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Take a Look

The art of visual merchandising should never be an afterthought for physical retailers. For most shoppers, windows and displays not only help drive them to make a purchase, they also create lasting impressions, setting a tone for brands or store experiences. It's said that humans have an attention span of eight seconds (a figure that varies widely from study to study), and regardless of whether it's eight seconds, 10 or even more, retailers have a limited amount of time to make an impact – and what better way to capture their attention than a stunning window or cleverly planned product display.

As our “Visual” issue, this July/August edition features not only our 32nd annual International Visual Competition (pg. 30, celebrating temporary retail like pop-ups, windows and storewide campaigns), it also has an in-depth look at the latest visual merchandising trends in store and in windows (pg. 40), penned by our longtime U.K.-based contributing writer, Georgia Mizen.

With another focus on the importance of visual merchandising, our latest column (pg. 18) – dubbed “On Display” – written by MBH's Cynthia Ortiz (and Intl. President of the Retail Design Institute), examines the importance of synchronized store design and visual merchandising departments within businesses. This new section replaces our previous Next UX column and will feature rotating content from a variety of retail industry experts focusing on a range of topics. (If you're interested in having your voice heard, be sure to email the *VMSD* editors at vmsd@smartworkmedia.com with your ideas. We'd love to hear from you!)

Before I let you explore the amazing projects within this issue's pages, I'd like to throw in a reminder to register for our 25th annual International Retail Design Conference (IRDC), coming to Providence, R.I., this Oct. 22-23.

Between keynote presenters like “near futurist” Neil Redding, economist Sarah Quinlan and our new closing experience facilitated by AGAR, attendees will have all their senses engaged this year through sights, sounds and even smells. Also new this year is a “young professional” registration rate, allowing you to bring a colleague who's new to the industry and give them the exposure they need to succeed. As usual, IRDC will be co-located with the Shop! Ideation Conference & Retail Challenge – the latter of which (Retail Challenge) will have a focus on the shoe and streetwear brand Snipes. For more information on either events or to register, visit irdconline.com or shop-ideation.com.

Until then, enjoy the rest of your summer – and stay cool out there!



CARLY HAGEDON

Editor-in-Chief, IRDC Co-Chair



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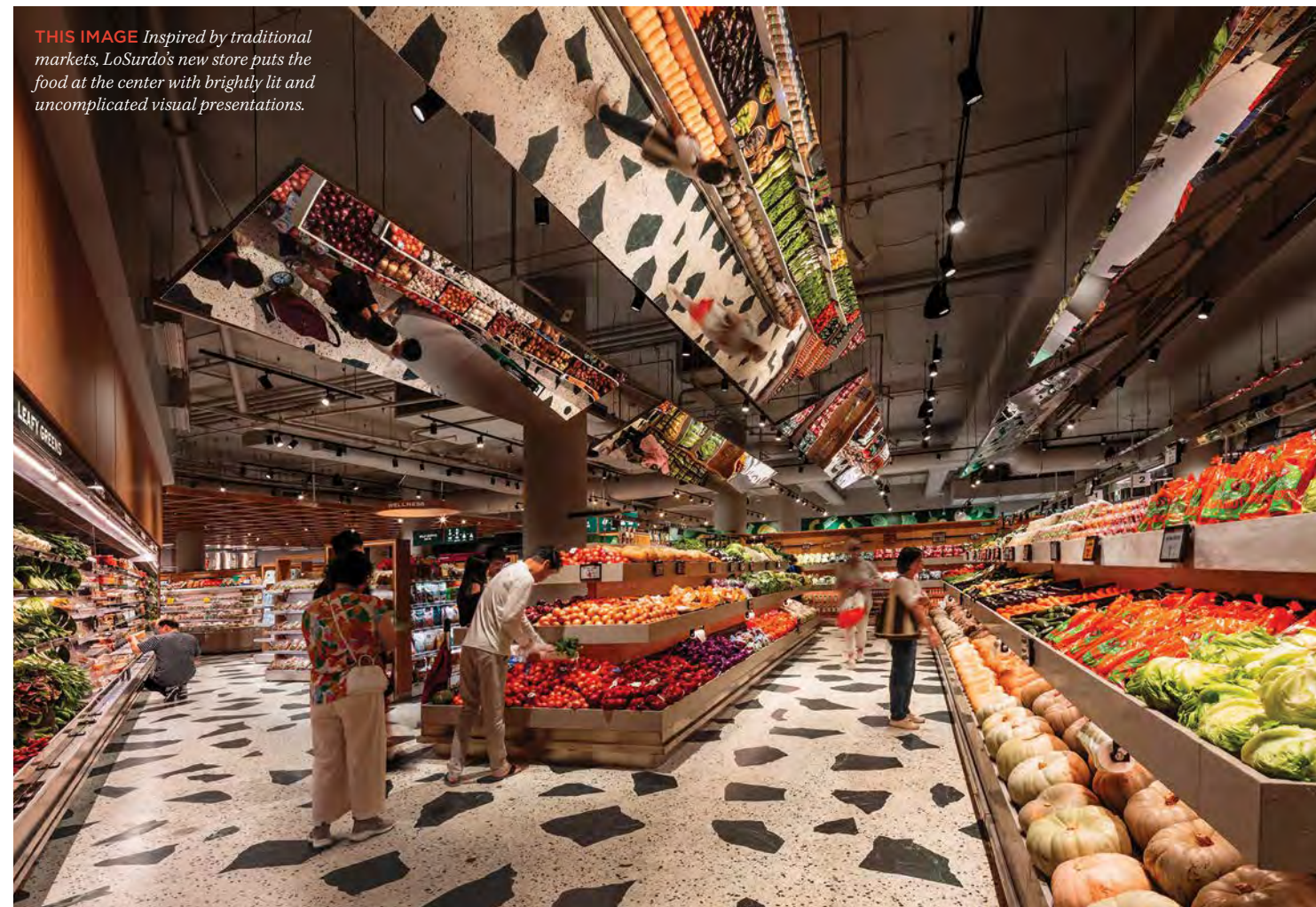
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TREVOR MEIN, MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA

THIS IMAGE Inspired by traditional markets, LoSurdo's new store puts the food at the center with brightly lit and uncomplicated visual presentations.

