

A Stuart Weitzman Exec Is Suing the Company for Sexual Harassment racked.com

A VP says he was the victim of a “constant barrage of sexual harassment” from the former creative director.

After only a year in the position, Stuart Weitzman creative director Giovanni Morelli abruptly resigned last week. Tapestry, the parent company that owns the footwear brand (as well as Coach and [Kate Spade](#)), [said in a statement](#) that it admired his talent but also is “committed to an environment where every individual feels respected and at times his behavior fell short of these standards.” Vague statements like these are common ways for companies to attempt to bury workplace misconduct.

Now details about Morelli’s behavior are surfacing. Thomas Gibb, the [current vice president](#) of product development and production of footwear, is suing Stuart Weitzman for sexual harassment. In a lawsuit filed yesterday in a New York state court by Wigdor Law, Gibb says he was the victim of a “constant barrage of sexual harassment” from Morelli, and that the company did nothing, although Gibb reported the behavior to human resources.

Gibb alleges that only once he’d begun to seek legal counsel did Stuart Weitzman force Morelli to step down “in an attempt to shield itself from liability.” Gibb also says he is still experiencing “monetary and emotional harm for which he is entitled to an award of damages.”

In a statement to Racked, a spokesperson for Tapestry confirmed the suit, saying that “while we historically have not commented on pending litigation, we can confirm that the Wigdor firm, representing Mr. Gibb, wrote to our General Counsel on May 15, 2018. On that date, the Company commenced an investigation which ultimately resulted in the announcement on May 21, 2018, regarding the resignation of Giovanni Morelli.”

In the suit, Gibb, a seasoned footwear professional who previously worked at Nine West and Marc Fisher, says that working with the Stuart Weitzman creative director meant being the victim of “numerous unwanted touchings and endless comments.” Morelli, he says, “constantly injected sexually charged conversation and innuendo into the workplace.” The suit contends that Morelli, who previously worked on accessories at Marc Jacobs and Chloé, created a “hostile work environment” that made “those around him, including Mr. Gibb, extremely uncomfortable.”

Gibb goes on to say that Morelli constantly made comments about his penis. During their first meeting, he alleges, the creative director asked, “How is your dick?” On a work trip to Spain, Gibb says Morelli touched his leg, mentioned his penis again, and asked, “Is there any way you would ever consider not being straight?” Gibb says Morelli also asked him about his shoe size, before commenting, “Wow, you must have a huge dick — probably 25 centimeters,” and adding, “You are straight, though, it’s so sad.”

Gibb also says that Morelli taunted him about his sexual orientation; he nicknamed him “Tommy Straight” and suggested that he needed to have a “dick in his mouth” or a “dick in his ass.” In another incident, Gibb says he found a drawing of two penises on his whiteboard, along with the nickname “Tommy Straight.” When Gibb complained about the drawings, he says an HR rep responded, “Hahaha I’m dying. Giovanni??”

In his lawsuit, Gibb places blame on the company’s HR department, which he says “effectively allowed Mr. Morelli to operate outside the normal confines of acceptable conduct and made seemingly endless excuses and exceptions for him.” Morelli had been the fresh and celebrated talent at Stuart Weitzman; he’d just

unveiled [his first collection](#) for the brand in January. Gibb says “HR refused to take any action whatsoever and the sexual harassment continued.”

When Gibb filed an official sexual harassment complaint with Tapestry and sought legal counsel on May 15, he claims that Peter Charles, the company’s global head of supply chain, asked him, “What’s your end game?” Another HR rep allegedly told him that “we all need Giovanni to succeed.” Gibb adds that even Morelli’s departure from the footwear company signaled preferential treatment; the creative director was allowed to step down, and the company still cited his talent in the statement, without any accompanying details about his misconduct.

“The company accommodated Mr. Morelli by allowing the internal and external statements to be that he resigned rather than being terminated,” the suit says.

Stuart Weitzman joins a slew of retail companies that are reckoning with workplace misconduct in the midst of the [#MeToo movement](#). In February, Lululemon CEO Laurent Potdevin resigned over workplace misconduct, which included creating a toxic [“boys’ club culture.”](#) Nike has seen [several departures](#) of executives owing to its [“frat boy culture,”](#) and it’s currently trying to make the company more inclusive and diverse [by promoting more women](#). Guess co-founder Paul Marciano stepped down in February after the model Kate Upton [accused him](#) of groping and harassment.

David Gottlieb, Gibb’s lawyer, tells Racked via email that “in this #MeToo era, the public should expect more from corporate leaders than prophylactic measures intended only to minimize liability in the face of a lawsuit.”

“Mr. Gibb complained internally about sexual harassment on multiple occasions, and no corrective action was taken until after he was forced to hire counsel — but still the company minimized the seriousness of the conduct at issue,” Gottlieb continued. “If Tapestry was genuinely interested in providing an inclusive workplace, it would have taken Mr. Gibb’s complaints seriously and not permitted sexual harassment to continue unabated in the first place.”

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