

DESIGNER DOSSIER

Canadian design at Reitmans

Quebec label Martin Lim creates under-\$120 pieces for retail chain

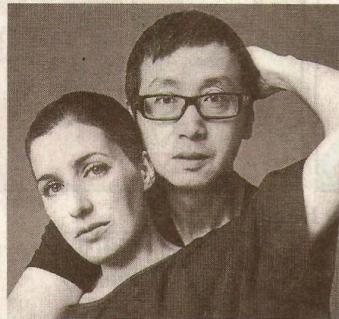
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SPECIAL TO THE STAR

One of the thrills of the crush of collaborations between designers and mass market retailers is the opportunity to get a designer label in your wardrobe for less. And Canadian design can be especially hard to get your hands on.

So this Friday marks a big day at Reitmans: Canada's biggest women's clothing retailer with 365 stores across the country is launching a dress collection by Quebec's Martin Lim.

It's fresh off Reitmans' success with another designer. Marie Saint Pierre, also a designer from Quebec, has done two capsule dress collaborations for the brand. The dresses sold out within hours of hitting the sales floor in Montreal, and were mostly wiped out of Toronto stores at the end of the first day.

Martin Lim, a collaboration between Danielle Martin and Pao Lim, launched for the spring 2011 season; they also won the first Mercedes-Benz Start Up competition at World Mastercard Fashion Week in Toronto last fall. But they are not new to fashion. Married for 17 years, with two daughters, they both attended Ecole Supérieure de la Mode in Montreal and won back-to-back Smirnoff Fashion Awards, and did their master's degrees in fashion design at London's Central St. Martins. Before they united to launch Martin Lim two years ago, each worked for Canadian designers and in-house labels, honing the manufacturing side of their skill sets. Martin describes their style as "effortless, so-



Designers Danielle Martin and Pao Lim.

phisticated . . . with lots of bold colours, contrasting and colour blocking." Lim thinks their signature is the attention to finishing details. Their client, Lim says, is 25 and up, "fashion-oriented, and knows what is happening with the trends, but is attracted to products that look and feel unique."

Reitmans merchandise manager Brigitte Martin says they were attracted by the duo's standout collection at fall 2012's fashion week. "This is an interesting assignment, because designers have to bring the dresses in for a price point for our customers." (The pieces range from \$85 to \$120.) "And there is the challenge of fit for women of all ages and sizes" — two of the styles are for petites; two for plus sizes. The couple enjoy challenging each other. "Each one brings the idea further," says Martin. "Two ideas becomes four ideas." Becomes a 10-dress collection.



Clara one-shoulder crepe dress with front slit and grosgrain strap, \$85.

Sandy two-tone dress with crepe blouson top, matte jersey sleeves and faux leather skirt, \$110.



Julia colour block crepe back satin dress, \$85.



Limi boat neck crepe sheath dress with cap sleeves and satin front, \$85.

