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Is Madison Avenue Losing Its Luster?

With stores like Jonathan Adler and Calvin Klein shutting down, will the design industry move to other New York City neighborhoods?

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An aerial view of Manhattan's Upper East Side and Madison Avenue.

Photo: Getty Images

On New York's Madison Avenue, two store closures have left Upper East Side design shoppers a bit stunned. The Calvin Klein flagship store, long a haunt for fashion and the home, is closing this spring. Just weeks ago the Jonathan Adler flagship, known for sleek and quirky furnishings, also shuttered its doors.

Why the sudden closings? Raf Simons decked out the Calvin Klein interior in searing yellow, and artist Ruby Sterling created an art installation with scaffolding, hanging American quilts, artwork, and, of course, clothes. The limited home-collection offerings, including sheets and dinnerware, had taken a backseat in that radical redesign.

PVH, the parent company of Calvin Klein, explained the closing of the 22,000-square-foot space in a statement as a “digital-first” strategy. “The company is evaluating options for future retail locations, and will also be unveiling new consumer experiences both online and offline,” the statement said.

Jonathan Adler did not comment. Both his Upper West Side and Lexington Avenue stores are going strong.

“That kind of bricks-and-mortar establishment is hardly in free fall, but taste changes,” says Corey Shuster, a member of the Douglas Elliman team who has long been luring luxury retailers to Madison Avenue. A case in point: Purveyors of antiques such as Mallett, Florian Papp, Gerald Bland, and, most recently, Gem Antiques have shuttered their doors. “New home furniture stores will move in at some point,” adds Shuster.

Whether these defunct storefronts are just a coincidence or signal a broader movement away from the tony neighborhood is still to be determined.