LOSURDO'S FRESH FOOD MARKET, SYDNEY

Traditional street-food markets, with their buzzy energy and boundless stalls of brilliant produce, were the inspiration behind the newly opened LoSurdo's Fresh Food Market in Sydney's Chatswood Chase shopping center. The more than 15,000-square-foot, family-owned flagship offers an uncomplicated and uncluttered shopping experience where the food is the hero. Every visit, from a weekly grocery trip to an aisle-



by-aisle hunt for unfamiliar recipe ingredients, is meant to evoke a sensorial and emotional experience. The market should bring joy, says Mark Landini, Creative Director at Landini Associates (Sydney), which partnered with the premium grocer for the flagship's design. (The design of the original LoSurdo's location was one of the Australian design studio's founding food projects 30 years ago.)

"When it comes to local markets, the design should be invisible," Landini says. "It's all about the merchandise – how it's presented, lit and experienced by customers. Our new design for LoSurdo's reflects this philosophy, something that taps into the

psyche of customers all over the world, offering a vibrant marketplace where produce, fresh food and connection take center stage while promoting operational efficiency for the business."

Inside the store, the in-house bakery, butcher, live seafood counter and deli showcase the retailer's commitment to craftsmanship with on-hand experts at the ready. The counters recall traditional food markets with unique signage that features hanging cured meats or wheels of cheese stacked high overhead. Within the locally sourced produce area, angled ceiling mirrors reflect the colorful fruits and veggies, amplifying their abundance while also spotlighting the bold, oversized Italian terrazzo flooring underfoot. —Lauren Mang



CHICKEN GUY!, WESLEY CHAPEL, FLA.

Restaurateur Robert Earl teamed with celebrity chef and television personality Guy Fieri to open Chicken Guy! (Lake Buena Vista, Fla.), a fast-casual concept starring chicken tenders topped with sauces alongside sandwiches, salads, fries and shakes. Since its 2018 launch at Walt Disney World Resort's Disney Springs, its creators are betting on a new prototype to speed expansion.

In January, a new Chicken Guy! location opened near Tampa in Wesley Chapel, Fla., with design duties handled by api(+). The Tampa-based design firm worked with Earl and Fieri from the outset as it launched its latest concept. This new spot represents an evolution of the original, according to Jeffrey Nader, Studio Director, api(+). The ground-up construction project includes outdoor seating and dual drive-thru service lanes.

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The 3870-square-foot location is almost evenly divided between the customer-facing order and dining areas and the food prep. The prep area has "upgraded elements includ[ing] automated freezers and fry machines that have taken some guesswork out of the process for better consistency," Nadar says. These quality assurances mean more time for employees to serve customers and other tasks.



Equally important was allowing the environment to reflect Fieri's colorful and playful personality – there's even a carve-out for 'Guy's Gear,' featuring branded merchandise. Brick walls, metal pendant lighting and metal seating at wood-topped tables provide an industrial backdrop to 'in-your-face' graphics featuring its signature palette – egg-yolk yellow and a fiery shade of red-orange.

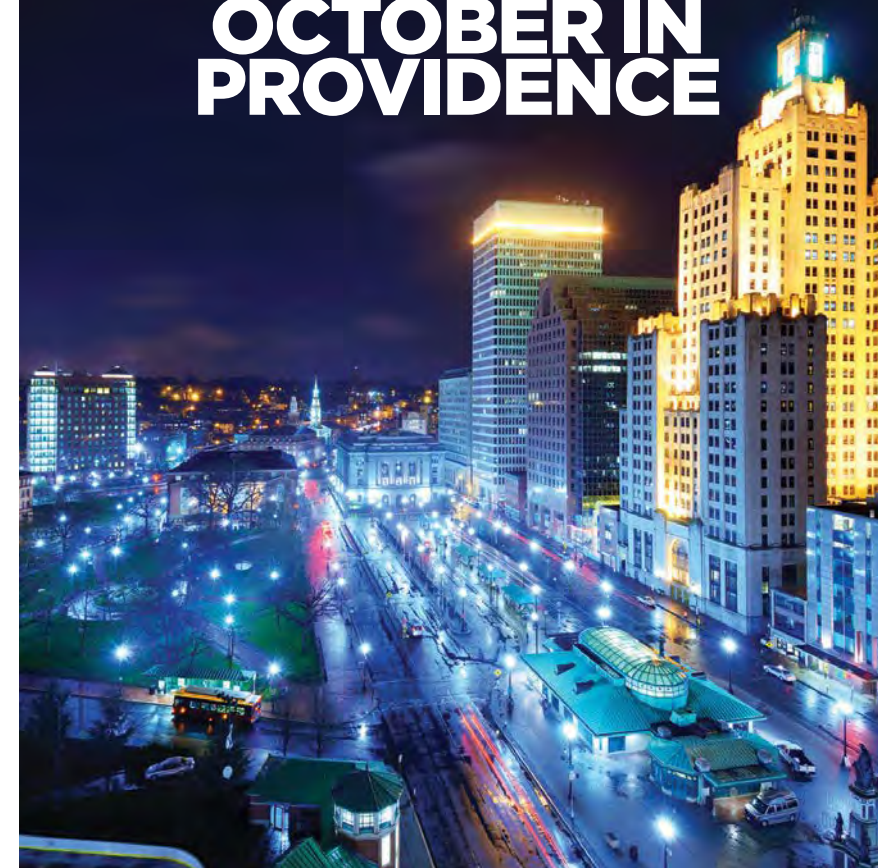
Graphics are key for this new concept, given the restaurant's location. "Wesley Chapel is a growing area and there are a lot of bland big boxes," says Juan F. Romero, api(+)'s President and CEO. From the building's painted walls to exterior signage and signature "Flavortown" graphic call out, "this project does a really good job of reminding people they are there."

