

WWD

Fashion. Beauty. Business.

The Bottom Line

Parsing chief executive officers' comments during the latest results season on what the future holds for fashion and retail. **Page 4**

Specialty Stays Strong

Menswear specialty stores attending Chicago Collective were upbeat about business — and shrugged off any impact of tariffs. **Pages 6 and 7**

Scandal's Impact

Unpacking what the supply chain scandals mean for both the luxury sector and Made-in-Italy production. **Page 12**



Celebrate Good Times

It was the perfect summer's evening on Thursday for Saks Fifth Avenue and Amazon to celebrate their multiday pop-up at The Hedges in East Hampton with a dinner hosted by Gabrielle Union and Dwyane Wade, seen here, which drew the likes of Naomi Watts, Alexandra Daddario, Nicky Hilton Rothschild, Rachel Zoe and more. The couple has been summering on the East Coast, and for Wade the season has been "all about family. And, for me, golf." And maybe a little bit of Kool and the Gang? *For more on the party, see pages 16 and 17.*

PHOTOGRAPH BY ALYSSA GREENBERG

BUSINESS

Saks Wraps Up \$600M Financing

- The company looks forward to focusing on integrating Neiman Marcus now that the controversial exchange is done.

BY EVAN CLARK

Saks Global has buttoned up its latest financing package early.

The retailer said it received \$300 million in connection with its debt exchange offer on Friday, rounding out the \$600 million package it revealed in late June.

About 98 percent of the eligible bondholders agreed to exchange their notes.

The deal could bring the temperature down on the Saks financial drama – at least for now.

To buy Neiman Marcus Group, Saks took on \$2.2 billion in debt from bondholders in December, just as Wall Street was feeling giddy over what many hoped would be more business-friendly policies from a second administration of U.S. President Donald Trump.

But when the reality of having Trump back in the White House led to a trade war with the world and the retail outlook dimmed, bondholders got spooked, particularly since a little-noticed provision in the bond prospectus allowed Saks to pile as much debt as it wanted onto its Fifth Avenue flagship.

Saks was already fending off vendors over slower payment terms and late back payments when a meltdown in the bond price added a sense of uncertainty – again – to the company and its finances. The retailer's bonds traded at around 30 cents on the dollar for a time, but the company

was able to negotiate a deal with some bondholders that eventually brought along the rest of the pack.

Now Saks is limited in how much debt the Fifth Avenue flagship can carry, leaving the building to stand as collateral for the bondholders in the event of a bankruptcy.

While many lenders and vendors to the company have been worrying over the potential of a bankruptcy for months, the retailer clearly sought to present the completion of the exchange as the final turning of the page on what's been an uncertain and disruptive time.

Marc Metrick, chief executive officer, said: "With this transaction, we are embarking on Saks Global's next chapter, with the financial flexibility to drive long-term value and growth for our stakeholders, particularly our brand partners. Our bolstered liquidity position, combined with our improved inventory flow and the work we have done to strategically integrate our businesses, positions us to continue executing on our strategy to advance the luxury shopping experience for our customers. We thank our bondholders for their continued confidence in our business."

Metrick works closely with Saks Global's executive chairman Richard Baker, who for years dreamed of buying Neiman Marcus and combining the two luxury department store powerhouses.

Together they have a vision that has lots of moving parts – from the new terms with vendors to a Saks presence on Amazon and a new single operating structure for the two chains.

But in the run-up of the deal and this year, vendors complained, bitterly at



Marc Metrick

times, about not being paid for shipments, in many cases not for several seasons. And while Saks promised to make good on its bills – and some vendors have been paid – other suppliers have continued to privately complain that the money is always on the way, but still slow to arrive.

A source close to Saks said of the finalization of its latest financing package: "Now you're going to not hear from brands anymore about not getting paid. You're not going to hear from brands anymore about concerns. You're not going to hear anymore from that side of the equation."

But the world might well be hearing a little more about Saks' finances before the spotlight will be able to the big luxury retail "reset."

That's because debt watchdog Standard & Poor's previously said it viewed the financing as "tantamount to a default" since bondholders "will receive less value than they were initially promised and will rank lower in terms of priority than the new money notes."

S&P said it expected to lower its rating on Saks to "selective default" or "default" after the financing was completed.

"That 'selective default,' if it were to come, is a technical distinction that stems from the bonds being exchanged for new debt below par.

The new bonds have not yet been rated. Now Metrick and Baker have to convince the market that the they've solved the Saks financial equation.

ACCESSORIES

Claire's Chap. 11 Filing Follows Dual Track Process, Could Close at Least 700 Stores

- Bankrupt Claire's hired Hilco to liquidate its stores, but could hold off from an entire liquidation if it finds a going-concern buyer.

BY VICKY M. YOUNG

For bankrupt Claire's, it's either find a buyer or shut down.

Court documents indicate that the accessories chain, which also sells items such as socks and slippers, is following a dual-track process that includes hiring Hilco Merchant Resources as the liquidation firm to close all stores. Claire's operates 1,260 stand-alone locations across North America, plus 210 shops-in-shop inside select Walmart stores. There's also an additional 850 company-operated stores overseas. The overseas operations are not part of the Chapter 11 case that was filed on Wednesday in a Delaware bankruptcy court. The company said its Canadian affiliates also plan to commence proceedings in Canada in the Ontario Superior Court of Justice under the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act. There were rumblings last month that a Chapter 11 filing was a possibility. But there were signs of cash-flow pressures earlier this year.

The agreement between Claire's and Hilco allows for the suspension of the

liquidation sale should the retailer find a going-concern buyer. But even if it does, at least 700 mall locations are on the chopping block and are expected to be shuttered by early September once store closing sales are completed. If no buyer is found, then all Claire's are expected to go dark by the end of October.

That doesn't mean that the Claire's name will go away. The intellectual property assets for U.S. operations could be sold as part of a bankruptcy court auction. And a buyer could acquire the assets with an eye toward resurrecting the name online.

Chris Cramer, chief executive officer,

chief operating officer and chief financial officer, filed a document called a declaratory statement with the Delaware bankruptcy court, noting that the closure of 700 unprofitable store locations are part of a go-forward business plan centered on a smaller footprint. The company began marketing its go-forward plan in June, with outside advisers reaching out to more than 150 prospective strategic and financial buyers. Confidentiality agreements were signed with 60 parties. Cramer said the company is in talks with certain parties in connection with a potential stalking-horse bid.

Cramer said the company sources merchandise from 250 vendors, with about 70 percent located outside of the U.S. Included in the overseas vendor list are 56 percent that are based in mainland China, 8 percent from Vietnam and 23 percent from Thailand. He said the heavy reliance on foreign suppliers has significantly impacted the company following the implementation of reciprocal

tariffs in April. The company engaged in tariff-mitigation initiatives, including testing price increases. Cramer said the company knew that raising prices could contribute to a "declining customer base and declining same-store sales," which is what happened in 2021 and 2022.

The company's Chapter 11 petition listed total assets and liabilities each at between \$1 billion and \$10 billion.

The core Claire's doors target girls between the ages of 3 and 18, while the 120 Icing branded stores in North America caters to the fashion-conscious young woman between ages 18 and 35.

Ragini Bhalla, Creditsafe's head of brand and spokesperson, said Claire's "faces fierce competition from ultra-low-cost online retailers like Shein and Temu." She noted that the company's mounting debt and rising tariffs aren't its only problems. The company's payment history show signs of cash-flow strain, and its growing late payments have contributed to the aging of invoices, she said. According to data from the credit research firm, Claire's outstanding bills over 91 days past due rose from 3.6 percent in November 2024 to 6.7 percent in December 2024, and then rose even higher to 10.1 percent in January 2025.

"And when we looked at the company's aging invoices for the last few months, we could see that upward of 50 to 67 percent of its outstanding bills were already in the one-to-30 days past due category in May and June 2025," Bhalla said.

Wednesday's filing is the second bankruptcy for Claire's. It is owned by Elliott Management Corp. and Monarch Alternative Capital, who were part of the creditor group that took control of the retailer after it filed its first Chapter 11 petition in March 2018.



A Claire's store inside a mall.

BUSINESS

Under Armour Expects Tariffs to Bite, Sees Profits Halving This Year

- The Baltimore-based sports brand is trying to mitigate the costs of the new tariffs, but they are adding to the pressure on the company's turnaround efforts.

BY JEAN E. PALMIERI

Under Armour fell short of analysts' expectations in several segments in the first quarter of fiscal 2026, and the situation is expected to deteriorate even further thanks in part to the added costs of tariffs, which the company said will slice profitability in half this year.

In a conference call, chief executive officer Kevin Plank said the company is estimating about \$100 million in additional costs from tariffs which, when added to the anticipated soft demand in fiscal 2026, will result in operating income on an adjusted basis coming in at "roughly half of fiscal 2025 levels," chief financial officer David Bergman added.

"We are actively pursuing mitigation strategies such as cost sharing with suppliers and partners, exploring alternative sourcing options and making selective pricing adjustments," Bergman said. "However, due to the complexity and lead times involved, we anticipate most of the gross margin offsets to be realized in fiscal 2027 and beyond."

Even as Plank sought to put a positive spin on the numbers and outlook Friday morning, citing quarterly results that "met or exceeded our expectations as we drive a bold transformation," the results proved the sports brand still has a way to go to return to its former glory. Wall Street also wasn't swayed, trading Under Armour's shares down more than 18 percent.

The Baltimore-based company reported adjusted earnings per share of 2 cents for the first quarter, slightly below the analyst estimate of 3 cents, with a revenue drop of 4 percent to \$1.1 billion. The net loss was \$3 million and adjusted net income was \$9 million.

North American sales, a sore spot for the company for a while now, also fell more than expected, with revenue down 5 percent to \$670 million, more than the 4.4 percent analysts had projected. The company attributed that to a decrease in full-price wholesale and lower e-commerce sales.

International sales dropped 1 percent to \$467 million, with Asia-Pacific falling 10 percent and Latin America down 15 percent while the Europe, Middle East and African region posted a 10 percent increase.

Wholesale revenue was down 5 percent and direct-to-consumer sales fell 3 percent, which included a 12 percent drop in e-commerce sales. Sales at the company's owned and operated stores inched up 1 percent but its factory outlets and licensing revenues were up 12 percent.

By category, apparel sales fell 1 percent to \$747 million, with softness in run, outdoor and golf, and strength in training and sportswear product. Footwear sales were particularly weak, dropping 14 percent to \$266 million. The one highlight was accessories, which posted an 8 percent increase in sales to \$100 million.

The poor showing was exacerbated by a weak second-quarter outlook with earnings per share now projected to be



An Under Armour store.

between 1 cent and 2 cents, significantly below analysts' projection of 26 cents. Revenue is expected to decline 6 to 7 percent, with a low-double-digit decline in North America and a low-teens percent decline in the Asia-Pacific region, partially offset by high-single-digit growth in EMEA.

Adjusted operating income in the second quarter is expected to be in the \$30 million to \$40 million range.

Under Armour did manage to meet expectations on overall revenue, and beat them on gross margin and operating income, a company spokesman stressed.

