

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

Calvin Klein vies for upmarket return with By Appointment debut

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Calvin Klein By Appointment 1-14, 2017

By JEN KING

PVH Corp.'s Calvin Klein is showing it is much more than jeans and underwear by opening its bespoke services up to general consumers, rather than reserving customization for celebrity friends of the brand.

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For decades, Calvin Klein's New York atelier has been responsible for made-to-order pieces mostly seen on the red carpet during awards season. The decision to expand the bespoke consumer base comes as newly appointed chief creative officer Raf Simons seeks to make his mark on the 49-year-old label, and quite possibly, restore its standing among its high-end peers.

"While an iconic brand identified with an unfussy American style and directly linked to New York, the Calvin Klein brand has gone through blurry creative times in the past," said [Thoma Serdari](#), Ph.D., founder of [PIQLuxury](#), co-editor of [Luxury: History Culture Consumption](#) and adjunct professor of luxury marketing at [New York University](#), New York. "The underwear and jeans lines have remained true to their original brand story but clothing has tried to be too many things to too many people without solid grounding.

"Opening up its bespoke services to everyday clients will help Calvin Klein elevate the customer's perception of the brand and also intrigue them with the possibility of something both unique and special (as all bespoke items are) as well as representative of the iconic American style the brand ushered in the past with its collections," she said.

"Having created a galaxy' of collections that reach to fragrance, watches and jewelry, as well as home, the Calvin Klein brand is reshaping its structure by implementing Calvin Klein By Appointment, a line that re-establishes the tip of the pyramid.' This is a line to aspire to, admire and talk about."

Ms. Serdari is not affiliated with Calvin Klein, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

[Calvin Klein](#) was reached for comment.

Made-to-order

After months of rumors, Calvin Klein confirmed Mr. Simons as chief creative officer in August 2016. The year prior, Mr. Simons had exited his lead design role at Dior and spent time working on his namesake label until his non-

complete clause with the LVMH-owned atelier expired ([see story](#)).

As chief creative officer of Calvin Klein, Mr. Simons is in charge of Calvin Klein Collection, Calvin Klein Platinum, Calvin Klein, Calvin Klein Jeans, Calvin Klein Underwear and Calvin Klein Home. The newest addition to Mr. Simons' already weighty load is Calvin Klein by Appointment.

The line will be handcrafted and made-to-measure in New York and is being hailed as a "tribute to the Calvin Klein atelier." The service will include a full range of handcrafting skills from embroidery to tailoring.

"Calvin Klein is not only about iconic underwear and jeans – it's about so much more," Mr. Simons said in a statement.

Appointments will become available April 1.

News of the Calvin Klein by Appointment launch was accompanied by Mr. Simons' first advertising campaign as chief creative officer.

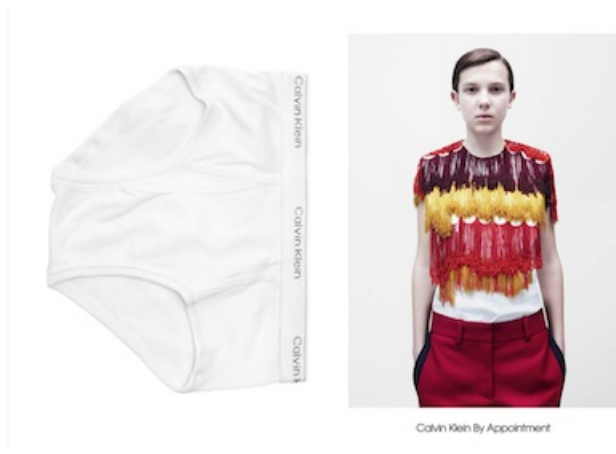
Styled by Olivier Rizzo and photographed by Willy Vanderperre, the Calvin Klein By Appointment ads show a collection of 14 bespoke looks juxtaposed against a pair of classic Calvin Klein white briefs underwear.

"Calvin Klein By Appointment is a very well conceived brand extension and has full potential to succeed," Ms. Serdari said. "It was actually refreshing to see its presentation on the Calvin Klein Web site: the new brand extension is presented tongue-in-cheek' and poking fun at its own success through the ubiquity of Calvin Klein underwear.

"What fun to see the Calvin Klein By Appointment haute-couture pieces interjected in between a long line of white Calvin Klein underwear. Brilliant," she said.

In a statement shared on Calvin Klein's Web site, Mr. Simons explained that, "Calvin Klein By Appointment 1-14 is very much about celebrating the American woman and American fashion."

The campaign imagery features 12-year-old "Stranger Things" actress Millie Bobby Brown and models Abbey Lee, Julia Nobis and Samantha Eldridge, among others.



Millie Bobby Brown for Calvin Klein By Appointment

"It is driven by character; it's about a woman feeling empowered and being her own person in what she wears," said Pieter Mulier, creative director of Calvin Klein, in a statement.

Calvin Klein By Appointment's ads will run in print and on digital. The brand, for example, placed an image from "CKBA 1-14" in the New York Times' Sunday Jan. 22 edition.

The image shows Ms. Lee wearing an American flag-print as a skirt and topless while she poses on a bare, concrete floor.

On the brand's Web site text referring to the campaign reads, "Cheerleader, debutante, majorette: Together with American pragmatism and playful pop iconography."



Calvin Klein By Appointment

Abbey Lee for Calvin Klein By Appointment

Given the current tension in American politics and the importance of honoring the American flag, Calvin Klein has received some flack for the image and its high-profile placement.

Shake it up

While only at Calvin Klein for a short time, Mr. Simons has already begun altering the brand's approach.

For example, Calvin Klein's fall/winter 2017 show during New York Fashion Week on Feb. 10 will feature both men's and women's wear. Calvin Klein's announcement came just a day after Bottega Veneta made a similar move, pointing to the potential for more co-ed runways ([see story](#)).

The "couture sensibilities" of Mr. Simons may create significant buzz for Calvin Klein going forward.

"Mr. Simons is much admired in the world of fashion," Ms. Serdari said. "In spite of the musical chairs' situation in luxury fashion houses where designers end up with short tenures and not enough time to prove their connection to the DNA of the brand, a designer of Mr. Simons' caliber brings new life to the slightly 'tired' Calvin Klein brand.

"Less restricted by the rules of an old luxury house, Mr. Simons will have the opportunity to materialize ideas the Calvin Klein brand was built on and which still resonate with the everyday customer," she said.

"The first Calvin Klein By Appointment collection is a good example of that: what does being American mean today? To whom? How? These are questions that give Mr. Simons artistic freedom while also infuse the Calvin Klein brand with what it had been missing: a connection to contemporary culture on a deeper level."

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