—Janet Groeber

THE GOODS

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The 2025 International Retail Design Conference (IRDC) is quickly approaching! Taking place this Oct. 22-23 in Providence, R.I., IRDC is celebrating its 25TH consecutive year with immersive experiences, hands-on workshops, unique networking opportunities and engaging events. Always a highlight, the Iron Merchant Challenge, co-hosted by ZenGenius, is now entering its 19TH year – styled as a cocktail party, participate or watch fellow attendees compete to create a window display using a secret ingredient unveiled on-site. Registration is now open, so be sure to secure your spot today by visiting irdconline.com or vmsd.com. And for our New England attendees – this year, you're only a train ride away! Hop on board and join us in the Creative Capital this fall.



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ON OUR RADAR RALPH LAUREN, SAN FRANCISCO

After five years of absence, Ralph Lauren (New York) returns to San Francisco with a new Polo Ralph Lauren location in the city's Jackson Square Historic District. Embellished by hand-painted gold leaf and brass signage, the dark green storefront welcomes guests into an open, loft-like interior layout. The stained oak floors, white-painted brick walls and an open wood joist ceiling showcase the historic building's architectural craftsmanship and evoke the bespoke vintage aesthetic of the Ralph Lauren brand. Decorative wall art, reclaimed antique fixtures and millwork cases add accents of warm charm. —OT

ON OUR RADAR LOUIS VUITTON, SHANGHAI

All aboard! Paris-based retailer Louis Vuitton opened a store shaped like a cruise ship in Shanghai's Nanjing West Road business district, Taikoo Hui, in late June. Dubbed "The Louis" and encompassing more than 17,000 square feet and towering nearly 100 feet tall, the experience combines retail, hospitality and exhibition spaces spread across three levels, the lower two of which are dedicated to the exploration of the brand's storied history. Customer interaction is abound with live demos by artisans in various testing and workshop areas. Complete with a café (Le Café Louis

RIGHT The store's exterior features Louis Vuitton's monogram and a cabin that resembles the brand's iconic travel trunks.



ROBERT WAT/STOCK BY GETTY IMAGES

Vuitton) and gift shop, the new ship-shaped store also features a monogram on its expansive hull and a cabin constructed to look like iconic LV trunks. According to the Louis Vuitton in-

house design team, as reported by *Forbes*, the cruise liner pays homage to the port culture of Shanghai while offering a nod to the retailer's history of supplying trunks intended for oceanic journeys.—CH

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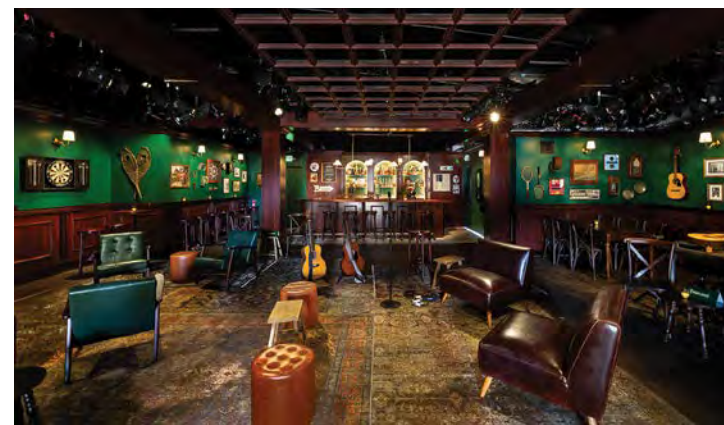
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THE GOODS

ON OUR RADAR THE OLD PHONE PUB, IPSWICH, MASS.

Fully operational as a pub complete with traditional culinary fare and drinks, the Old Phone Pub was a temporary installation in Ipswich, Mass., built to film the latest music video for Grammy-winning musician Ed Sheeran. The pub's exterior was coated in various shades of green with custom graphics that evoked classic English style. The interior is dark yet cozy and welcoming with a central hearth, warm wood paneling, a dark green color palette, leather seating and vintage memorabilia. The pub was also fitted with interactive technology, which allowed fans to send in messages that were projected onto the pub's walls. Ultimately, the pub served two fronts: first as a visually rich set for Sheeran's music video and second as a functional pub to be enjoyed by the residents of Ipswich. —OT



ABOVE Inspired by English pubs, the installation for Ed Sheeran's new music video was fully operational with drinks and food.