Despite the poor results, Plank told analysts Under Armour is sticking to its plan to "undertake a bold reinvention and rebuild with purpose to become a sharper, more focused brand, one that blends sports style and innovation with financial discipline and edge."

He said over the past eight years, Under Armour has been operating "more like a company than a brand," but now 16 months into his return as CEO, "we're in the process of flipping that script where every decision we make is focused through a brand-first lens."

He added that developing "world-class financials" is not the answer. Instead, he said: "The only way we win is by creating a brand people can't ignore."

He asked Wall Street to be patient with the company's ongoing transformation as it moves to "build deeper, lasting connections with consumers and focus on creating mid- and long-term shareholder value."

As he has said in the past, Plank acknowledged that Under Armour's assortment had gotten too broad and its designs "lacked clarity. We're on track to meet our initial goal of reducing SKUs by 25 percent. We're discovering new ways to streamline. We've already cut our materials by 30 percent for our 2025 products and plan to reduce it further in 2026, lowering costs, improving sourcing and supporting more sustainable, innovation-driven design."

He said the company is "systematically

redesigning our top 10 volume items," which is expected to result in "better and more average selling price revenue."

He singled out some wins, including the HeatGear OG compression mask, the Velociti Elite 3 Running Shoe, the Magnetico football boot and Halo Collection, along with accessories such as the StealthForm hat and the No Weigh Backpack.

This focus on upgrading top-selling items also gives the company permission to raise prices, a move that is expected to somewhat mitigate the tariff impact. Even so, in North America, Plank expects to face continued challenges in fiscal 2026 due to higher tariffs and softer demand. But the company is fighting back by working to rebuild cultural relevance, starting with football and expanding into team sports.

"Our priorities are clear: strengthen brand loyalty through top-tier sports culture and emotionally compelling storytelling, stabilize the growth by increasing full price e-commerce, boosting factory house profitability and rebuilding wholesale partnerships and shrink the battlefield by concentrating on key product franchises and optimized distribution to achieve more consistent wins, doing less things better," he said.

Increasing its reach with women is also a priority, Plank said. Although the company has built a \$1 billion women's business, its market share has not increased. "That's on us and we're addressing it," he said, adding that the company is "integrating a women-centered approach" into its business that will encompass not only product design but also storytelling to draw females into the brand.

Turning to the struggling footwear category, he said two years ago, the company streamlined its offering, eliminated underperforming lines and focusing on top performers such as the Velociti and Halo. Although the category will continue to be challenged in the short term, Plank believes results will rebound in the future.

Last May, a month after returning

Plank to the CEO post, Under Armour unveiled a restructuring plan to improve its financial and operating efficiencies that was expected to cost from \$140 million to \$160 million. By the end of the fiscal fourth quarter of 2025, the company had recognized \$58 million in restructuring charges and \$31 million in other expenses. It expects the remaining charges to be realized during fiscal 2026.

Analysts on Friday had a mixed reaction to the results. Neil Saunders, managing director of GlobalData, said that although sales declines eased in the first quarter, since 2022 they are down 14.2 percent, higher than the sports category as a whole. "This means it has lost share," he said of Under Armour.

And although the company has improved its product offering and reduced discounting, "the improvement in margins is not yet showing up on the bottom line." He said the company needs to ramp up its storytelling and product assortment messaging to "cut through in a crowded market."

He said due to its internal repositioning and the macroeconomic challenges, "the fiscal year ahead looks like it will be another write-off as the costs of restructuring will join tariff and supply chain pressures to deplete the bottom line."

Joseph Civallo of Truist Securities said that as a result of "brand-specific issues, a choppy macro, tariff headwinds and steep category competition, we continue to believe that visibility into a turnaround remains limited." He reiterated his "hold" rating on the stock.

Zachary Warring of CFRA Research maintained his "sell" opinion on the shares as a result of the company's ongoing challenges and expected shortfall in the second quarter. And John Kernan of TD Cowen said that on top of the tariffs and weak demand, Under Armour is facing a potential cash burn in the spring when \$600 million in debt payoff is due that can "bring cash balance abnormally low unless working capital flows improve."

THE BOTTOM LINE

Talking the Talk, Fashion CEOs On the Future

- Corporate chiefs are controlling the controllables, hinting just where they're at in their turnaround and more.

BY EVAN CLARK

Fashion's bigwigs are not necessarily all-out control freaks.

Some are, of course. But not every chief executive officer needs to have a hand in every nuance of the business empires they oversee. The best, in fact, are generally good at delegating.

Still, when it comes to the regular exercise of reporting financial results to Wall Street — and painting the broader picture for investors — the corner office set is filled with, let's say, selective control freaks.

CEOs are once again “controlling the controllables.”

The parsing of high-level business speak is an inexact art. But “controlling the controllables” is often a kind of low-key warning that there could be some tough sledding ahead — and if there is, the CEO is being as proactive as possible.

It's an acknowledgment that the future has gotten so much murkier.

Much of that has to do with the turn-on-the-dime trade policy of U.S. President Donald Trump's trade war(s) and the uncertain impact of consumers. But there's also the rise of AI, geopolitical uncertainty and more.

While it's the numbers that really speak in earnings reports, the CEOs always have some more to say. Here, an annotated look at how the big corporate chiefs have been talking to analysts over the past two weeks as they examine their present and guess at the future.



The Almost Ready to Turn Around

“In spite of all the macro noise out there, we delivered above our guidance this quarter, a good start to the fiscal year. But the much more exciting thing happening is while the company...Turnarounds, by definition, start with declines. It's been two years of resetting the table and soon we, too, will move to growth.”

— *Bracken Darrell, president and CEO, VF Corp.*



Planning to Turn Around

“While still early, we are beginning to see signs that our strategies are working. Although the global macroeconomic environment remains dynamic, we are on track to stabilize our business this year while establishing a strong foundation for return to growth in fiscal 2027.”

— *John Idol, chairman and CEO, Capri Holdings Ltd.*

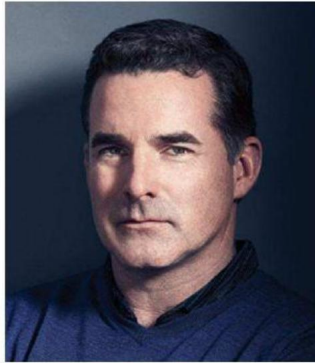


The Good News First

“This strong early performance gives us confidence to take up our full-year guidance, even as we remain cautious on the second half of the year due to potential tariff-related pressures on broader consumer behavior.”

— *Patrice Louvet, president and CEO, Ralph Lauren Corp.*

Giorgio Armani, men's spring 2026



Building the Hype for a Turnaround

“We're undertaking a bold reinvention and rebuilding with purpose to become a sharper, more focused brand one that blends sports, style and innovation with financial discipline and edge. This isn't about fixing the past, it's about unlocking our full potential...World-class financials don't build world-class brands. It's actually the other way around. The only way we win is by creating a brand people can't ignore. Our current numbers don't yet tell the whole story, but the signs are there. Brand health is starting to gain traction.”

— *Kevin Plank, founder, president and CEO, Under Armour Inc.*



Still Riding the Wave of the Future

“For the past 14 years, we've been ahead of the curve, making luxury resale desirable and accessible. Now the circular economy is on the rise. We are not only leading the cultural shift in luxury resale, we are also helping to define it. Our operating and consumer expertise and growing brand affinity drives our market leadership.”

— *Rati Sahi Levesque, president and CEO, The RealReal Inc.*



The Resale Benefits of Trump's Trade Policies

“The closure of the de minimis exemption is likely to cause higher prices for ultrafast fashion goods and to reduce production volumes, both of which could continue to be positives for ThredUp. Second, the increase in the price of new apparel that may result from broad-based tariffs could enhance the comparative value proposition for consumers who are shopping for value on ThredUp.”

— *James Reinhart, cofounder and CEO, ThredUp*



The Classic, in Control

“As we look ahead, we remain focused on what we can control, elevating our brand, driving operational excellence and deepening connections with our customers around the world.”

— *Dani Reiss, chairman and CEO, Canada Goose*

HOME DESIGN

Interior Designer Craig Anthony Longhurst Opens Furniture, Art Gallery

- The trove of finds includes vintage pieces from Pozzi, Donghia, Marcel Breuer and more.

BY JENNY B. FINE

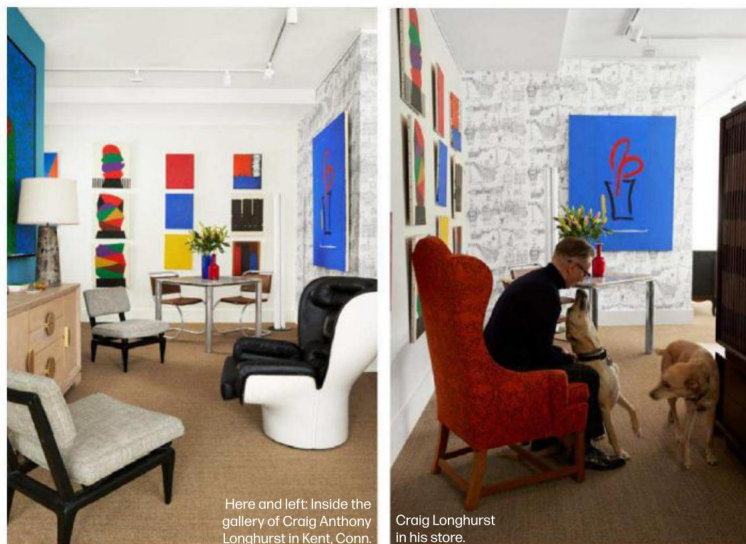
Kent, Conn. has a chic new home decor destination.

Interior designer Craig Anthony Longhurst has opened an eponymous design studio-slash-gallery in the town center. Longhurst, a Melbourne native who moved to New York about 15 years ago, is known for his wide-ranging style, and the items available for sale reflect that. There's everything from 1970s-era Pozzi designs to pieces from Donghia and Cassina from the 1980s and 1990s, with Marcel Breuer — who lived not far away in New Canaan — represented as well.

"My aesthetic is very eclectic. There's no common theme and that's the interesting thing about it," said Longhurst. "When I'm working on a project for a client, I narrow it down, but when it comes to this space, I can be more open about what I buy, because I'm not buying for anyone in particular — I'm buying a piece because I really like it."



His favorites include a set of 20th-century Swedish wingback armchairs with hand-carved rope pattern frames, \$9,600 for the set; a signed Leda floor lamp by Jacques Jarrige, also \$9,600, and



Here and left: Inside the gallery of Craig Anthony Longhurst in Kent, Conn.

Craig Longhurst in his store.

a ribbon chair signed by Cesare Leonardi and Franca Stagi in lacquered fiberglass for \$8,600.

The store also functions as a gallery. It is exhibiting works by Robert Baris, an artist who lived in New York, Connecticut and the South of France, and had a studio in Sharon, Conn. "He has a wonderful backstory — he was independently wealthy and never sold any of his work," said Longhurst. "He painted because he loved to paint."

While the store opened in late February, Longhurst, who divides his time between an apartment in Chelsea and weekend home in nearby Falls Village, finds pieces all over — thrift stores, flea markets, auctions online and off. "I always have my eyes open," he says. "I'm always on the lookout for my clients and myself."

