



## **STUART WEITZMAN NAMES FRANÇOIS KRESS GLOBAL PRESIDENT**

*By Lisa Lockwood*

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**NEW YORK** — François Kress has been named global president of Stuart Weitzman Holdings LLC.

Most recently, he was president and chief operating officer of The Row. Earlier, he was president and chief executive officer of Prada and Miu Miu USA and ceo and managing director of Bulgari America.

A spokeswoman for The Row said Kress' successor hasn't been named yet.

Kress, who reports to Wayne Kulkin, ceo of Weitzman, is based at company headquarters at 625 Madison Avenue here. Kress will oversee all aspects of the \$300 million global retail and wholesale business, in addition to spearheading new initiatives and brand extensions.

"François will be a key catalyst in driving new initiatives as well as leading and collaborating with our talented management team already in place around the world," said Kulkin.

"I think there are very few brands with so much opportunity as Stuart Weitzman. It's a real designer brand with strong brand identity. The team is fantastic and the product is impeccable, there's still a lot of room to grow internationally," said Kress in an interview.

Kulkin said that Kress "brings such a wealth of knowledge," to the post, with his past experience in not only footwear, but accessories and handbags.

Weitzman is reinvesting in handbags, a category it has tried to establish in the past. At present, handbags comprise 5 percent of sales, but Kulkin said they are getting more serious about bags and adding more structure to the business. It expects that over the next three years, the category could grow to 20 percent of Weitzman's volume.

Today, Weitzman's business is equally divided among international wholesale sales, North American wholesale sales and direct-to-consumer (retail and e-commerce) sales. In September, Weitzman opened a Milan flagship on Via Sant'Andrea. The Milan store was the first featuring a new retail concept designed by architect Zaha Hadid. Additional flagships designed by Hadid are slated to open in Hong Kong, Rome and New York in 2014, with more to follow.

Kulkin said there are 103 stores globally, and three Web sites — in the U.S., Canada and Western Europe.

Weitzman will establish e-commerce sites in Hong Kong in March and Mainland China in July. The company intends to have 150 stores in operation by the end of 2014, with new stores slated for the U.S., Asia Pacific, Middle East and Europe, among other regions.

It also looks to expand through brand extensions. Watches and eyewear are potential categories that could be housed in its boutiques.