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More Glam

Glamsquad is evolving with a new-look web site, more markets and services – and a plan for retail.

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Top Brass

The funeral of L'Oréal heiress Liliane Bettencourt drew a former French president and current and past leaders of the firm.

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Fashion. Beauty. Business.

BUSINESS

Gass Named Kohl's CEO

- The former chief merchandising and customer officer will become ceo when Kevin Mansell retires as president, ceo and chairman in May.

BY EVAN CLARK

It looks more like evolution than revolution at Kohl's Corp. as Michelle Gass prepares to take the top job at Kohl's Corp. from longtime chief executive officer Kevin Mansell.

Gass, 49, will step in as ceo after Kohl's annual meeting in May, when Mansell will retire as president, ceo and chairman after a 35-year run at the company.

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FASHION

Lacoste Returns to Roots With Paris Show

- The French tennis apparel brand is feting its 85th anniversary by taking its spring collection to the Tuileries Garden.

BY MIMOSA SPENCER

PARIS – The weather might not cooperate, but Lacoste designer Felipe Oliveira Baptista has a backup plan: He'll leave the rain cover in place.

But if the sun shines, then the lid will be off and the label's first Paris ready-to-wear show in 13 years will be in a stadium-like setting surrounded by trees.

"I really wanted to do it outdoors, somewhere iconic and close to Lacoste. It was difficult to find a place that seats a thousand people," explained Baptista.

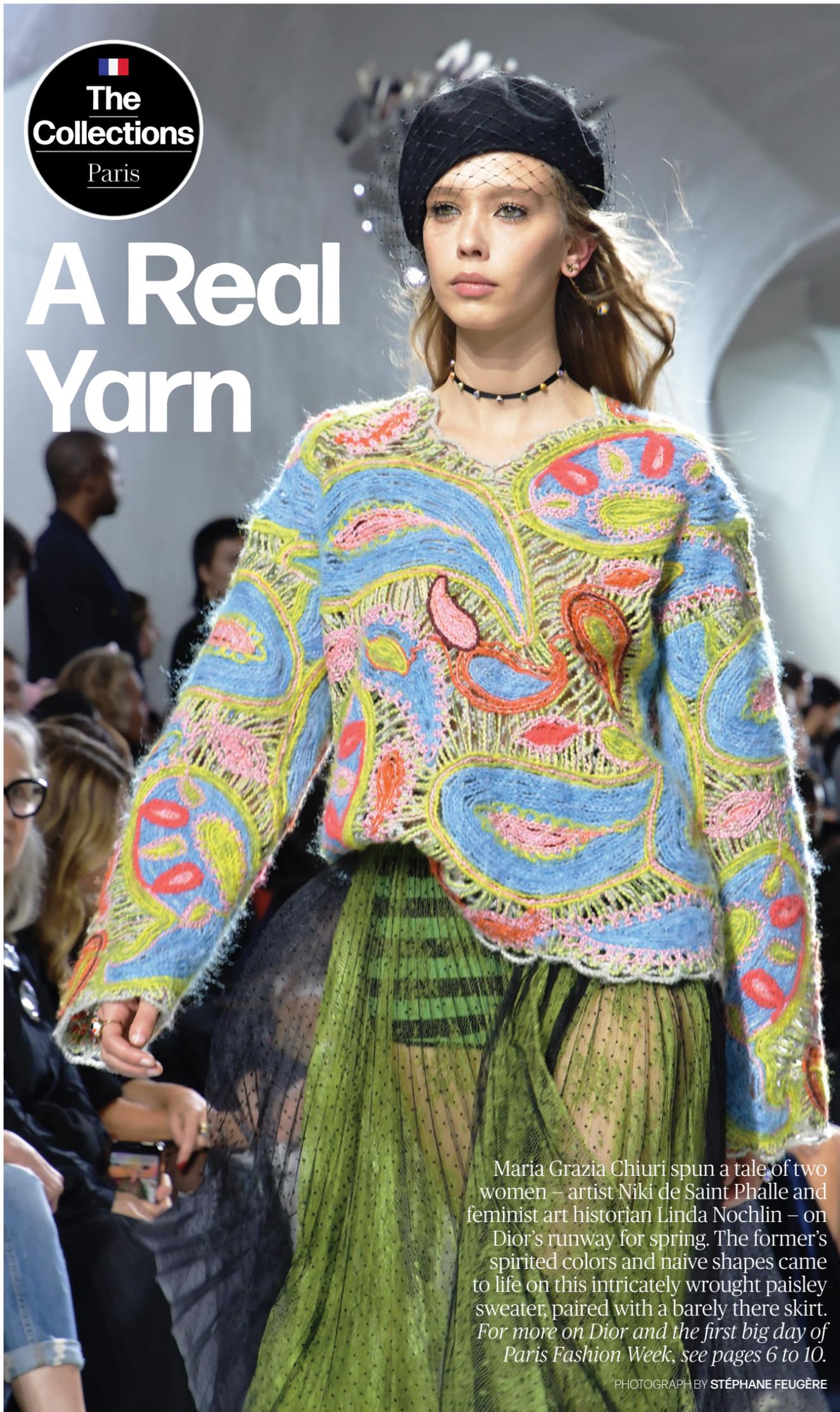
That spot turned out to be a corner of the Tuileries Garden, bang in the middle of Paris and just a stone's throw from the Jeu de Paume museum – a historic site where Parisians played a popular indoor game considered the predecessor to tennis.