Craig Anthony Longhurst: 27 North Main Street, Kent, Conn., 917-280-8878.

BUSINESS

Farm Rio Opens Madison Avenue Store

- The Brazilian lifestyle brand brings its tropical aesthetic to the Upper East Side with its third unit in New York City.

BY LISA LOCKWOOD

NEW YORK — Farm Rio, the 28-year-old Brazilian lifestyle brand known for its tropical prints and vibrant colors, has landed on the Upper East Side.

The new store at 1055 Madison Avenue, which opens today, marks the brand's third New York City unit, with the other two being in SoHo and Brooklyn. Overall Farm Rio has more than 143 stores globally, with seven in the U.S., consisting of two in Los Angeles, three in New

York City, and one each in Miami and Washington, D.C.

At 732 square feet, the Madison Avenue store is the smallest of the New York ones. The SoHo store is the largest at 2,264 square feet and the Brooklyn unit is 1,083 square feet. The Madison Avenue store is located next to Reformation.

Fabio Barreto, chief executive officer of Farm Rio, told WWD, "The Upper East Side represents a vibrant new chapter for Farm Rio in New York City, a city that holds special meaning as the brand's global debut location. Opening on Madison Avenue allows Farm Rio to bring its joyful, nature-inspired world to a new neighborhood, connecting with both loyal fans and first-time visitors in a fresh setting."

Noting that each location is tailored to the specific neighborhood, he said the Madison Avenue store "is thoughtfully designed to surprise and delight" and that "the Upper East Side store reflects the brand's commitment to crafting immersive, locally resonant experiences."

The Madison Avenue outpost continues the brand's theme of a nature-inspired aesthetic, with a fresh take on the design.

One feature of the space is a striking mosaic installation that reinterprets French artist Dominique Jardy's watercolor wallpapers using more than 1.9 million hand-placed glass tiles. Jardy has been based in Rio de Janeiro since 1985, where she creates romantic representations of Brazil's tropical landscapes, native plants

and animals. Produced in collaboration with Bisazza, the Italian luxury mosaic maker, the decorative tiling took more than 460 hours to complete.

The store will feature an exclusive preview of the fall collection, highlighting printed essentials, bold knits, statement outerwear and accessories, which will hit Farm Rio stores and online starting in September. Barreto said he's confident that their outerwear will be strong sellers, from puffers to teddy coats and knitwear.

Barreto noted that Farm Rio's products are manufactured in different facilities around the world, predominantly in South America, Europe and Asia. The company became B Corp. certified in 2023.

"It is only possible to improve ethical trade when acting fairly, responsibly and sustainably in our supply chain through long-term honest relationships," said Barreto. "Our efforts toward full transparency in everything we do lead us closer to our suppliers and allow the process of monitoring every step of the production chain."

Under the theme, "NYC Dressed in Happiness — You Caught My Eye," the store will offer an exclusive souvenir scarf inspired by the energy of New York City streets.

Throughout the opening month, guests will be offered a series of experiences and treats. From Monday through Aug. 17, Farm Rio will team with Butterfield Market to offer customers limited-edition mango frozen yogurt. Visitors through Aug. 15 will be welcomed with personalized cookies. On Aug. 16, a flower bar will be offering mini bouquets and a complimentary souvenir scarf will be included with every purchase.

As for future stores, Barreto said the brand is expanding in Latin America and will open a store in Los Cabos later this year, which is its second in Mexico.

The brand also has 2,000 wholesale partners worldwide, and in New York is available at stores such as Saks Fifth Avenue, Nordstrom, Anthropologie and Bloomingdale's.



Here, above and left: A rendering of the Farm Rio store at 1055 Madison Avenue.



The Chicago Collective is held at the Merchandise Mart.

MEN'S

Retailers at Chicago Collective Shrug Off Tariffs

● Specialty stores shopping the menswear show were optimistic about the future of business and sought pieces to freshen their floors for spring.

BY JEAN E. PALMIERI

CHICAGO – The men's specialty store contingent swooped into this city last week in an upbeat mood after a string of successful months and hopes for continued solid results the rest of the year.

Although the ever-changing tariff situation was a frequent talking point, most merchants took it in stride.

While prices have inched up on some merchandise for fall and spring 2026, other brands were holding back, adopting a wait-and-see attitude.

Retailers were prepared to pay between 5 and 10 percent more for goods going forward, and will need to pass the increase along. But stores serving a better or luxury customer are not expecting any pushback from their well-heeled customers.

At the Chicago Collective trade show, merchants caught up with their top brands and were on the hunt for items that were fresh and different to offer their loyal shoppers something new to buy. Sportswear and gift items were on the top of their shopping lists since many stores had already placed the bulk of their spring orders.

While the Chicago Collective was the primary draw, two other shows were also in town last week: Show & Tell, which focuses on streetwear, and Outpost, an independent brand showcase. The addition of competing fairs shows the strength of the Collective, which has become the must-attend show for independent men's stores.

Monique Kielar, vice president of marketing, apparel for the Chicago

Collective, said 1,800 buyers attended the show, which was consistent with the attendance last August. Special events included Piloti's opening-night party, which drew around 1,000 people, and the Italian Trade Agency's Monday night event.

The newly added fourth floor, which joins the seventh-floor flagship location at the Merchandise Mart, has been well received, she said. The floor houses mainly showrooms such as Triluxe and M5, which were pleased with the results. "The brand assortment was strong and we want to make sure the assortment stays relevant and flows with the seventh floor," she said.

Going forward, Kielar said the goal is "continue the cadence of success. We are at a peak and we want to make sure that we keep the quality and experience up for the retailers." She said in the future, she'd like to attract more international buyers. Although some retailers from Europe and Japan shopped this edition of the show, the opportunity going forward is enormous, she believes.

Right now it's Italy that dominates – at least from a brand perspective. The Italian Trade Agency brought 62 companies to Chicago, including seven new vendors, and Kielar said the group is clamoring for more space, a request she hopes to be able to accommodate in the future.

Alessio Nanni, head of the fashion and beauty division of the ITA, said in addition to the country's core tailored clothing and high-end sportswear, there was more emphasis on leather goods this time. He said the goal was to showcase the "style and craftsmanship" of Italian brands to American retailers and he will continue to push to add more vendors at the next edition.

The ITA's annual party was held on the rooftop of iO Godfrey, a local watering hole. But the group wasn't the only one partying: Gladson, a fabric mill that focuses on

custom products, hosted a dinner Sunday night at Smith & Wollensky and held a panel discussion on Monday afternoon on the opportunities for women's custom clothing featuring a panel of experts from the U.S. and Italy. Accessories brand Tateossian celebrated its 35th anniversary with an event at the residence of the British Consul General in Chicago.

The Collective added a preview day on Saturday and ran through Tuesday and most retailers were on the floors for the duration.

Ken Giddon of New York-based Rothmans sang the praises of the Collective, calling it "the most efficient show in the business. They do a good job of bringing a curated group of vendors, and if you're in the men's business, you have to be here."

Giddon said his business is "surprisingly very good," on top of what was his best year ever in 2024. Even so, he said he was "waiting for the tariff shoe to drop" when shoppers realize that prices will be going up. He said for fall, he will raise prices by around 5 to 10 percent.

At the show he was shopping with his son Will, who oversees a department called Rothmans Next, which highlights more fashion-forward brands. "Men's fashion continues to change and we have to cover it with a wider net," Will Giddon said. "Every shopper should feel represented. We can't be everything to everyone, but we can be a lot to a lot of people."

"We have done a good job establishing what Rothmans is," Ken Giddon added. "We have a broad base of customers and to make all of them happy, we need to test the fashion edge."

He said Rothmans Next has allowed the company to add 10 percent more vendors to its assortment since it debuted two years ago.

At the show, they shopped Circola for its soft sport coats, along with Surfside Supply, Hedge, Rails, Marine Layer, Latorre and Fradi.

Richard Penn, president of Puritan Clothing, which operates three stores on Cape Cod, said since the pandemic, the Cape has been bustling with the influx of people moving and living there year-round, which has boosted his business. "We've really benefited," he said.

He said sportswear represents the largest part of his business, but tailored brands such as Canali, Jack Victor and Samuelsohn

are also strong because the area is such a big wedding and event destination.

Although the tariff situation impacted sales early in the year, by May business rebounded strongly and the Puritan stores had their best July in several years, he said. As a result, he's optimistic about fall. And although "tariffs are not going away," he said vendors and retailers are working together to minimize the impact.

At the show, he was looking for elevated casualwear for men to wear to both work and events.

Hill and Richard Stockton of Norman Stockton in Winston-Salem, N.C., said their business has been "great" since relocating four years ago next to Wake Forest. Students – as well as their parents – have discovered the store, picking up both tailored clothing and sportswear.

The students who are getting ready to enter the work force are stopping by for interview or first job suits, Richard Stockton said, generally opting for classic styles in charcoal or navy.

Hill Stockton shrugged off the tariff situation, saying, "We can't worry about it. There's something new every day and we're not just looking for lines not affected by tariffs." His son added, "If it actually happens, we'll figure it out."

At the show, they were shopping Billy Reid as well as their two biggest vendors – Peter Millar and Johnnie-O – to check out updates for spring. "They don't change a lot," Hill Stockton said, "but if it's working, why shoot yourself in the foot."

Craig DeLongy of John Craig in Winter Park, Fla., said business at his eight Florida stores remains strong, despite a slower-than-normal summer. And as a "staunch supporter of tariffs," he is absorbing the extra cost right now and will pass it along if necessary in the future.

He said he is "bullish on fall," and confident that his "incredible staff" will help drive momentum through the remainder of the year.

At the show, he said he was looking for "odds and ends" to complete his assortment. "We're not looking to reinvent our vendor mix, but there's one item we might have missed," he said.

Lindsay Morton Gaiser of Andrisen Morton in Denver said some ups and downs at the beginning of the year have smoothed out and June sales were up 12 percent while July was up 4 percent. "So we're really optimistic going into fall."

She said spring sportswear sales were up 9 percent, suits rose 10 percent and sport coats were flat. "Sportswear is having a run," she said. Contributing to her optimism is that some true luxury items such as a Brunello Cucinelli outerwear piece for \$15,000 have already started selling.

Her opinion on the tariffs was that "there's no reason to panic until we fully understand the impact on business." And the anticipated price increases of 3 to 4 percent "are pretty minimal for the luxury customer."

At the show, she liked the look of Paul & Shark, which she said has "evolved and changed," and she was looking for sportswear, small leather goods, jewelry and holiday items because the bulk of her buying was already completed.

Dana Katz of Miltons, based in Braintree, Mass., said he had a "decent first half" in terms of business. Although he's concerned about the impact of the tariffs, the special occasion and wedding business continues to be strong and is fueling sales.

"The tariff situation changes almost daily so we're taking a wait-and-see attitude," he said. He said for fall, there will be a few "strategic" price increases, but he expects the customer impact to be negligible.

At the show he was looking to fill in his fall assortment to replace pieces that were not put into production because of the tariffs while adding some fresh items for spring. ▶

MENTALITIES



Billy Reid's Tuscumbia shirt is based on archival fabrics.

