

RETAIL

Saks defines New Luxury with latest renovation rollout

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Saks Fifth Avenue's innovative store design. Image credit: Saks

By BRIELLE JAEKEL

Department store chain Saks Fifth Avenue has concluded the next phase of its flagship renovation process as it seeks to build what it believes is the New Luxury shopping experience, focusing on product assortment, a new form of heightened service and exclusive offerings.

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Saks is starting off its new main floor opening with a series of more than 100 exclusives developed with brand partners to celebrate its emphasis on product. In addition to a one-of-a-kind escalator as a focal piece, Saks' flagship location is also grabbing attention with its impressive handbag selection.

"We have created a luxury handbag shopping experience unlike any other in New York City – the new main floor at Saks Fifth Avenue offers an unprecedented assortment and world-class service" said Tracy Margolies, chief merchant of **Saks Fifth Avenue**. "To celebrate the opening we worked closely with our partners to create over 100 exclusive products specifically for our customers."

Modern department store

With the opening of its new 53,000-square-foot main floor, Saks has tripled its handbag offering with an additional 14 brands as well as more products from its already established brand partners.



Saks' new ground floor. Image credit: Saks

Architecture design firm OMA/Rem Koolhaas designed an eye-catching escalator in vibrant but translucent colors. The escalator joins the main floor to the newly launched Beauty 2.0 second floor as well as the jewelry Vault below, which will be unveiled this year.

The ground level is also connected to the second floor via a new atrium that features a 60-by-20-inch LED screen.

Saks states that its new aisles are designed based on the runway for a heightened luxury experience, complete with floors from Italy.

Glass fixtures created from two-way mirrors, folded metal tables and a special 600-square-foot space for installations are also new to the floor.

On staff will be 20 Saks Service Advisors as well as 50 Handbag Style Advisors, who will focus on multi-brand knowledge to provide shoppers with the best recommendations that fit their needs. Many individuals on staff are multilingual to accommodate a wide range of consumers.



Burberry focuses on accessories. Image credit: Saks

Customization services such as monogramming, embossing, hand stamping, artwork and graffiti will be available on a complimentary basis with purchase.

In addition to the installations, Saks will also be hosting a variety of events and experiences, such as Logan Real monogramming and hand-painting merchandise, hand-painting with Jaydee Studios and Royce hand-stamping.

Saks' updates

Later on this year, Saks plans to roll out more updates as part of its Grand Renovation, including an overhauled men's section and the opening of the Vault.

The department store chain's major renovation was to make way for the addition of more accessories on its ground floor, but its new execution of the beauty department could be indicative of an emerging trend.

Saks' uptown New York store has undergone significant refurbishment beyond a simple facade uplift, with a

makeover in fundamental methods of business. The retailer's newly revamped beauty department, named Beauty 2.0, has been moved to the second floor and offers a new strategy toward cosmetics buying to compete with retailers such as Sephora and Ulta ([see story](#)).

However, big changes such as this can come with growing pains.

Saks is countersuing Cartier after the jeweler brought a suit claiming that the retailer's changes to its flagship store were hurting its business.

Cartier's suit centers on its five-year lease for space on the first floor of Saks, which the retailer seeks to end early as part of its revamped ground level concept centered on handbags and leather goods. According to a report from *Women's Wear Daily*, Saks says it will see more than \$55 million in damages due to Cartier's refusal to move ([see story](#)).

"The size and scale of the new main floor enables us to showcase the best handbag and accessory designers in the world, demonstrating Saks Fifth Avenue's strong fashion point of view," Ms. Margolies said. "We are confident that the overall presentation, including high-design shop-in-shops combined with personalization and customization services, will truly surprise and delight our customers."

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