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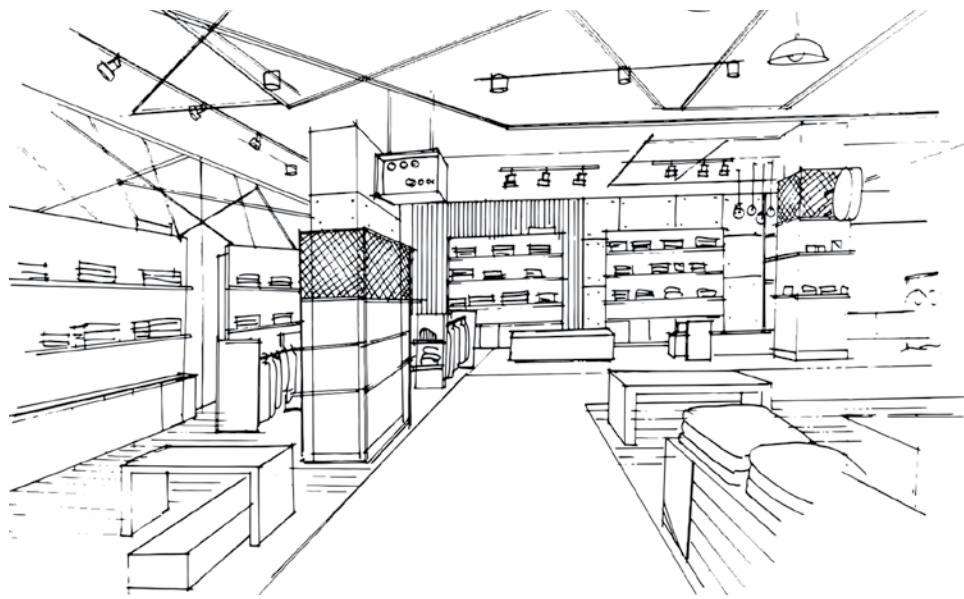
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THE POWER OF UNITY

Why visual merchandising and store design must work together.

BY CYNTHIA ORTIZ | GUEST WRITER

WITHIN MY RETAIL CAREER, I have had the privilege to work on both the visual merchandising side of the business as well as the store design/architectural side. I always found it strange that in many companies, these departments rarely interact with one another. In a retail landscape marked by heightened competition and ever-evolving consumer expectations, the alignment of visual merchandising and store design has become a crucial differentiator. And though these two disciplines have traditionally been treated as separate functions, their combined impact on customer experience, brand perception, and sales performance cannot be overlooked. To thrive in today's marketplace, retailers must recognize and harness the synergies between visual merchandising and store design.



THE FOUNDATION: STORE DESIGN

Store design lays the groundwork for the customer experience. It involves the strategic planning of physical spaces to create an inviting, functional and brand-aligned environment. Key elements of effective store design include:

→ **Flow and Layout:** A well-planned layout

ensures smooth customer navigation and encourages exploration.

→ **Lighting:** Proper lighting sets the mood, highlights key areas and enhances product appeal.

→ **Materials and Fixtures:** The choice of materials and fixtures reflects the brand's identity and

supports the durability and functionality of the space.

→ **Zoning:** Distinct zones within the store can guide customers to specific categories, promotions or experiential areas.

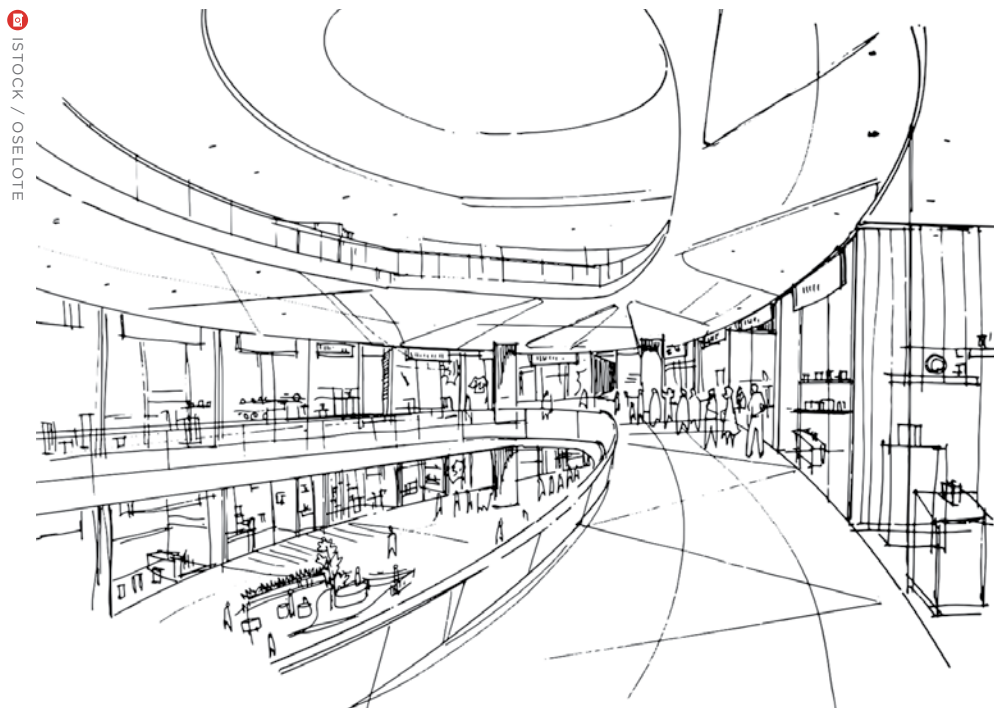
THE CATALYST: VISUAL MERCHANDISING

Visual merchandising is the art and science of presenting products in a way that captures attention, drives interest and prompts purchase. It is the first impression that communicates the brand's personality and aesthetic. It focuses on:

EDITORS' NOTE

This article appears on [vmsd.com](https://www.vmsd.com) alongside the following parts of The Power of Unity blog series. This new column, "On Display," to be in every issue, will feature rotating content from a variety of retail industry experts.