Ted Silver of Weiss & Goldring in Alexandria, La., said the tariffs have caused most of his vendors to raise prices by 5 to 7.5 percent, a cost he will have to pass along.

So far this year business has been good, he said, adding that the gift items he has added in recent years to augment his apparel business have helped lift sales. So at the show he visited with his regular vendors and was searching for belts as well as other potential gift items.

Here are a few highlights from the show.

Billy Reid

The Alabama-based designer got relaxed and refined for spring, tapping into his now-signature innovative fabric choices to update his collection for the season. "We work so hard to get the finishes right," Reid said.

"[Our customers] love seeing the techniques, whether we're playing around with embroidery or jacquarding or printing or working with dobbies," he added. He said the goal for his collection was to offer versatile pieces that can be worn eight or nine months with a soft hand that makes a customer say, "I love the way this feels," he said. "At the end of the day, you want them to fall in love with the piece you're working on."

Among his most popular pieces for spring 2026 was a knit chore coat with a cardigan fit that Reid said could be worn to a black-tie wedding or dressed down with ripped jeans. He also singled out the array of textured knits in the offering that included a polo with a rollback sleeve and a "start-stop pocket" as well as a jacquard camp shirt with a bold botanical graphic.

He reached into his archives for the striped Tuscumbia shirt that delivered an array of shades and fabrics in a button-down silhouette. While the texture and patterns were most evident in the tops, the collection includes chinos and five-pocket bottoms in a variety of colors and patterns. And there was also a whole indigo capsule that included a chambray field shirt and a shirt jacket.



A silk and linen blazer from Caruso's spring collection.



Meyer offers a wide variety of men's trousers.

Caruso

Casual luxury was the focus of Caruso's spring collection.

The Italian luxury brand defined that as "a relaxed yet refined attitude that blends natural elegance with high-quality craftsmanship." What that translated into was a collection of suits and sport coats in silk, wool and linen that were elegant and easy to wear at the same time.

One highlight was a lightweight double-breasted silk and linen blazer in a pale tone that would work for steamy summer days as well as warm evenings.

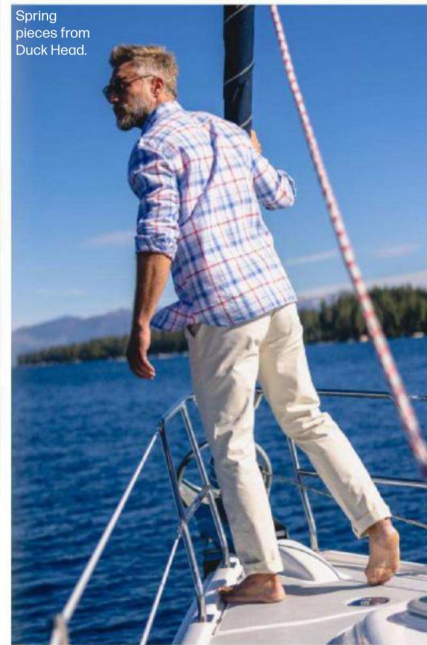
Another key style for spring was a Donegal-inspired jacket in wool and linen with red silk slubs on an orange base that spoke to the brand's history in tailoring but in an updated, more modern silhouette. There was also a linen and silk herringbone jacket in a soft lavender color.

"The spring/summer 2026 collection presented at the Chicago Collective revolved around the jacket – our core product – reinterpreted with a playful and effortless spirit," said Marco Angeloni, president and chief executive officer of Caruso. "Fully canvassed yet exceptionally lightweight, it embodies a relaxed elegance, further enhanced by soft pastel shades and unexpected takes on classic fabrics."

As the company summed it up: "The inspiration here is about attitude – effortless, a little undone, but always intentional. These jackets aren't meant to be crisp or too precious. They wear like your favorites, but look like you care."

Duck Head

It all started in 1865 when brothers George and Joe O'Bryan came up with the idea to repurpose surplus army tents into work pants. This heavy canvas was known as "duck," so they used that as the launching point for their company's name, adding "head," and the now-famous mallard



Spring pieces from Duck Head.

the moniker Duck Head Denim Co. Initially there will be two fits – a classic straight and a slim straight – in two washes, and they will retail for \$178.

Also, in celebration of its anniversary, the company created four special capsule collections, two earlier in the year and two remaining drops: the Ivy in September and Workwear in November. Those collections are available through select wholesale distribution and online.

Meyer

The 60-year-old Meyer trouser company has pants for seemingly every occasion. From chinos, denim and wool to five-pocket, golf and dress slacks, the German brand has numerous styles from which to choose.

A variety of fits are offered, ranging from regular and modern to "Italian," which indicates a slimmer silhouette. A perennial favorite at independent specialty stores, the trousers are high quality, whether they're for the office or the local watering hole. Many of the styles have a pickpocket-proof pocket and a patented contour waistband for added comfort. For the summer months, cottons are king while in the cold weather, corduroy, flannel and thermal fabrics rule.

The family-owned company, officially Meyer Hosen, launched in 1960 and is being run by the second generation of the founding family. The pants are designed in Germany and manufactured in the company's production facility in Romania.

Richard Wheelhouse, the agent for the company, said Meyer is the largest privately owned trouser company in Europe, producing 2.5 million pairs of pants a year. It sells only specialty stores in 35 countries and has been in the U.S. market for a decade.

Wheelhouse said that in the U.S., 60 percent of Meyer's business derives from dress pants, the exact opposite of that in Europe. "There's more formal business here," he said. Its most popular fabric is a washable wool-polyester stretch that is highlighted in the fully tailored Bonn 2500, the model "that put us on the map." Most retail for around \$295.

Although based in Europe, Wheelhouse said that as of now, the company hasn't raised prices due to the tariffs, and in fact, even reduced prices on some five-pocket models. "We're hesitant to pass along speculative increases, so we will probably just absorb it," he said. ■



JFK Jr. and Carolyn Bessette Kennedy in 1998.

MEN'S

JFK Jr. and Carolyn Bessette Kennedy Still Enchant America

- A three-part documentary series, "American Prince: JFK Jr.," revisits stories about America's golden couple.

BY HIKMAT MOHAMMED
AND ROSEMARY FEITELBERG

The Kennedys have endured public fascination for more than 65 years and in the last few years, John F. Kennedy Jr. and his wife Carolyn Bessette Kennedy have once again come back into the limelight with numerous books, fashion articles and social media accounts dedicated to the couple.

Now a three-part CNN documentary series, "American Prince: JFK Jr.," that premiered on Sunday is recollecting all the stories about America's golden couple: the good, the bad, the forgotten and the political.

The series features interviews from close family, friends and acquaintances: Carole Radziwill, Steven M. Gillon, Gary Ginsberg, Robert De Niro and Cindy Crawford among them — touching on the subjects of celebrity, privacy and legacy.

"The reason why I participated in the documentary was because I don't want John to be remembered as the 'Hunk Flunk' or the sexiest man alive. He was a man of substance and I hope that the documentary's portrayal of him captures the substance, as well as the flair," said Gillon, a friend of Kennedy Jr. and author of "America's Reluctant Prince: The Life of John F. Kennedy Jr.," in an interview.

The documentary paints him as a man in search of purpose, in his professional and personal life, something he came close to finding after his mother's death in 1994.

The first episode, "The Boy Who Would Be King," traces the public's zeal for

Kennedy Jr. from the day he was born and the events that followed, from his father's assassination to his time at Brown University, his 1983 trip to India after graduating, failing his bar exam numerous times, the pressures of his mother Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis and the launch of his political magazine *George*.

His magazine was met with hype, with Cindy Crawford on the cover of the first issue photographed by Herb Ritts and posing as George Washington. In hindsight, it was a precursor to the media world's focus on the now common collision of politics, celebrityhood and pop culture. It started out strong, with 97 percent of the 550,000 newsstand copies of the first issue having reportedly been sold.

The first person Kennedy Jr. interviewed for the magazine was George Wallace, the famous segregationist who his father clashed with in the '60s. He went on to interview numerous political figures.

"His point was that these are really human beings who are complicated. His other goal was to find common ground and to try to overcome the growing partisanship in American politics with a magazine that marries culture with politics," said Gillon.

Running a magazine was not what it was cut out to be for Kennedy Jr., who faced constant pushback from his publisher Hachette. He had no real experience working on a publication and the magazine demanded more of his personal time and his publisher urged him to share more of his personal life in its pages.

"He came of age during the emergence of celebrity culture in America. Being the son of a martyr president with a political background, his family name and being the sexiest man alive just contributed to this public fascination with him and

I'm not surprised it's continued all these years," said Gillon.

He adds that in many ways Kennedy Jr. was America's answer to royalty. His family has continued to work in public service and maintained a public allure.

Graydon Carter, editor of *Air Mail* and author of "When the Going Was Good: An editor's adventures during the last golden age of magazines," told WWD, "Visuals count a lot in American popular culture. And John and Carolyn were far and away the best-looking, non-movie-star couple in existence. Each of them had off-the-charts charm. And they had it in equal measure."

Recalling seeing the couple after one of the White House Correspondents Association dinners, Carter said, "They

were sitting outside at the Vanity Fair after party. There was a chill in the air, and she was sitting on his lap to warm up and they seemed like the center of that world without even trying."

"There's a nostalgia for the '90s, and no couple captures that era quite like John and Carolyn. They were pre-internet, pre-influencer, famous but still private, stylish without trying, iconic without knowing it. In a world now obsessed with overexposure, their mystery is what keeps people fascinated," said Radziwill, a family friend of the couple and the wife of Anthony Radziwill, Kennedy Jr.'s cousin.

"Their love story, and the tragedy that cut it short, has become something of a fascination for people born long after it happened. They represent a pre-9/11 America — before we had to remove our shoes and started measuring liquids at airport security. The '90s had a kind of freedom that feels almost mythical now," she added.

But like any fairy tale, the cracks of their relationship started to appear in 1996 after they got married. ▶



JFK Jr. and Carolyn Bessette Kennedy at the second anniversary party for *George Magazine*.

