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Calvin Klein's Colorful New Flagship Is a Fresh Take on Americana *Raf Simons worked with Sterling Ruby to transform the Madison Avenue store*

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*Calvin Klein's flagship Madison Avenue store has been revamped by Raf Simons and Sterling Ruby.
Photo: Courtesy of Calvin Klein*

Calvin Klein's new New York flagship is Instagram gold—quite literally. The Madison Avenue space, which reopened this week after extensive renovations, is a sun-colored, maximalist, art-filled ode to Americana, a fresh take on a classic American brand. It's a fitting symbol of the brand's renaissance and of the seemingly limitless creativity of its creative director, Raf Simons.

Simons, who joined the brand almost exactly a year ago, turned to artist Sterling Ruby (who also oversaw the redesign of the ground-floor and 12th-floor showrooms at the company's headquarters) to undertake the Madison Avenue renovation with him—and Ruby went big. "I'm taking the Calvin Klein flagship store from minimal to maximal; my design should be seen as a marker to celebrate the future of the brand," says Ruby. "I wanted the store to glow from within, representing a new day for Calvin Klein."

And glow it does, thanks to a particularly kinky shade of yellow—Benjamin Moore's Delightful, to be exact—that's swathed over all the store's walls, ceilings, and unconventional shelves (more on those later) and that immediately draws the eye past the store's gray, concrete façade. (I admit

I did a double take when catching my first glance from across the street. The effect is a startling one coming from a building that has, since 1995, housed a monochrome, minimal home for Calvin Klein.)

Through a combination of art, fashion, and decor—indeed, sometimes it's difficult to tell where one ends and another begins—Simons and Ruby present a new take on "classic American" that's anything but the expected red, white, and blue. In lieu of shelves, the duo installed construction platforms, a reference to American industry rendered in juicy primary colors. Structured handbags rest on Formica platforms of the same shades, while benches and shelves swathed in fabric of Ruby's design add a celestial vibe.

Hanging from beams, off of walls, and folded on shelves is an expansive collection of vintage American quilts—all sourced by Simons and the Calvin Klein Home team—which tie into the patchwork Americana motifs of the designer's debut collection for Calvin Klein, presented in February. Today's America is a different one than that of the prairie days, though, and the shop's bold colors and modern forms carry this aesthetic staunchly into the contemporary. Interspersed with the patchwork quilts are yarn works by Ruby, meant to evoke the patriotic bunting seen over doorways and across streets on the Fourth of July.

As one of his most concrete stamps on the company, Simons renamed Calvin Klein Collection, making it Calvin Klein 205W39NYC, a reference to the brand's roots (and current headquarters) in New York's Garment District. The gritty, industrial feel of this neighborhood is present here, though it's been dressed up and oversaturated in a manner fitting the Instagram age.

"I wanted the store to generate a very immediate physical experience that could as well be intimately connected to the collections," Simons explains. "It is also a continuation of the language I am creating with Sterling for Calvin Klein's visible and physical identity. The use of very direct and familiar references common to the American visual experience creates a simple and emotional connection with the brand."