYAHRI

Feathers, faux fur, pops of color, curious shapes, architectural concepts and innovative designs. KEEYAHRI is a shoe label focused on building up the confidence of the shoe wearer along every step of the way. Founder and Artistic Director Keya Martin swapped out her corporate career for a more rewarding one in fashion with emphasis on luxury footwear for the confident woman. Her journey has pushed her to embrace the shoemaking process while rewriting and redefining the rules of shoe design. After establishing a name for herself within the United States, KEEYAHRI's contemporary designs are now sailing across the Atlantic.

LUDOVIC DE SAINT SERNIN

Ludovic de Saint Sernin represents a return to beauty, seen via the lens of sensuality and sexuality, with an exacting approach to design. Ludovic is a French designer who graduated in Fashion Design from ESAA Duperré and worked in a number of French fashion houses before launching his own label in 2018. Ludovic de Saint Sernin is for guys and girls, with many pieces designed without one gender in mind. Ludovic has shown his collection on both the men's and women's official Fashion Week calendar in Paris. The label is known for its underwear, forming a new product category of luxury underwear for men, with the eyelet brief being the brand's signature item. The majority of Ludovic's clothes and accessories are made in France and sustainable practices are always closely followed, consciously shortening the supply chain and maintaining a close relationship with all ateliers.

NALEBE

Nalebe was founded by Amina Means with the goal of providing sustainable and comfortable shoes. Made In Italy, the global lifestyle shoe brand was founded after Amina Means sprained her ankle and decided to create shoes that were not only birthed on classic design with artisanal craftsmanship, but also focused on creating comfort while infusing stylish details. Amina's brand personifies her love for sustainability in which she chooses to produce within a zero-waste production cycle and uses recyclable packaging. Her romantic sensibility, artistic indulgence, and exquisite innovations have become a must-have for celebrities, fashion influencers and women making their mark on the world.

SUNNI SUNNI

SUNNI SUNNI is a conceptual footwear brand formed in July 2020 by the self-taught footwear designer Sunni Dixon. The label is artful and cultured with stimulating inventive concepts that are sophisticated and simple, yet street smart. Born and raised in Washington, DC formerly known as Chocolate City, much of Sunni's inspiration is rooted in black culture. Consciousness runs deep in everything produced and SUNNI SUNNI plans to make the most ethical choices when designing its footwear and creating its stories.

UNDRA CELESTE

Undra Celeste as a designer is the modern multicultural women's designer. Undra designs clothes that evoke confidence and an unapologetic presence. The brand is the perfect mix of professional and statement dressing. Undra's goal is to empower multicultural women to show up to work feeling like their authentic selves, exuding confidence by providing modern, fun and bold workwear.

WHO DECIDES WAR

In 2019, Artistic Director Ev Bravado and his creative partner Tela D'Amore presented their first full-scale collection in Paris for Who Decides War. Widely recognized for newfound signature denim silhouettes, Who Decides War hones in on carefully crafted pieces, expert garment distressing, recycling, reworking and multi-phase hand-dyeing, all with incomparable and meticulous attention to appliqué detailing. These key factors are what continue to set this creative team apart. As Who Decides War continues to grow exponentially, its in-house team retains the same grounded outlook and mission statement of instilling faith, culture and a handmade touch into each garment created.

ZEYNEP ARÇAY

Zeynep Arçay spent most of her career as an executive in the tech industry before switching gears to follow her passion for design and launch her namesake label in 2016. Best known for unconventional leather fabrications and

innovative craftsmanship, the brand's sophisticated dresses and tailoring strike the perfect balance between modern and classic.

ABOUT SAKS

Saks is the premier digital platform for luxury fashion in North America. Driven by a mission to help customers express themselves through relevant and inspiring style, we serve as a destination to explore and discover the latest from established and emerging designers. Our expertly curated assortment features sought-after names in women's, men's and kids fashion, as well as beauty, home and lifestyle merchandise. Through the Saks website and app, we provide access to professional stylists, inspiring editorial content and interactive events. Our differentiated approach seamlessly combines elevated online experiences with in-person services through an exclusive partnership with the Saks Fifth Avenue stores. Visit [Saks.com](https://www.saks.com) for more information. Follow @saks on [Instagram](#), [TikTok](#), [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#), and @thesaksman on [Instagram](#).

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