→ **Window Displays:** Often the first thing a consumer will see, they need to be impactful and give shoppers a reason to come into the store.

→ **Product Displays:** Showcasing merchandise in creative and compelling arrangements.

→ **Signage and Messaging:** Communicating key information about promotions, product features and brand values.

→ **Seasonal Themes:** Keeping displays fresh and relevant by aligning them with seasons, holidays or trends.

→ **Sensory Engagement:** Leveraging colors, textures, and even scents, to create a memorable shopping experience.

THE MAGIC AND IMPORTANCE OF COHESION

When store design and visual merchandising work in harmony, the results are transformative. Here are a few ways in which this synergy elevates the retail experience:

→ **Enhanced Storytelling:** Cohesive store design and merchandising tell a unified brand story, making the shopping experience more engaging and memorable.

→ **Optimized Product Placement:** Strategic layouts combined with eye-catching displays ensure high-traffic areas are leveraged effectively.

→ **Seamless Customer Journey:** A balanced integration of design and merchandising eliminates friction points, guiding customers effortlessly from entry to checkout.



Cynthia Ortiz leads business development for the Manhattan office of MBH Architects. As the International President of the Retail Design Institute and a board member of the Shop! Association, she leverages her experience from working on both the vendor and architectural firm sides of the industry to provide new educational content and form connections. She has been a speaker at the International Retail Design Conference (IRDC), the Global Retail Show, NRF and StorePoint, and has served as co-chair of the PAVE Gala. She was also featured on the "Retail Decoded: Defining the 'Next' Normal," podcast focusing on the effects of the covid-19 pandemic on retail.

→ **Increased Dwell Time:** A visually appealing and well-organized space encourages customers to spend more time exploring, often leading to higher purchase volumes.

PRACTICAL STEPS FOR ALIGNMENT

To achieve this level of cohesion, retailers should consider the following strategies:

→ **Collaborative Planning:** Ensure store designers and visual merchandisers work together from the concept stage, aligning their goals and strategies.

→ **Technology Integration:** Utilize tools like 3-D modeling, augmented reality or analytics to simulate and optimize store layouts and displays.

→ **Regular Refreshes:** Continuously update design elements and displays to keep the store dynamic and relevant.

→ **Customer Feedback:** Actively seek and incorporate customer insights to refine both design and merchandising efforts.

In an era where the in-store experience competes with the convenience of online shopping, retailers cannot afford to overlook the interplay between visual merchandising and store design. By fostering collaboration between these disciplines, brands can create environments that captivate, inspire and convert customers. The future of retail belongs to those who master this powerful synergy, transforming their spaces into more than just stores – but destinations. ▲

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FANG EYEWEAR SHOWROOM, WENZHOU, CHINA

CONCEPT: Designed to reimagine traditional showroom design, this eyewear retailer's headquarters and showroom were inspired by deconstructive architecture to create a soft, minimalist aesthetic.

1 TAKE SHAPE

The showroom's interior is framed by geometric, architectural forms with soft angles that guide guests through each section and serve to hide the building's support columns. These elements were inspired by the idea of triangles "symbolizing the creation of spiritual essence."

2 A LIGHT TOUCH

Lighting follows an "invisible design" concept, according to Jizhong Wu, Designer, M-D Design Studio (Wenzhou, China). Abundant natural light highlights the interior's geometric angles, while artificial illumination is "subtly embedded in architectural folds, joints and shadows," says Wu. "This allows the light to appear as though it grows organically from the building itself."

3 COLOR CODE

Its earthy color palette amplifies the various light and dark shades on the walls to create visual texture, making flat surfaces feel dimensional. The warm tones aim to encourage guests to reconnect with nature and "counter the fragmented, fast-paced urban tempo," says Wu. Other pops of color, such as red lighting accents in the recessed ceiling, add visual interest.

4 STATE OF THE ART

Eyewear products are embedded into the showroom itself: There are no glass boxes for the eyewear to sit behind or risers. Instead, eyewear is treated as artwork. The spatial layout and architectural angles create a natural flow for customers to view each piece on custom displays.

5 PLANT POWER

Potted plants, sprouting outward in continuous, organic growth, are used throughout to contrast the set geometric angles. Additionally, these biophilic touches provide tactile texture and a sense of smell for guests to enjoy – also allowing for a peaceful reprieve to reunite with nature in the sprawling city of Wenzhou. ▴

PHOTOGRAPHY: YU SUNPING, XIE SHUXLANG, QU WENHAO, WU QIYAN



Paris Sprungs Eternal

French retailer Printemps opens its first U.S. location in New York's Financial District.