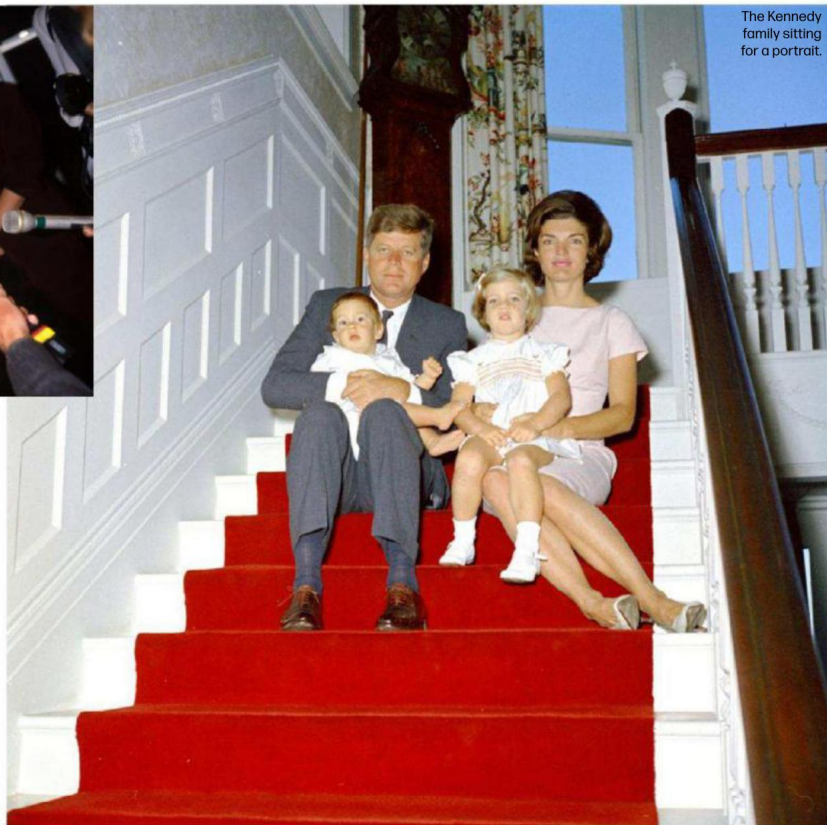
MENTALITIES



JFK Jr. with Carolyn Bessette Kennedy at the premiere of "Air Force One" in 1997.



President John F. Kennedy claps while his children Caroline and John Jr. dance in the Oval Office.



The Kennedy family sitting for a portrait.



JFK Jr. with Carolyn Bessette Kennedy with actor Sean Penn in 1999.

The press started to ask for the same openness of Bessette Kennedy as they did from Kennedy Jr.

"He grew up with paparazzi. It was second nature to him, whereas Carolyn struggled mightily with the amount of attention and the focus on celebrity – it was a source of real tension within their marriage," said Gillon.

"Carolyn just added to the traction that John had and widened his public appeal, but there was a downside to that – there was a split in the family," he added.

Kennedy's former assistant at George magazine, RoseMarie Terenzio, said in an interview, "The fascination with them continues and I am happy about that. I don't want them to be forgotten."

While some of that interest can be chalked up to social media accounts (like @carolyn_iconic, @allforcarolyn, and @allforjohnjr among others), Terenzio said the revitalized interest is "not just about this glamorous couple." She said, "There's always been this emotional connection to

John in this country from the time when he was born. And a younger generation picked up on her, her style and her fashion sense."

The fact that Bessette Kennedy never spoke to the media or gave interviews made her this mysterious figure to a lot of people, Terenzio said. "But part of their appeal is a nostalgia for a period where there was no social media and there were no cell phones. There are certainly a finite number of images of them from the paparazzi and certain events."

Kennedy Jr. never had a cell phone and Bessette Kennedy had a little StarTAC [flip] phone or something, according to Terenzio. "Back then, it was like, 'Oh my gosh, there's paparazzo around. Now everyone is paparazzi. Everyone has a cell phone and an Instagram account,'" she said. "It was a more uninhibited time. There was certainly more freedom and connection. When you sat down to dinner, everybody wasn't taking a picture or looking around. They were just talking

and not recording every moment. There's some nostalgia for that."

According to the documentary, Kennedy Jr.'s aunt Lee Radziwill told tabloids in 1997 that the family was said to have not approved of Bessette Kennedy. However, Radziwill did not disapprove of Bessette Kennedy at all, according to a friend of Radziwill's. "I was in East Hampton with her, when the accident happened and she was quite devastated about her nephew and Carolyn," the friend said Friday.

The former Calvin Klein publicist is compared to the likes of Princess Diana and Meghan Markle, who faced the scrutiny of entering a public family that's inspected under a magnifying glass by the press and public. With her own sense of originality, Bessette Kennedy routinely shopped at What Goes Around Comes Around in SoHo for vintage Levi's, pretty dresses and other finds. "Very aware of trends," she was "really one of the early forerunners to take vintage shopping into a bigger picture fashion moment," said co-owner Seth Weisser. "Her body size was perfect for a vintage cut."

The fashion designer Nicole Miller unknowingly provided an alias for anything related to their wedding on Cumberland Island in Georgia. Her friend Gogo Ferguson, a friend of Kennedy's, orchestrated the festivities at the First African Baptist Church and at the Greyfield Inn, which was once her family's home. To keep everything under wraps with caterers and others involved with the top-secret nuptials, Ferguson referred to it as "Nicole Miller's wedding." Never mind that Miller had been married for a few years.

Miller recalled how the president's son attended a party at her store that she hosted for Ferguson, who is also a jewelry designer, and he sported one of her bone jewelry pieces. As for the ongoing zeal for Kennedy Jr. and Bessette Kennedy, the designer said, "They were just a golden couple. They were both absolutely gorgeous. It still seems like something that shouldn't have happened. Everybody loved John Kennedy over time."

Ferguson told WWD, "There is this elegance that comes with the Kennedy name and the rise of the obsession with the New England style that Carolyn and John so eloquently modeled with their 'quiet luxury.' Carolyn's timeless style has become incredibly relevant in today's fashion, with her blending of quality basics, high-end pieces and more affordable brands appealing to younger generations."

Describing JFK Jr. as "a very dear friend," Ferguson said, "John was an authentic man, but so many people romanticize the relationship they had."

Pressure reached new heights by 1999 for the couple.

Bessette Kennedy had more involvement with George Magazine that caused a further rift in their deteriorating marriage. Kennedy Jr. was trying to gain momentum again for the publication against the backdrop of his cousin, Anthony Radziwill, dying of cancer.

The documentary outlines that the hardships made the couple reassess their lives with the hope of moving out of New York City to lead a more private life and to potentially start a family.

On July 16, 1999, the single-engine plane that the 38-year-old Kennedy Jr. was piloting crashed into the sea, killing him, his 33-year-old wife and her 34-year-old sister, Lauren. "John was like his father, who will always be remembered for what might have been: How would things work out? Would they have worked out the issues in their marriage? Was John going to get into politics?" said Gillon.

He remembers Kennedy Jr. telling him that he didn't understand the American public's fascination with his father's death.

"We could say the same thing about John now – people are fascinated by his death and that adds another level of intrigue and dimension to the way we think about John today," Gillon added.

The next retelling of the couple's history will come from Ryan Murphy's FX series "American Love Story," which is due out next year. And fans and critics are already weighing in on that one. ■



A number of luxury brands have come under fire for supply chain malpractices.

SUSTAINABILITY

What Supply Chain Scandals Mean for Luxury Brands

- Inside the allegations of brands' ties to sweatshop schemes in Italy.

BY MARTINO CARRERA

MILAN – Over the past two years, shock waves have been running through the luxury industry as supply chain scandals uncovered in Italy have prompted strong reactions from stakeholders.

Multiple probes by a Milan Court into luxury brands' ties to subcontractors allegedly engaged in workers' exploitation, abuse and sweatshop schemes have placed the sector's supply chain under scrutiny, all amid mounting pressure on fashion as a result of the global downturn in luxury spending.

The latest case linked Loro Piana to sweatshop subcontractors that the brand allegedly failed to properly audit and follows earlier similar incidents at Dior, Giorgio Armani, Valentino and Alviero Martini. All brands have been put under judicial administration, with the probes into Dior and Armani fully resolved and the judicial oversight lifted.

"According to the prosecutors, brands would have relied on weak controls, turning a blind eye to subcontracting practices. More specifically, there would have been a huge disparity between the brands' ethical and social commitments, also reflected in the supplier contractual framework, and the supplier audit process, which would not have been adequate to identify relevant risks," said Arnaldo Bernardi, a Milan-based partner at law firm Dentons' global Litigation and Dispute Resolution

practice and part of the Italian White-Collar Crime and Compliance team, as well as environmental, social and governance ambassador for Dentons in Italy.

Subcontracting is a common practice, implemented to gain flexibility of production and better deal with business shifts. Although no current regulatory framework in Italy holds fashion companies legally accountable for forced labor or health and safety violations along their nonproprietary value chain, brands are expected to implement robust, risk-based assessment and compliance protocols to detect and exclude such risks.

"It's worth remembering that creating a product, say, a luxury handbag, quite legitimately requires multiple layers of subcontracting, which per se are not inherently problematic," Bernardi said.

In most cases Milan prosecutors indicated that the companies failed to properly audit their supply chain partners, which kept them from uncovering unofficial subcontracting arrangements. In some circumstances the first- and second-tier subcontractors involved third parties in breach of contract with the brands, paperwork reviewed by WWD revealed.

"Once you outsource production, you essentially gain flexibility but reduce control and insight into supply chain relationships. Having extremely strong contractual frameworks is one key step in the management of supplier relationships from a legal and compliance standpoint. However, it is important to verify that suppliers abide by their contractual commitments," Bernardi explained.

The Industry Responds

All brands subject to judicial administration have fully complied with court-mediated auditing procedures to improve oversight of their supply chains.

Loro Piana firmly condemned illegal practices and reaffirmed its commitment to human rights and compliance with all applicable regulations in line with its Code of Conduct. The brand pledged to continue to strengthen its control and audit activities.

The LVMH Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton-owned Italian luxury house said "in breach of its legal and contractual obligations, the supplier did not inform Loro Piana of the existence of these subcontractors," and terminated all relations with the subcontractor in less than 24 hours.

When in February a Milan court lifted

the judicial administration imposed less than a year earlier on Giorgio Armani Operations, a unit of the namesake designer's fashion group, the company said the decision was made because the company had taken all the necessary corrective actions to improve its already structured and tested system of controls. However, the Italian Competition Authority, or AGCM, imposed sanctions of 3.5 million euros on the luxury brand for alleged misleading advertising linked to its sustainability claims. Armani said last week that it plans to appeal the fine.

Last year, judges also placed an Italian subsidiary of Dior, which produced small leather goods for the French brand, under the same form of monitoring, but the company was cleared of any wrongdoing in May. Dior reaffirmed its commitment to "upholding our values of transparency and respect throughout our supply chain" and "dedication to pursuing both rigorous Made in Italy products and the highest standards of ethics and excellence."

Alviero Martini was also investigated over alleged worker exploitation, and in May a unit of Valentino specializing in bags was placed under judicial administration for a year by the Milan court after alleged abuse was uncovered at subcontractors. ▶

"Once you outsource production, you essentially gain flexibility but reduce control and insight into supply chain relationships. Having extremely strong contractual frameworks is one key step in the management of supplier relationships from a legal and compliance standpoint. However, it is important to verify that suppliers abide by their contractual commitments,"

ARNALDO BERNARDI, DENTONS



Inside a clothing manufacturing facility.

Following the move, Valentino said it had intensified its supplier evaluation process across its supply chain in recent years and would cooperate with the relevant authorities to “fully understand the circumstances that have led to the measures taken by the judiciary in this specific case.”

Meanwhile, Carlo Capasa, president of Camera Nazionale della Moda Italiana, is pushing back against the narrative that Made in Italy production lacks ethics.

While acknowledging that wrongdoing must be uncovered and prosecuted, he strongly defended the country’s high-end fashion supply chain against ongoing claims that it systematically fails to fulfill the principles of quality, work ethics and sustainability that the sector has long prided itself on.