The venue signals a wish for the brand

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The
Collections
Paris

A Real Yarn



Maria Grazia Chiuri spun a tale of two women – artist Niki de Saint Phalle and feminist art historian Linda Nochlin – on Dior's runway for spring. The former's spirited colors and naive shapes came to life on this intricately wrought paisley sweater, paired with a barely there skirt. For more on Dior and the first big day of Paris Fashion Week, see pages 6 to 10.

PHOTOGRAPH BY STÉPHANE FEUGÈRE

Gass Named Kohl's CEO

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The appointment, which was long expected, makes Gass one of the highest-profile female executives in retail, where most of the leaders are still men. And she'll have some backup in the c-suite. Sona Chawla, 50, Kohl's chief operating officer, will take on the role of president. The board plans to appoint one of the company's independent directors as chairman.

"I am energized by the challenges we are all facing today in the retail sector," Gass said. "We are resilient, innovative and agile, and will continue to make investments in our business to provide compelling customer experiences that pave the path for our future success."

Gass joined Kohl's in 2013 as chief customer officer overseeing marketing and e-commerce and in 2015 became chief merchandising and customer officer, adding the company's merchandising, planning and product development divisions to her responsibilities.

Before joining Kohl's, Gass spent almost 17 years at Starbucks.

Kirk Palmer, founder of executive search firm Kirk Palmer Associates, said Gass has an "outstanding reputation" and "took the time to immerse herself and understand

the merchandising part of the business."

Palmer said it was a "good move for Kohl's to have an internal candidate ready and I believe she will be an energizing force within the business."

Like most of the rest of retail, Kohl's has been struggling as consumers change their shopping habits and rely more on the web. The retailer's sales fell 2.7 percent last year as adjusted profits declined 13.8 percent to \$673 million, but there are hopes that the company could hold up better than its more mall-based competitors.

And Kohl's has shown its willingness to take a new approach – and an if-you-can't-beat-them-join-them attitude toward Amazon. Last week the retailer said a total of 82 of its stores in the Chicago and Los Angeles markets would offer free, convenient returns of Amazon products beginning next month. The company also this month laid out a new smart home experience with Amazon that will be introduced in 10 doors.

Jefferies analyst Randal Konik applauded the promotions, which he said were expected and would hold on to both Gass' and Chawla's "deep expertise in the omnichannel strategies that will be necessary to drive Kohl's next leg of growth."

Konik said he was impressed, particularly by "merchandising efforts under Ms. Gass's direction, most notably the recent partnership with Amazon, which we view as a smart strategic decision."

The analyst suggested that it was the Kohl's "story" that mattered to investors.

"We see Kohl's as a share gainer, as initiatives to drive traffic appear to be taking hold, including positive transactions in the month of July (an anomaly in



the retail world)," Konik said. "We believe the combination of enhanced marketing initiatives and the addition of new brands are helping attract a new customer base."

Gass is already responsible for a big part of the company's current strategy. Mark Altschwager, a retail analyst at Robert W. Baird & Co., said, "We would expect a smooth leadership transition and continuation of the current strategy" under Gass.

Mansell added: "Michelle has been an instrumental leader in shaping the future at Kohl's – one where we continue to put the customer first, focus on innovation, speed and agility and remain dedicated to the long-term financial health of the business. Michelle's leadership of our merchandise and marketing organizations has proven her talent, passion, vision and readiness to lead our organization."