BY ERIC FEIGENBAUM
NEW YORK EDITOR

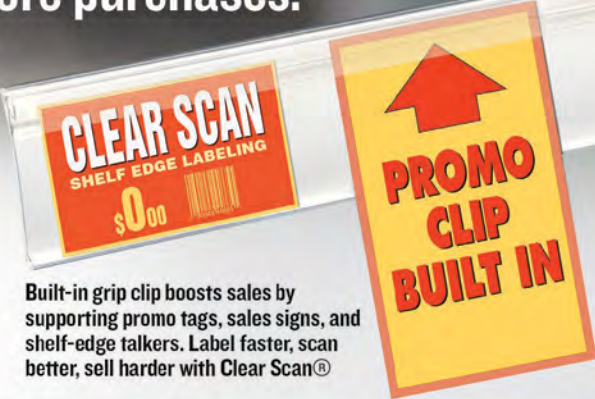
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* Path to Purchase Institute and Mood Media "Engaging Shoppers In-Store" Study (July 2023)
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GIEVES ANDERSON FOR PRINTEMPS NEW YORK

P

RINTEMPS, the upscale Parisian department store whose name translates to “springtime,” has joined the ranks of New York’s roster of luxury retailers. Unlike its midtown competitors Saks Fifth Avenue, Bergdorf Goodman and Bloomingdales, Printemps planted its flag in the canyons of Lower Manhattan’s rapidly expanding Financial District.

In its first foray across the Atlantic, the French retailer set up shop in a landmark art deco skyscraper at 1 Wall St., spanning 55,000 square feet across two floors. A destination flagship, the environment offers a timeless blend of lifestyle merchandising and digital

engagement in what appears to be an opulent Parisian apartment.

Designed by architect Laura Gonzalez, Printemps New York is a comingling of French aesthetic sensibilities and historic New York architecture and art. “We have been deeply inspired by the legacy of Printemps – its mosaics, stained glass, patterns and original art – but we are in New York,” says Gonzalez. “This is a new story. It is a city where anything is possible.”

While maintaining the integrity of the art deco architecture, the store presents a wide range of beauty products, high-end fashion, lifestyle groupings and a curated offering of fine

dining options in an elegant series of captivating experiences. The in-store journey offers sights like fanciful sculptures, lush couches, sparkling lamps and dreamlike floral wallcoverings. In this transformative environment, visitors are guided through strategically positioned and themed rooms, including the Beauty Corridor, the Playroom, the Sneaker Room, La Garconnière and the Fragrance Room – and not to be missed is the architectural splendor of the Red Room.

A walkway from the Beauty Corridor serves as a seamless link between the past and present, leading visitors to the building’s historic tower and



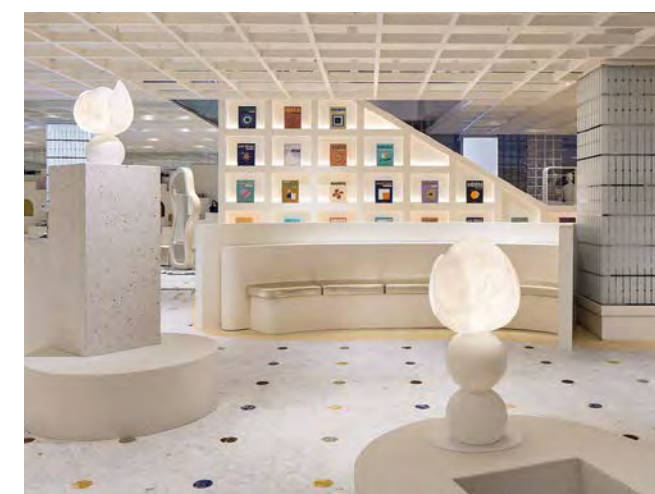
spectacular Red Room. This art deco gem, once the lobby of the historic building, now serves as center stage for the retailer’s high-end shoe collection. The awe-inspiring space features a 33-foot-high, floor-to-ceiling mosaic arranged in an ombré pattern, going from deep oxblood red to a lighter shade. Designed in 1931 by artist Hildreth Meière (one of the preeminent muralists of her time), the mural is just a part of the Red Room’s ambience, which visually represents the confluence of a bygone era and contemporary merchandising.

Another overall highlight is a melding of the human element with digital, as seen through Printemps’ wayfinding system designed by experiential agency L+R. Technology needed to be subtle but strike a balance between functionality and aesthetics. “A significant challenge was establishing a seamless connection between the physical and digital retail environments to ensure omnichannel consistency,” says Mary Jane Puangco, Chief Customer Experience Officer, Printemps America. “This required meticulous planning, development and testing to guarantee a uni-

fied customer experience.”

The overall store environment is an ethereal stroke of visual inspiration combined with technological features that enhance the physical experience without overwhelming it. An in-depth digital platform and strategically positioned wayfinding seamlessly guides visitors in a balanced and harmonious manner through this brick-and-mortar fantasy – an artistic interpretation of the creative sensibilities of two iconic fashion capitals. ▲

LEFT The Red Room features an expansive mosaic designed in 1931 by muralist Hildreth Meière.



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Matt Bosserman, Capital One

"I wasn't sure what to expect at IRDC as a first-time attendee, but the experience exceeded my expectations! There were plenty of networking opportunities, and the speakers offered diverse ideas with valuable takeaways. The Merchant Challenge was both stressful and exhilarating! While my team didn't win, the creativity and beauty of all the displays were truly impressive."