“The message trickling down is wrong and dangerous. It conveys the idea that fashion equals labor exploitation and luxury is unethical,” Capasa said.

“As much as it shouldn’t exist entirely, the illegal supply chain is confined to a small portion,” he claimed, noting how, according to reports from the National Institute for Statistics, or ISTAT, the sector allegedly employs illegally about 30,000 workers, compared to a total workforce of 600,000 people across its industrial operations. The tally, Capasa said, is far below other industries.

“According to our estimates, irregular suppliers contribute to just 2 to 3 percent of the high-end fashion production in the country,” he added.

In the most recent webcast reporting 2025 first-half and second-quarter figures, LVMH’s chief financial officer Cécile Cabanis addressed the Loro Piana probe and judicial administration procedure, further adding to the conversation.

“On Loro Piana, we were not satisfied with the situation, especially because we’ve been working a lot since last year on reworking on all the processes, making sure that we had more audits in place,” the executive said.

“This topic is beyond Loro Piana. It’s a topic that the full industry in Italy is facing, and it’s something that we all will have to manage collectively with the association,

with the government as a whole,” she said.

“It shouldn’t create an impact on the [brand’s] image...Still, we need to make sure that – collectively with everyone – we can solve, or at least improve, the situation of the industry that should [have] very fair practices and clean supply chain, so we need to continue to work on that and obviously there is still progress to be made,” she said.

It didn’t take long for Italian industry association Confindustria Moda to respond. Its president Luca Sbrulati addressed Cabanis’ remarks, noting that “there are indeed, and it is evident, instances of irregularities and illegal practices, which must be firmly condemned....However, it is crucial to underline that these episodes are the exception, not the rule. Italy remains the manufacturing heart of global fashion.

“We welcome LVMH’s call for collaboration. These challenges must be addressed as partners, not adversaries, with a shared long-term vision and an awareness that the entire supply chain is interdependent and transnational,” Sbrulati said. “Generalizing all Italian companies as being complicit in illegality is unacceptable, and we will strongly oppose such narratives at every level. Our country deserves better.”

A New Auditing Approach

No regulatory framework exists that sets defined supply chain auditing rules for fashion or other sectors, and perhaps there is no one-size-fits-all solution to aspire to, observers argued.

Luxury companies usually conduct several thousand audits a year on their supply chains, but the checklist-based system is often weak or insufficient and frequently outsourced to third parties, which on one side are supposedly impartial but on the other provide somewhat fragmented assessments, multiple sources said.

“We need to rethink the auditing approach. What brands need is a supplier audit system based on two pillars – a risk-based approach, and a verification process taking into account the specific operations of each supplier category,” Dentons’

Bernardi noted. Most audits currently in place, he said, “cast a wide net but often lack a tailored focus depending on the supplier’s operations...‘one-size-fits-all checklists’ are no longer sustainable.”

The burden isn’t light, at both ends of the spectrum, but for suppliers being audited by big brands, the process can become burdensome. At the same time, brands’ frequent lack of in-house manpower and financial resources – especially at a time of market volatility and a spending downturn – contribute to their inability to check on their subcontractors.

Fashion and luxury brands’ re-shoring initiatives over the past decade have helped to curb their exposure to work exploitation incidents abroad, especially for companies that have integrated their production capabilities via new industrial facilities or the acquisition of suppliers.

“The key rationale is certainly that of securing a high-quality supply chain. Nonetheless, once that supplier becomes part of a group, internal processes are rapidly improved through dedicated procedures and multiple layers of controls,” Bernardi said.

However, as probes suggest, the phenomenon has not erased unlawful practices entirely.

If anything, the recent investigations have forced the entire sector to do better, having raised red flags for ESG metrics in the luxury sector.

“Companies that were placed under judicial monitorship had to improve their supplier auditing process, including through the enhancement of relevant checklists, which were ultimately validated by the prosecutors, and which are now setting a new industry standard,” Bernardi said.

Regulatory Framework

These incidents have highlighted the increasing regulatory and legal risks for luxury brands, although until recently the legislative framework within the European Union has been fragmented.

The enactment of the EU’s Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive and the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive by Member States by July 2026 and enforcement a year later starting with companies with net sales of 1.5 billion euros are seen as partially driving more transparency in the supply chain, although their proposed simplification may dodge the key issue.

Despite not receiving much attention, the EU Forced Labor Regulation that will begin to be applied from December 2027 is viewed as a strong regulatory tool.

“This regulation prohibits the placing or making available on the EU market of products made with forced labor...thus covering all stages of the supply chain,” Bernardi explained. “It mostly takes the perspective of enforcement authorities, detailing the controls that they need to conduct...While enforcement authorities will bear the burden of establishing the existence of instances of forced labor, luxury groups – like any other company – will have to rely on the soundness of their supply chain due diligence processes.”

In Italy, industry associations and trade unions are pressuring the Ministry of Enterprises and Made in Italy to define a countrywide mandatory protocol and policy to ensure the luxury sector complies with fair work standards.

A fashion roundtable held in July at the ministry moved the conversation forward, although no advancement is expected before the end of the summer.

“A national law is needed...and it should introduce third-party certification of the production supply chain, granting a presumption of legality to certified companies based on independent criteria ensuring complete transparency,” Camera della Moda said in a statement. “It is important to note that this supply chain, by its very nature, operates on a national and often international scale.” ▶



A shoemaker prepares the leather to make shoes.

“Regular employment, traceability and compliance must become systemic standards for the sector in order to safeguard our most valuable brand: Made in Italy,” said Confindustria Moda’s Sbrulati. “A unified national auditing protocol is not only desirable but also necessary and urgent. We may not fully realize it, but we are facing attacks even from abroad.”

“It is baffling that institutional players are unable to establish a mandatory nationwide system for certifying legality across the supply chain....Such a system is essential to safeguard the entire manufacturing sector,” echoed the unions Filctem Cgil, Femca Cisl and Uiltec Uil in a joint statement.

According to Confindustria Accessori Moda president Giovanna Ceolini, one first step is ensuring that “employment contracts are limited to those negotiated and signed by the sector’s most representative trade unions, rather than company-level agreements. It is essential that the entire production chain operates in full compliance with all applicable laws and regulations, ensuring fairness, sustainability and dignity for all parties involved.”

A Local Protocol

As many of the claims of alleged work abuse have involved companies based in the Lombardy region, the Milan Prefecture promoted in May a memorandum of understanding to tackle worker exploitation, undeclared work, tax evasion and unfair contractual practices in the fashion supply chain.

Confindustria Moda, Confindustria Accessori Moda and Camera Nazionale della Moda Italiana were among other entities that undersigned the non-legally binding memorandum.

In the signed document reviewed by WWD, the Milan Prefecture proposed the creation of a voluntary digital supply chain platform for fashion companies, requiring mandatory updates every six months.

Brands are expected to encourage their suppliers to sign onto it, as well as impose compliance with labor, fiscal, health and safety laws and implement onboarding processes, ethical codes of conduct, audits and targeted staff training.

Supply chain players are invited to extend compliance clauses to subcontractors through cascading contracts and enforce scheduled and surprise audits.

Companies adhering to the platform, free of charge, will receive a Fashion Sector Transparency Certificate, or “green badge,” valid for six months and renewable, along with access to financial incentives from the Lombardy region.

The proposal’s scope is limited to the Lombardy region, which observers have described as one of its weaknesses.

“Given the existing framework, the platform itself will not be decisive. Once again, supplier registration is voluntary and the territorial scope of the protocol regional – at least for the time being,” Dentons’ Bernardi said.

“Let’s also remember that Italy’s manufacturing base is primarily composed of small and medium-sized enterprises. The platform registration process is time-consuming, and I am curious to see how many small companies that already have long-standing ties with brands will actually be willing to invest time and resources into this,” he said.

“The current market contraction might encourage some of them to make the effort, perhaps to better position themselves toward the brands, but many simply lack a qualified in-house workforce to handle these procedures,” he opined.

“The platform will not be accessible to the public, who will therefore be unable



Here and below: Sewing industry laborers.

to exercise any oversight of corporate conduct,” said Deborah Lucchetti, national coordinator of the Italian branch of the Clean Clothes Campaign global organization.

“The protocol rightly points the finger at the top of the supply chain, where true responsibility must be sought. But it leaves hanging in the air one deafening question: what became of all the workers who, for years, were victims of forced labor, exploited with inhumane hours and stripped of their rights? What happened to them once the brands’ supply chains were ‘cleaned up’ through judicial oversight?” she questioned.

To this end, a court case that began in July that was initiated by six, now-former workers of Z Production – a Tuscany-based handbag supplier to Compagnie Financière Richemont-owned Montblanc – could set a legal precedent in Italy.

The six Pakistani workers, supported by trade union Sudd Cobas and the Clean Clothes Campaign, allege that the relationship between Z Production and Pelleteria Richemont Firenze – a Scandicci, Italy-based Richemont subsidiary – did not constitute a genuine subcontract and so they seek recognition as direct employees of Pelleteria Richemont Firenze.

The case goes back to 2023, when the workers alleged that they were paid as little as 3 euros an hour, working 12 hours a day, six days a week, Sudd Cobas said. The latter organized months-long strike campaigns to secure better working conditions.

After Z Production’s contract with Pelleteria Richemont Firenze was terminated within less than a month of the union agreement, the workers were laid off and now seek reintegration into the Montblanc supply chain, said Francesca Ciuffi, a representative of the Sudd Cobas union.

“It was only when the workers decided to unionize...that things changed. Less than a month later, Richemont terminated the contract, effectively carrying out an antiunion policy and paving the way for the workers’ dismissal,” she claimed.

“Should the six Pakistani workers leading the case succeed, the ruling could represent a turning point for thousands of exploited workers across the Made in Italy supply chains. It would be the first time a fashion brand is held directly responsible



for working conditions within its supply chain,” the union said in a statement.

Montblanc has rejected the allegations, claiming that the “decision by former supplier Z Production to dismiss six of its employees was an independent choice by the company, made nearly 18 months after the notification and 10 months after the termination of the contract.”

Brand Accountability

Perhaps the most immediate impact of these scandals has been on brand perception and goodwill.

“The operational management of client companies cannot focus solely on cost reduction. Quality requires investment, know-how and time. A supply chain driven only by price [wars] ultimately undermines the perceived product quality by end customers. This is a real and present risk,” said Sbrulati.

To be sure, debate is growing among social media netizens over the worthiness of luxury brands’ products.

Many have expressed frustration and disdain over the discrepancy between manufacturing costs and related retail prices, which they allege is proof of worker abuse practices, as widely suggested in media reports about the case involving Loro Piana, which reports claimed sells cashmere jackets retailing for 3,000 euros, which, through its subcontractors, would allegedly cost only 100 euros.

As reported, the luxury label firmly

denied this claim, saying that “the reported cost figures are not representative of the amounts paid by Loro Piana to its supplier, nor do they consider the full value of all the elements, including, among others, raw materials and fabrics.”

“One of the key components of fostering human rights throughout the supply chain is that of ensuring that all workers involved receive a wage that allows them to maintain a decent standard of living for themselves and their family, that often goes beyond applicable minimum wage requirements,” Bernardi said.

