

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

Calvin Klein, Raf Simons split over strategic differences

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Calvin Klein's upmarket moves put pressure on the brand. Image credit: Calvin Klein

By STAFF REPORTS

U.S. fashion label Calvin Klein's chief creative officer Raf Simons is leaving after only two years at the company.

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The brand announced what it referred to as an amicable split on Dec. 21. As a result of Mr. Simons' departure, Calvin Klein has cancelled its show during New York Fashion Week in February.

Moving on

Mr. Simons was hired by Calvin Klein in August 2016. In his role, he was in charge of all Calvin Klein labels, from its runway Calvin Klein Collection to its Calvin Klein Underwear, overseeing design as well as marketing and communications ([see story](#)).

The designer, who was previously at Christian Dior and Jil Sander, brought an upmarket spin to Calvin Klein.

PVH Corp.'s Calvin Klein showed 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.

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 came as Mr. Simons sought to make his mark on the 50-year-old label, and quite possibly, restore its standing among its high-end peers ([see story](#)).



Raf Simons took Calvin Klein in a more upmarket direction. Image credit: Calvin Klein

Calvin Klein Collection was also rebranded Calvin Klein 205W39NYC ([see story](#)).

As the designer exits Calvin Klein, the company said in its statement that the split came about due to "a new brand direction which differs from Simon's creative vision."

In the past month, Calvin Klein made a number of moves aimed at making both Calvin Klein 205W39NYC and Calvin Klein Jeans more commercial.

According to *WWD*, in a conference call reporting Calvin Klein parent company PVH's earnings for the third quarter, the fashion group's CEO Emanuel Chirico said that the brand's recent designs had been too fashion-forward and pricey for the Calvin Klein customer.

For the quarter, Calvin Kleins' revenues were up 2 percent, but its EBITDA fell from \$142 million in 2017 to \$121 million in 2018. PVH attributed this to a \$10 million rise in "creative and marketing expenditures," as well as more promotional selling in Calvin Klein Jeans.

Also among the strategic shifts was a move away from print advertising towards more influencer and digital marketing.

Mr. Simon's exit came about six months before his contract was up. As of press time, Calvin Klein has not announced a successor.