Gina Walton, CD Companies



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OPENING KEYNOTE

Orchestrating Reality: AI, Agents and the Near Future of Creativity

Presented by Neil Redding, Founder, CEO, Redding Futures

Wednesday, Oct. 22

The future is arriving so fast that traditional foresight and creative practices can't keep up. The rise of Artificial Intelligence (AI), agents and spatial computing will profoundly impact every brand. This convergence unlocks a new creative mode: the orchestration of evolving brand realities. In this transformative keynote session, "near futurist" Neil Redding will reveal the mindset and tools for practical co-creation of the future.

Offsite Disruptive Mystery Experience

Wednesday, Oct. 22

Step outside the traditional conference setting and into an undisclosed offsite experience. Attendees will challenge conventional thinking with unexpected spaces, bold ideas, and interactive moments that will spark creativity and fresh perspectives.

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CLOSING KEYNOTE EXPERIENCE

You're Only as Good as Your Last Party

Presented by: Josh Heuser, Founder, AGAR & Andrew Salzburg, Managing Partner, AGAR

Thursday, Oct. 23



Close out IRDC with this immersive, high-energy session that will dive into the art of creating memorable brand activations that resonate with customers. Attendees will explore the key elements to designing an experience driven event or space, discovering how to turn virtually any interaction into an opportunity for lasting connection and memory making.

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AN IDEAL FIT

VMSD's 32nd annual International Visual Competition once again showcases the true power of visual merchandising, as evidenced through its 2025 Best-in-Show winner, Levi's Paris ICON store.

BY CARLY HAGEDON | EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

In-Store Apparel Presentation

"LEVI'S PARIS ICON STORE"

VMSD's International Visual Competition (now in its 32nd year) continually proves the positive impact of visual merchandising and retail design of a temporary nature through its robust submissions spanning the globe. This year's Best-in-Show winner, "Levi's Paris ICON Store," helped support this notion through its impeccable in-store apparel presentation and visual merchandising, elevated through thoughtful design details, such as its ceiling hue reminiscent of the retailer's classic 501 denim jeans.

"The store's design and merchandising are thoughtfully centered around fit, guiding customers seamlessly to discover their ideal size, silhouette and wash before immersing them in the

finer details of each piece," explains Faith Huddleston, Studio Design Leader, Retail, NELSON Worldwide.

The customer journey begins with an array of mannequins and exhibition displays sporting stylized looks. Farther into the space, the 501 Vault houses the story behind the brand's most well-known apparel lines. This includes vintage pieces on display, the story of how 501 jeans are made and their lifecycle. A tailor shop offers repair and personalization, and digital displays throughout engage visitors. Inspired by the raw aesthetic of denim and its deep hues, the space is a striking blue with a blend of curves and straight lines.

"The Levi's store at 44 Champs-Élysées in Paris showcases what's



SUBMITTED BY:
NELSON Worldwide
PHOTOGRAPHY:
Courtesy of Levi's

possible for a brand when we push our creative boundaries and explore new expressions of our retail store design," says Jesse Moyer, Director, Global Store Design, Levi Strauss & Co. "For this store environment, we started with our Indigo concept and pushed it in new directions: What if we leaned in on the spectrum of blues inherent in our signature product? What if we softened the architecture with curves and swoops to complement the modularity and rectilinear forms of our fixtures? The result delivered a best-in-class branded retail experience for our consumers on a premier shopping street in Paris."

Sustainability was a big factor in the overall design, with all materials specified to include recyclable elements. Local artists and artisans were tapped to create features like a custom mural and bespoke fixtures (e.g., wooden slats with curved ends dipped in blue). Other fine details include accent lighting/lines of light (designed by Windward Lighting Studio) mimicking the stitching found in denim.

Like many successful projects, the result couldn't have been achieved without the teams working in sync, says Huddleston. "Our teams worked together so closely, and it was a true collaboration. The Levi's team was really the blue thread throughout this entire project," she says.



ABOVE Levi's Paris ICON store includes curated VM alongside design details like its ceiling hue celebrating denim.



THIS IMAGE Edge-lit props and dynamic mannequins create an illusion of movement and depth.

Non-Holiday Window Displays

"SUMMER OLYMPICS WINDOWS 2024"

Last summer, the buzz around the Summer Olympics in Paris was palpable, and Macy's decided to go for the gold with its on-theme displays. These windows set the stage for nine

SUBMITTED BY: Macy's
PHOTOGRAPHY: Bill Waldorf Photography, Farragut, Tennessee

different brands, all sporting an Olympic theme with dynamic mannequins and props. "Our brand collaboration was key to the installations," says Andi Woung, Visual Merchandising Manager, Macy's. "While the windows were designed to

reflect a cohesive theme, brands were integral to the approval process as well as the merchandise direction."

The mannequins featured special paint finishes and were designed for an illusion of motion – running or even flying through the air – and were complemented by super-thin, fin-shaped props that were edge-lit with faux neon. One challenge was the implementation of the forced perspectives in some of the windows, which were intended to add a sense of movement. This was especially difficult, Woung says, when it came to windows with shallow depths.

"The windows utilized a combination of gloss painted shapes and floors in contrast against the flat finish of the walls," Woung says. "Inset LED strips and graphic stripes were added to complete the sense of movement and [amplify] the clean look of the windows."



In-Store Seasonal Promotions; Temporary/Pop-Up Retail

"MACY'S FLOWER SHOW POP UP SHOP"



THIS IMAGE Scaled fixtures, prints, props, risers and more, all took cues from the retailer's annual Flower Show.



