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Why Are Designers Leaving New York Fashion Week?

Proenza Schouler, Rodarte, Hood by Air, Tommy Hilfiger. Who's Next?

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on January 31, 2017



Phoenix House Fashion Award Dinner, Cipriani 42nd Street
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Is New York becoming a fashion ghost town?

Not quite. There are roughly 150 shows on the fall 2017 official schedule after all. But nowhere is fashion's state of flux more evident than in New York. In the last week, two of the creative pillars of the New York shows — [Rodarte](#) and [Proenza Schouler](#) — revealed plans to recalibrate their collections to the January and July couture schedule, showing only two times a year in Paris beginning for spring 2018. Hood by Air and Vera Wang are also headed to the City of Light for fall 2017, Wang showing in tandem with her French Legion of Honor award.

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Add to that the fact that Opening Ceremony opted out of [New York Fashion Week](#) this year, showing its see-now-buy-now collection at Lincoln Center on Jan. 28 via a collaboration with the New York City Ballet. Then there's Tommy Hilfiger, Rebecca Minkoff and Rachel Comey, all of which are showing in Los Angeles rather than New York, at least for the fall 2017 season.

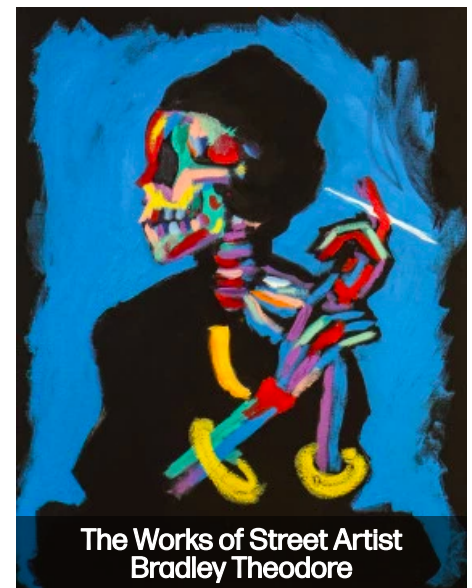
Where does this leave [New York Fashion Week](#)? Will more designers stray from the American fashion capital?

[Rodarte](#) and [Proenza Schouler](#) both stated that their decisions to move were business-driven, echoing each other's sentiments that timing their shows to couture and bringing the collections to Paris would allow them to increase international visibility and deliver earlier to stores. Kate and Laura Mulleavy of Rodarte also unveiled plans to add a third pre-collection to the brand's annual roster, while Proenza Schouler noted it will consolidate its pre-collections into the main collections in the hopes of getting more retail traction out of the runway collections, which, as Lazaro Hernandez said, "Jack [McCollough] and I pour our blood, sweat and tears into. The brand is known for the runway collection and the reality of the business today is that buyers are spending 80 percent of their dollars on pre-collections."

Hernandez said his and McCollough's decision to go to Paris had been at least two years in the works and was more about timing than location. Showing earlier allows them to align their design teams to focus on one collection at a time. Creating two larger collections per year, instead of four, will be divided into deliveries.

That said, when Hernandez was asked what he thinks about the current state of New York Fashion Week, he said, "It definitely has changed a lot since we first started showing. There are still superinteresting people showing in New York, but there's a lot of things that we're not that interested in in New York."

Proenza Schouler had a taste of showing in Paris last July when [MAC Cosmetics](#)' new fashion initiative granted the designers the option to show or present their resort collection during couture week. "Everyone was super receptive," said Hernandez. "We saw a lot of editors that we don't usually see during New



York Fashion Week and it felt kind of right, so we went full throttle.” He noted that showing in Paris was not necessarily a permanent move. Rather, they’re “playing it by ear.”

Hernandez said Proenza Schouler has not yet applied for accreditation from The Fédération de la Couture, but plans to. The federation declined to comment about Proenza or any other American brand joining the Paris schedule.

Designers hitting the road with their collections is not a new thing, and many Americans have shown in Paris previously, including Zac Posen, Hood by Air, The Row and Kanye West. And Reem Acra will now show in Paris for the first time, while the company will continue to be based in New York. It’s the city on the circuit that receives the highest influx of international press and buyers, so there’s a lot to be gained business-wise. There’s also the aura of Paris as the home of the best designers — the competition is stiff and the stakes are high.

A mass exodus of New York designers to Paris is unlikely, but two brands for which it wouldn’t be a quantum leap are Altuzarra and Thom Browne. Joseph Altuzarra is French, born and raised, and Kering has a stake in his company. Browne already shows his men’s collection in Paris and has for years. Moving to the couture schedule wouldn’t be possible for him because of the workload of his men’s collections, and he’s said to be comfortable on the New York women’s schedule for now. Altuzarra and Browne are two of New York’s big-ticket shows — NYFW should be eager to keep them local.

Altuzarra and Browne declined comment.

Asked about Rodarte and Proenza’s upcoming defection from New York — Proenza will show its fall line as scheduled on Feb. 13 — [CFDA](#) president and chief executive officer Steven Kolb thinks “it’s great for American fashion, and there’s certainly a level of pride for those significantly talent brands that are going to show during couture.” He also felt validation for the Boston Consulting Group study the [CFDA](#) commissioned in early 2016, which essentially concluded: Every designer should do what’s right for them.



[Is Young Sheldon Building To A](#)



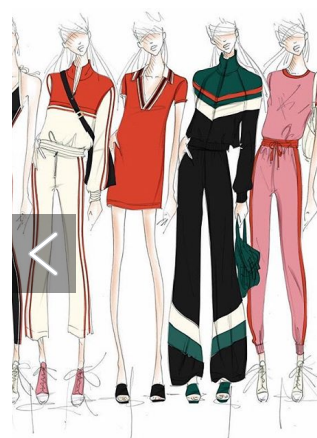
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Couture appoints celebrity stylist Jamie as its new creative director. Pictured are es of Mizrahi's spring 2018 collection for and, which will debut in three deliveries.
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“We’re in a period of experimentation now,” said Kolb, pointing to the designers that are showing in Los Angeles this season, and also noting that New York still hosts its share of European designers: Akris for spring 2017; Givenchy for spring 2016; Philipp Plein for fall 2017.

But doesn’t it sting, even just a little, to see some of New York’s most creative brands jump ship? When pressed, Kolb noted that New York has no shortage of exciting new designers — in fact, that’s what the city is known for. He made the point that both Rodarte and Proenza Schouler owe a lot to the CFDA/Vogue Fashion Fund. “There will be a new Rodarte and a new Proenza Schouler,” he predicted.

Kolb doesn’t see New York Fashion Week going away anytime soon, but “if the demand for an organized New York Fashion Week diminishes and isn’t important anymore, it will go away by itself.”

He did say that if there’s a groundswell of interest in shifting the New York women’s shows to January and July, the CFDA would explore the idea (a concept argued by Prada’s Patrizio Bertelli years ago, suggesting that all women’s fashion weeks should move closer to the men’s calendar).

Seeming to address the subtext that there’s a contingent of New York designers who think they belong in Paris’ elite ranks, Kolb said, “good luck to Paris with scheduling that.”

[cfda](#)[New York Fashion Week](#)[proenza schouler](#)[Rodarte](#)
