



# CAR TALK

The new FordHub store in New York's Oculus is a discussion about the future of mobility in a high-tech world, and there's not a car salesman in sight.

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**T**HE TRADITIONAL: AN AUTOMOBILE company's showroom, filled with late-model cars and eager salespeople. The future: an automobile company's storefront in a retail center without a single car inside.

That's what Ford Motor Co. (Dearborn, Mich.) is experimenting with – the FordHub experience store in the Oculus center in New York's World Trade Center. "It's a non-transactional space," says Laura Krpata, senior designer and project creative lead, Fitch (Columbus, Ohio). "But it expresses Ford's future brand proposition. Retail brands are learning that 'retail' as a place where people simply buy products is just not true anymore."

What is the *new* retail, then? "It's a place that connects brands to consumers," says Krpata.

That's just what Ford wanted with its initial FordHub concept. "It's the undiluted voice of Ford in conversation with consumers," Krpata says. The only automobiles in the space are a collection of tiny, colorful vintage car replicas

in a display on mobility.

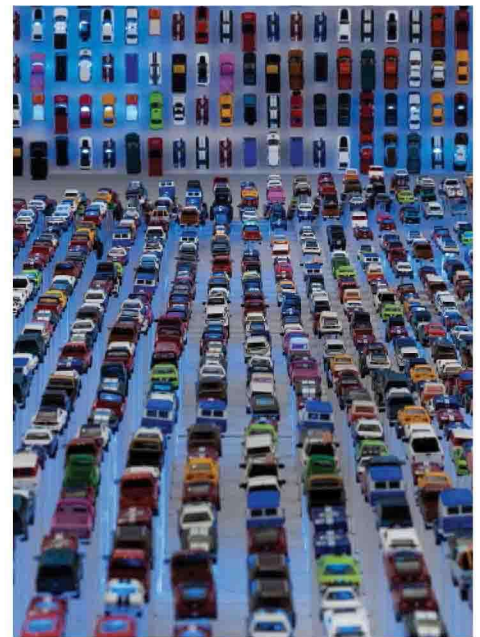
"Ford has been migrating to be more than just the traditional automotive brand," says Andrew Birkic, Ford's global advance consumer experience programs manager. "We want to become a mobility solutions provider in addition to designing and manufacturing great cars and trucks."

Filled with high technology and lots of moving parts, the store demonstrates how people may get around in the cities of the future – traffic patterns, mass transit, new technologies, self-healing roads, hyperloops, parking solutions and new options like car-sharing and car-borrowing. All are demonstrated on a series of interactive displays on the walls and on the floor of the 2800-square-foot space. A 26-foot-high wall called the Future of Mobility "shows how cities will emerge and change, and how we'll be impacted in our daily commutes," says Birkic.

"This platform is a way for Ford to help people rethink their mobility and what the new landscape could look like," says Krpata. "And

*LEFT Ford's newest outpost doesn't sell merchandise, aiming instead to educate visitors on its future brand positioning as an urban-minded transportation company.*

*BELOW A large subway map paired with transit times pulls in passersby waiting for subways and commuter trains near the World Trade Center's metro hub.*



*TOP Screens entice and display futurist predictions about traveling, from self-healing roads to other unbelievable technologies.*

*ABOVE, RIGHT Models are used in the space to convey the brand's ideas on what transportation in the future might look like.*

especially that Ford is working on solutions that will really help people.”

It would be difficult to find a more apt location to signify urban mobility than the World Trade Center’s über-busy transit hub, where subway and commuter trains converge, and where Krpata says 400,000 people pass through each day. However, she notes, the retail concourse where the store is located is an interstitial space for most of them. They’re rushing through so quickly that some traditional retail design principles need apply – like a storefront that makes people stop, wonder and come inside.

First, there’s the familiar Ford logo on the outside, and, in one window, is a lenticular sign that reads “Move Freely,” a motto the brand has used before in advertising campaigns.

People pass through the “blue portal” – a large

blue graphic-printed glass – as they enter the store. “We wanted to signal a transition from the world they understood to this world with all these new opportunities to explore,” says Krpata.

Birkic estimates that, so far, roughly 700 people per day have been drawn into the store, either out of curiosity or to interact with the displays, take photos or talk with one of the Ford guides on hand.

“And if they want to buy a car,” he says, “we can help them with that, too.”

Ironically, one of the major attractions of the storefront is a large digital screen just inside the front window displaying a subway map, real-time transportation information, directions, a clock and current weather conditions, among others. Even in the future, travelers still want to know what time it is. ▀