“We’re talking about living wages. If the price you’re paying for a handbag doesn’t allow workers to afford this, then yes, there could be allegations that human rights are being violated.... The issue isn’t about price disparity at retail but rather providing a fair price to suppliers that ensures adequate working and living conditions for all workers across subcontracting tiers,” he said.

Capasa, the Camera della Moda president, also refuted in recent remarks the reports about the differential between manufacturing costs and retail prices. However, compliance and fair labor practices are increasingly important elements of brand equity, especially at a time of rising price tags.

According to Capasa it’s not just luxury brands’ aura of quality, exclusivity and trust that is at stake, but “the survival of the entire supply chain.” ■

Letter From the Editor

One challenge with having an annual event is the need to keep the content fresh. There is always the danger of repeating yourself. The themes of the last few years—headwinds, uncertainty, turmoil—all begin to blur together.

Taking a bird's-eye view, however, it's easier to spot an overarching shift that has occurred as the world has become more globalized, more interdependent. There will always be obstacles in the way of doing business. We are simply too connected for it to be otherwise.

This year's Fall Summit, the "Super Bowl of Sourcing," taking place on Sept. 25 in New York City, distills this idea in its title: "Countering Chaos."

It does little good to bemoan the state of affairs, or to try and wishful think ourselves back to some misremembered, halcyon "good ole' days." An environment that often has us feeling as if the ground is shifting below our feet is here to stay. So, we will do what we have always done: adapt.

Geopolitics and trade will be top of mind at the event this year, as it's simply not possible to separate policy from practice when it comes to running your enterprise. We'll explore how to stay nimble and protect margins—even as formerly stable metrics—like the cost of goods sold—become harder to predict.

We will look at the effect this uncertainty has had on sustainability initiatives and the potentially perilous times ahead for workers in many garment-producing nations.

Artificial intelligence is another hot-button issue we will address, from use cases to justifying the capital expenditures when the ROI might be further down the road than one might hope.

I often describe our events at SJ as educational, and there is a reason for this. With so many complex issues facing our industry, it is hardly possible to fully understand the nuances of them all. That's why getting together and sharing our expertise is invaluable. I am constantly queried by colleagues and fellow industry professionals as to what policy changes mean to them, how tech will reshape the future and what strategies are most applicable. Let's all take a day to sit in a room together, find out the answers, do some networking and chart the course ahead.

I look forward to seeing you there.



Pete Sadera
Editor in Chief
SOURCING JOURNAL



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BEAUTY

John Lewis Pledges Large Investment in Beauty

● The British retailer will roll out six multisensory beauty halls nationwide this year, beginning with its Liverpool location. A partnership with Fenty Beauty is part of the push.

BY TIANWEI ZHANG

LONDON – The British retailer John Lewis on Friday unveiled plans to upgrade its beauty offering by investing millions of pounds and introducing six immersive, multisensory beauty halls across the U.K.

The beauty hall at the John Lewis store in Liverpool, which reopened Friday, offers a glimpse of what kind of transformation five other stores in Bluewater, Solihull and Cambridge will undergo later this year.

Upon completion, John Lewis will offer more than 540 beauty counters, almost 70 dedicated treatment rooms, and more than 400 beauty services nationwide.

With gross area up almost 40 percent to 16,000 square feet, the Liverpool beauty hall has 132 premium brands and features 23 new or expanded counters. Trinny London, Byredo and Maison Francis Kurkdjian are some of the new brands entering Liverpool with John Lewis.

The retailer said the new concept moves beyond the traditional counter-based model. It now puts a big focus on service and social shopping journeys, and encourages customers to discover new brands and experience products through treatments and consultations.

A partnership with Rihanna's brand Fenty is part of John Lewis' beauty push. Rihanna said in a statement that she looks forward to connecting with the retailer's "amazing beauty community" in the U.K.

John Lewis revealed that it has seen sales of the beauty category increase by more



The new John Lewis beauty hall in Liverpool.

than 40 percent in the last five years. The category attracts new customers in-store and online, and drives customer frequency.

The beauty hall upgrade is part of a broader 800 million pound commitment to the John Lewis brand.

According to Vikki Kavanagh, chief commercial officer at John Lewis, the retailer is making this commitment because its stores are the physical

heartbeat of the company.

"While our digital store offers convenience, our physical stores are designed for connection and discovery, ensuring customers receive the full John Lewis experience, however they choose to shop. The vision is for the stores to be destinations where people can discover and shop curated collections, learn from an expert, try a new beauty treatment,

or meet a friend for lunch. Ultimately, John Lewis aims for everyone who walks through its doors to leave feeling genuinely inspired," she added.

Millie Kendall, chief executive officer of the British Beauty Council, believes that these revamps will unlock new experiences for beauty lovers across the U.K. and support the continued growth of the 30.4 billion pound industry.

FOOTWEAR

Willy Chavarria, Adidas Issue Apology To Oaxaca Community Over Shoe

● The designer's slip-on sneaker unleashed a flood of controversy over cultural appropriation.

BY JEAN E. PALMIERI

Willy Chavarria officially apologized to the people of Oaxaca on Saturday after the slip-on shoe he designed with Adidas

unleashed a string of online criticism.

In a statement sent to WWD, the Mexican-American designer said: "To the people of Oaxaca – I want to speak from the heart about the Oaxaca slip-on I created with Adidas. The intention was always to honor the powerful cultural and artistic spirit of Oaxaca and its creative communities – a place whose beauty and resistance have inspired me.

The name 'Oaxaca' is not just a word, it's living culture, it's people and it's history. I am deeply sorry that the shoe was appropriated in this design and not developed in direct and meaningful partnership with the Oaxacan community. This falls short of the respect and collaborative approach that Oaxaca, the Zapotec community of Villa Hidalgo Yalalag, and its people deserve. I know love is not just given – it is earned through action. With respect, Willy Chavarria."

Last weekend, Chavarria's Oaxaca slip-on was unveiled at the Art Museum in Puerto Rico, leading to immediate backlash citing cultural appropriation. There was also pushback on the use of the name and the fact that the footwear is believed to have been made in China rather than Mexico.

Adidas also weighed in with its own apology over the weekend, saying: "Adidas recognizes and values the cultural richness of Mexico's indigenous communities and the meaning of their artisanal heritage. The 'Oaxaca slip-on' was inspired by a design from Oaxaca, rooted in the tradition of Villa Hidalgo Yalalag. We offer a public apology and reaffirm our commitment to collaborate with Yalalag in a respectful dialogue that

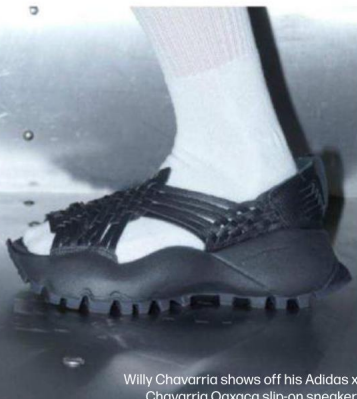
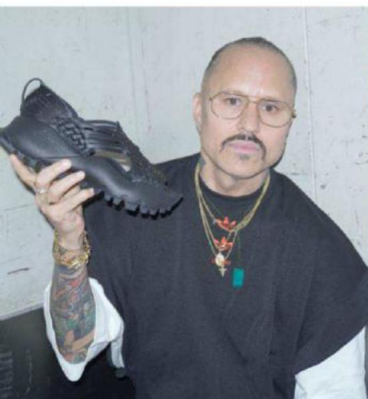
honors their cultural legacy."

In unveiling the Adidas Originals x Willy Chavarria shoe, the designer said it was inspired by the huarache, a classic Mexican sandal that has transcended generations and evolved into a staple of Chicano street style. His version elevated the shoe with an intricately woven upper in premium leather, offered in a slip-on sneaker style with an open toe.

The design also incorporates a thick, exaggerated sneaker sole with functional grip. The sole features a stamped Adidas logo on the side, and Chavarria's name is found on the back of the shoe and within the interior alongside a holographic gold Adidas logo.

Chavarria's first collaboration with Adidas was unveiled on his spring 2025 runway show in New York last September. The collaboration paid homage to his Chicano culture.

The designer has built his reputation on his socially conscious designs and use of fashion as a platform to shine a spotlight on the Latin community. In July, he was named an artist ambassador for the American Civil Liberties Union, where he will focus on immigrant and LGBTQIA+ rights. However, this is not the first time the designer has gotten into hot water over his activism. Last month following his spring 2026 menswear show in Paris, Chavarria raised the ire of El Salvador president Nayib Bukele who said his use of kneeling models with shaved heads dressed in all-white outfits was reminiscent of photos of his country's "Terrorism Confinement Center."



Willy Chavarria shows off his Adidas x Chavarria Oaxaca slip-on sneaker.

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WWD



Amazon and Saks Take Their Relationship to the Hamptons

Gabrielle Union and Dwyane Wade hosted a dinner for the Saks on Amazon partnership at the Hedges Inn in East Hampton, with guests including Naomi Watts, Alexandra Daddario and more. BY KRISTEN TAUER PHOTOGRAPHS BY ALYSSA GREENBERG



Gabrielle Union, Naomi Watts and Dwayne Wade.



Erin Walsh and Tina Leung



Kate Love



Alexandra Daddario

Saks Fifth Avenue and Amazon have hit a milestone in their partnership: a weekend trip to the Hamptons.

Saks on Amazon is at The Hedges in East Hampton for a multiday pop-up, with “experiences” including trivia night with Sai De Silva, celestial cocktails with Markarian, and an all-weekend style suite. The inn’s first-floor lounge has been transformed into a showroom with curated racks of clothing, accessories and beauty products that visitors can browse and have delivered straight to their door via the storefront partnership on Amazon’s Luxury Stores platform, which launched earlier this year.

On Thursday night, the Hamptons collaboration kicked off with a leisurely outdoor dinner at the inn’s onsite restaurant Swifty’s. Dwyane Wade and Gabrielle Union served as cohosts for the event, along with Saks’ Kristin Maa and Amazon’s Trisha Gregory Morse.