"She was a key leader driving the creation of our long-term strategic framework, the Greatness Agenda, led our focus on becoming the active and wellness destination for families, launched our new loyalty program, and is responsible for bringing in new categories, partners and brands including the company's launch of Under Armour earlier this year and our recently announced collaborations with Amazon," the outgoing CEO said. "The retail industry is going through a transformational amount of change and Michelle is extremely well-qualified and positioned to lead Kohl's through this evolution."

Mansell helped grow Kohl's from a local Milwaukee retailer with a dozen stores to a national powerhouse. He succeeded Larry Montgomery as CEO in 2008, shepherded the company through the Great Recession and set it on an omnichannel path with a \$3 billion e-commerce business.

Investors, who are often skittish in the face of any change, pushed Kohl's stock down for much of the day on Tuesday, but the stock strengthened in afternoon trading and closed up 0.1 percent to \$46.27.

"I am energized by the challenges we are all facing today in the retail sector."

– MICHELLE GASS

MEN'S

Duck Head Set for Relaunch

- The brand is being overseen by Oxford Industries' Lanier division, which will launch with e-commerce at the end of September.

BY JEAN E. PALMIERI

Just over a year ago, Oxford Industries quietly bought the Duck Head trademark. But at the end of this month, the Atlanta-based manufacturer is going to make some noise as it relaunches the venerable men's wear brand.

"There's a lot of resonance with this brand," said Wesley Howard, president of Oxford's Lanier Clothes division, which is spearheading the return of the Duck Head label. "It speaks to the authority of the brand – there's a lot of emotional connection."

Duck Head traces its history to 1865 when two Nashville brothers, George and Joe O'Bryan, turned duck – heavy canvas used for Army tents – into sturdy work pants and overalls. The company's pants with their mallard logo became a wardrobe staple and were especially popular in

the South. The company changed hands several times over the years and in 2013 was sold to Prospect Brands LLC, a joint venture between apparel industry veteran Tom Nolan and McCarthy Capital Fund V, an Omaha-based private equity firm. Although Prospect had big plans to revitalize the brand, they were never realized and Nolan resigned as president and chief executive officer early last year.

For the past year, Howard, along with former Tommy Bahama CEO Terry Pillow, who now serves as an adviser to Oxford, have been working with the company's design team on new positioning for the brand. They have created a comprehensive marketing plan and will launch with an e-commerce-only play at the end of

September. Down the road, Oxford plans to wholesale again as well.

"In the mid-1980s, it was a \$150 million business and it was basically selling chinos for \$49," said Pillow, an Arkansas native who grew up knowing about Duck Head. "We haven't done one nickel of commerce since we bought the brand, but we're in this for the long term. We think it can be a complete lifestyle brand like Tommy and Lilly."

The cash cows for Oxford Industries are its Tommy Bahama and Lilly Pulitzer labels. The group also owns Southern Tide, another Southern-themed brand that it purchased last spring.

Howard said Lanier's expertise in sourcing and design will serve Duck Head well

as it prepares to relaunch. The Lanier division, which has sales of more than \$100 million, markets and manufactures men's dress and casual apparel for Kenneth Cole, Nick Graham and others.

As a result, "it made the most sense" for Oxford to put Duck Head under the Lanier umbrella, Howard said. "This is a good place to nurture and build a brand."

Pillow added: "We have a whole infrastructure in place within Lanier with all the back-end pieces. We just needed the front end."

Pillow said the decision was made to "put our stake in the ground with chinos, surrounded by other items." Not only is Duck Head's history in chinos, it's also the "second pant" in every man's wardrobe after jeans, Pillow added.

The plan is also to slowly introduce Oxford shirts, polos, T-shirts, work shirts and denim shirts. More products will be added down the road and Duck Head may add women's wear in the future.

Although not a sports brand, it will have a distinct sporting bent and will be targeted to an active man aged 35 to 45 years.

Oxford's update of the brand includes brass buttons with a mallard head in a circle that is a nod to the original logo. Buttons are real horn with brass inlay, belt loops are sewn into waistbands. The chinos will have 2 percent stretch for comfort and cotton herringbone fabrics line the pockets.

Prices will be elevated from the original and will include chinos and shirts for \$118, T-shirts for \$38 to \$48 and two-button polos for \$89. This will position the brand just under other leaders in the premium chino market such as Bill's Khakis, whose trousers retail for around \$185.



A look from the new Duck Head collection.