

Stuart Weitzman Exec Sues Brand & Former Creative Director Over Sexual Harassment

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Just days after Stuart Weitzman creative director Giovanni Morelli abruptly resigned from his post, a new lawsuit contains several claims about what allegedly led to the exit.

Thomas Gibb, the brand's VP of product development & production of footwear, today filed suit in New York State Supreme Court accusing Morelli of "repeated" sexual harassment and Stuart Weitzman and parent Tapestry Inc. of taking no action to remedy it.

In the complaint, Gibb — whose shoe industry career includes stints at Nine West and Marc Fisher Footwear before joining Stuart Weitzman in March — said he endured numerous "unwanted touchings" and an "endless" stream of sexually explicit comments from Morelli.

Gibb further accused Tapestry of attempting "to shield itself from liability" by "permitting" Morelli to step down last week.

"The company accommodated Mr. Morelli by allowing the internal and external statements to be that he resigned rather than being terminated," the lawsuit stated.

On May 21, Tapestry announced that Morelli — who made a buzzed-about entrance to the brand last year, taking the creative reins from founder Stuart Weitzman — stepped down from his post. The company said "at times [Morelli's] behavior fell short of [company] standards."

In addition to his claims that Morelli "constantly injected sexually charged conversation and innuendo" in the workplace, Gibb also alleged Morelli gave him the nickname "Tommy Straight" to refer to his sexual orientation. As a result, Gibb claims Tapestry either allowed, permitted or acquiesced discrimination against him on the basis of his gender and sexual orientation.

In response to an email inquiry from FN, a spokesperson for Tapestry said while the firm has historically not commented on pending litigation, it could confirm that the Wigdor firm, representing Gibb, wrote to its general counsel on May 15.

"On that date, the company commenced an investigation which ultimately resulted in the announcement on May 21, 2018, regarding the resignation of Giovanni Morelli," the spokesperson added.

The situation at Stuart Weitzman comes at a time when companies — pressured by the rising importance of movements such as #MeToo, which shed light on the mistreatment of women at work — are feeling compelled to swiftly address internal behavioral issues. Movements such

as #MeToo and Time's Up have also emboldened more victims of workplace misconduct to speak out and seek recourse.

In his suit, Gibb is seeking monetary damages as well as an “injunctive measures” preventing other Tapestry employees from being subjected to the same alleged misconduct.