“For me it’s like, how do I show up where I’m not too over the top, but I’m not too understated? How do you find that middle ground?” said Wade before dinner, mulling his sartorial approach. He was sipping a glass of rosé in the backyard of a private cottage as he and his wife got



Don Lemon



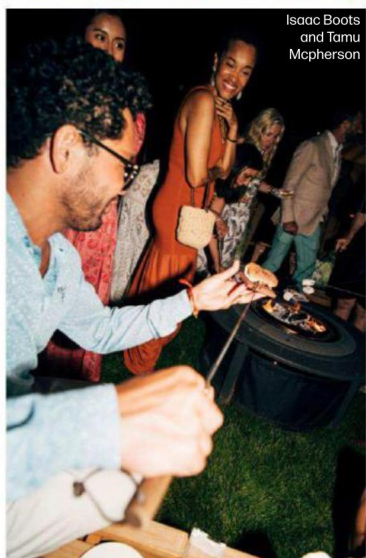
Isaac Boots

ready to head over for hosting duties. For Thursday’s dinner, the style assignment meant sneakers, Fear of God pants, and a beige Balmain emblem polo shirt. And a diamond link Tiffany necklace. “My mentality of getting dressed is like, all right, this is a basic piece – and then I add

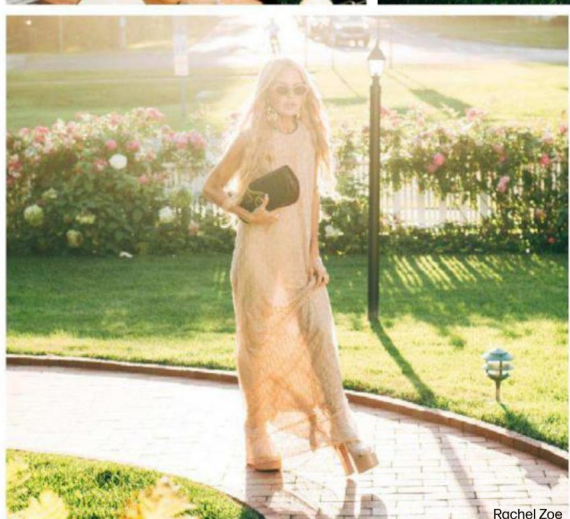
or I take away, depending on what the event is,” he added.

The couple had just landed in East Hampton from Martha’s Vineyard, where Wade launched his cologne Intuition by Aramis. The couple has been spending the summer on the East Coast,

including at their recently purchased house in North Fork, located close to friends. “We all have kids around the same age, so we wanted to bring everyone together over the summer,” he said. “So summer was all about family. And for me, golf.” ▶

David Burtka
and Sophie
SummerGabrielle Union
and Dwyane WadeIsaac Boots
and Tamu
Mepherson

Sharareh Siadat



Rachel Zoe

Sabrina Elba
and Gabrielle Union

Wade is already anticipating a big moment at the end of the summer: his and Union's 11-year wedding anniversary.

"Just by being here, I already got a couple gifts that I can give my wife. I know what's in her cart just by the conversation. So I wanna make sure I'm prepared," he said.

The couple made their way past the Saks on Amazon branded bikes and over to where guests including Naomi Watts, Alexandra Daddario, Sabrina Elba, Nicky Hilton

Rothschild, Saks' Marc Metrick and Roopal Patel, and more were mingling and posing for photos in front of a hydrangea backdrop.

"Do what's natural, babe," Union called out, earning a smile from Wade as she watched her husband pose for his solo shots before she stepped back in the frame.

During cocktail hour, other guests like Don Lemon, Kate Love, Casey Fremont, Joey Wölfler and David Burtka wandered across the property's lush backyard, and

were greeted with a caviar bar underneath a green-striped tent, which will host the upcoming weekend's "experiences." There was also a Hugo spritz cart nearby and fire pits already ablaze for later in the night.

"I've had my eye on this dress since the beginning of this summer, and I thought this was the perfect event," said Rothschild of her "beachy" Johanna Ortiz dress. "I ordered this Tuesday at three o'clock, and it was at my door the very next day."

The speediness, of course, was courtesy of Saks on Amazon. "Usually my Amazon packages are diapers, wipes, very mundane things. So to open it up to a beautiful designer dress is exciting," she added.

"You know, I'm pretty sure we all have Amazon boxes at our door on the daily. I know I do," said Rachel Zoe, dressed in a vintage rose-gold Gucci monogram kaftan for the occasion. "For me, summer means kaftans and wood stacked heels and raffia and lots of sunnies," she said. For Zoe, summer also means time in the Hamptons, in shorter supply this summer as she's been in Los Angeles filming "The Real Housewives of Beverly Hills." This week, filming took the cast out east, and Zoe was taking a few extra days for herself before flying back to the West Coast.

Family time was a big topic of conversation for the crowd heading further into August and the end of summer.

"I have a big milestone moment next week, which is dropping my son off to college," said Watts, dressed in a white dress and vintage headscarf. "So that is both wonderful and sad at the same time." Afterward, she'll head to the Venice Film Festival with husband Billy Crudup, who stars in Noah Baumbach's film "Jay Kelly," making its premiere at the festival.

After a candle-lit seated dinner, guests were invited back to the firepits to make s'mores. Wade detailed his technique, which involved fully lighting the marshmallow on fire. "I prefer it a little more burnt," said Watts, earning high praise for her technique from onlookers at another firepit. Evan Ross Katz and Billy Jacobson helped maneuver the crisp marshmallow off the roasting stick and onto a slab of chocolate. "I think it's a bit of a team effort," they said. ■

Fashion Scoops



Inside the new Space NK in Oxford Circus, London.

Making Space

Customers gathered through the night outside the new Space NK flagship in Oxford Circus to be the first through the doors of the store when it opened on Friday morning.

The flagship, located in part of the former Topshop at 214 Oxford Circus, was a long time coming. Spanning 4,600 square feet, it took the place of a much smaller store nearby. It was designed for socializing and shopping, with interactive features and visual elements.

"This store represents an new inflection and a new era for Space NK," said chief commercial officer Margaret Mitchell on Friday.

"We are so excited to bring to market a new customer experience and our brands are looking better than ever with unique visual merchandising concepts and more brand elevation," she added.

Although the store interiors may look familiar to customers, there are myriad new features including a fully staffed fragrance bar and special areas that focus on single, high-demand categories where customers can play and experiment with products such as lip balms and body sprays.

Chief executive officer Andy Lightfoot told WWD

earlier this year that Space NK was seeing "significant demand across the spectrum for full beauty. Customers are looking for efficacious products and for personal, niche fragrances and unique smells that no one else has."

As reported, the retailer, which was acquired by Ulta Beauty earlier this summer, teamed with the plush toy maker Jellycat to create a bag charm marking the opening.

The limited-edition, palm-sized Amuseables charm was inspired by the retailer's signature black shopping bag. It has the trademark Jellycat smile, soft handles, little corduroy boots and enough room inside to store a lip gloss.

The Oxford Circus store is a big step up for Space NK in London's West End. Until recently the brand had a small shop on Regent Street, which measured well under 1,000 square feet and was working "very, very hard," according to Lightfoot.

As reported, Space NK is on track to open 11 stores in the U.K. and Ireland this year. Earlier this summer it opened its largest store outside London, at the Bullring in Birmingham. That unit measures 4,400 square feet over two floors.

By the end of the year, Space NK will have 88 stores, seven of which will be new, with four existing units moving to larger locations.

—SAMANTHA CONTI

Verdy Summer

Cult multibrand retailer Dover Street Market on Friday kicked off its fall 2025 roster with a summer gift shop pop-up in partnership with Japanese artist Verdy, a close collaborator to leading cultural figures such as Pharrell Williams and Nigo.

Marking his debut in London, the productive graphic artist prepared a lineup of limited-edition collaborations to be released throughout August in a three-part drop.

On Friday, a long line formed outside the retailer's store in Piccadilly as fans of Verdy were eager to buy the co-branded T-shirts featuring Vick, the artist's signature panda-rabbit cartoon character, a giant plush of his more recent character Visty — created during the COVID-19 pandemic to bring joy — and items from Verdy's label Girls Don't Cry and Wasted Youth.

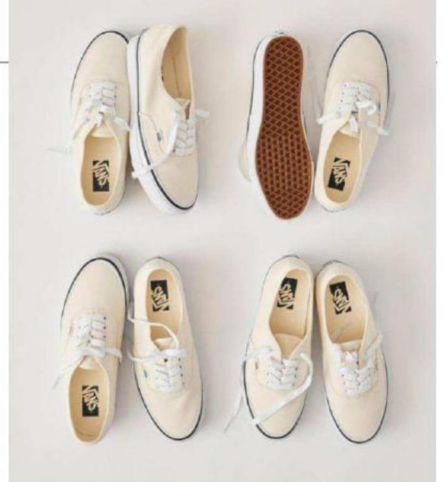
The upcoming drops will include rare collectibles such as a soft vinyl version of Visty wearing a DSM white T-shirt, a New Balance x VK Design x DSM three-way collab sneaker, a Beats by Dre speaker holder and Nike vintage soccer jerseys reworked by Verdy for DSM.

The artist said he felt blessed and lucky to bring his world to London through Dover Street Market, a retailer conceived by Rei Kawakubo and Adrian Joffe.

He added that the items in the lineup represents things he naturally gravitates toward at the moment and was created based on his feelings and emotions.

In recent years, the artist has amassed a global following, especially within the streetwear community, thanks to endorsements from major pop icons

J.Crew's exclusive Vans Premium Authentic unisex sneakers in canvas.



such as A\$AP Rocky, BTS member J Hope and rapper Central Cee.

Earlier this year Guess Jeans unveiled a creative partnership with Verdy as the brand looked to strengthen its presence in Japan. Last year he was named a creative partner at Nigo's own label Human Made.

Verdy has also worked with companies such as Nike, Levi's, Instagram, Coachella and McDonald's China on a project titled the "Best Friends Forever" campaign that included a capsule collection, exhibition and large-scale sculptures across a network of more than 5,000 stores around China.

He has also served as an artistic director for ComplexCon Long Beach 2022, ComplexCon Hong Kong 2024, and for Blackpink's "Born Pink" tour, which ended in 2023.

—TIANWEI ZHANG

Joining the Vanguard

J.Crew is offering its customers an exclusive sneaker from Vans this month.

According to the retailer, it has teamed up with the skate brand to launch a premium version of the Vans Authentic sneaker. The Authentic, originally called the #44 Deck Shoe, over time, Vans has upgraded the classic sneaker, combining archival details with premium materials like cushy, durable and comfortable Sola Foam ADC insoles designed to be antifatigue.

This version of the brand's Premium Authentic reissue sneaker is made with durable 8-oz. cotton canvas uppers, waffle-rubber outsoles and the signature Vans heel tab.

"When I started skateboarding as a kid, I dreamed of California," Brendon Babenzien, men's creative director at J.Crew, said in a statement. "I loved Vans and got a custom pair of Authentics in fourth grade. Canvas sneakers are always part of my summer wardrobe now — they're perennial staples on the East and West Coasts."

J.Crew's exclusive Vans Premium Authentic unisex sneakers in canvas, which retail for \$75, are exclusively available at jcrew.com and J.Crew stores.

This release comes one week after VF Corp. president and chief executive officer Bracken Darrell said he was bullish on the return of Vans.

Despite the California-based skate shoe brand reporting a 14 percent decline in sales in the first quarter of fiscal 2026 to \$498 million, the CEO noted that "things are really coming together" for Vans in the company's earnings call with analysts on July 30.

The CEO added that retailers are also starting to show more interest in Vans. He cited a 50 percent increase in appointment bookings at Paris Fashion Week in June, including new accounts and retailers who walked away from Vans in recent years.

In terms of new product, Darrell credited Vans brand president Sun Choe, who joined last year from Lululemon, for increasing supply and variety in the brand's latest products that already have strong interest, like the Super Lowpro, the Curren Caples Skate and the latest from OTW, the Pinnacle offering.

"We're also seeing encouraging signs in one of our classics, the Authentic," Darrell added. "Plus, we have an exciting collaboration with Valentino, which is hitting the market this fall."

—STEPHEN GARNER



Dover Street Market x Verdy gift shop pop-up.