The challenge? Creating a distinctive pop-up experience dedicated to merchandise created specifically for the retailer's coveted annual Flower Show. The solution? Immersion. Using extensive vinyl, the rooms were covered in graphics representative of the show, as well as with tables and risers.

"The space was divided into different sections, each merchandised as a cross/lifestyle moment featuring each unique print," says Manuel Urquizo, Director of Storewide Visual Campaigns & Windows, Macy's. "We used the maidenhair fern print as the backdrop to the shop, helping to anchor all the prints together. We used a small Piaggio truck and covered it into our own Macy's flower truck, creating a fun selfie moment for our customers."

Another hurdle to overcome during the design process was occupying the space itself – low ceilings and tight

confines challenged the creative team to make the space look larger, with one strategy including scaled fixtures in the space to help flow throughout the floor.

The resultant pop-up was merchan-

SUBMITTED BY: Macy's
PHOTOGRAPHY: Bill Waldorf Photography, Farragut, Tennessee

dised by stories under themes such as apparel, gardening or cooking, says Urquizo. "It was a big hit with lines of customers waiting for their moment to take a photo," he says.

Temporary/Pop-Up Retail Space

"NEW BALANCE NYC MARATHON POP-UP"

Taking over Coach's space for a dynamic pop-up event, the two-story New Balance NYC Marathon Pop-Up was bursting with interactivity, curated apparel and gear, storytelling moments highlighting the brand's past, community engagement opportunities and Instagrammable moments.

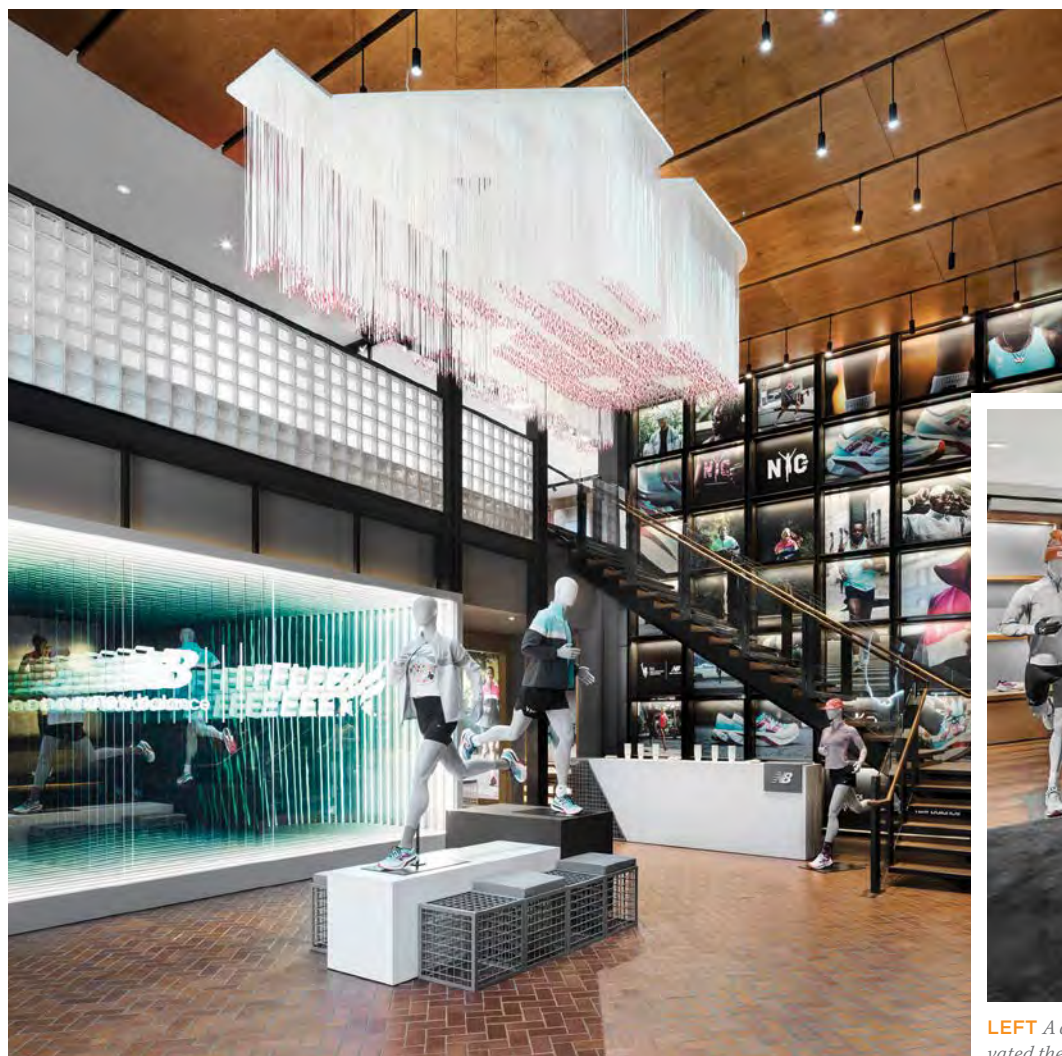
SUBMITTED BY:
EWI Worldwide
PHOTOGRAPHY: Richard Cadan, Fairfield, Conn.

"The design directive was clear: Create a space that celebrates the spirit of the marathon while inspiring movement and community," says Azadeh Sharifnia, Sr. Manager Wholesale Visual Merchandising, New Balance. "From a custom shoelace chandelier to an immersive infinity mirror and real-time test run stations, every element was crafted to

energize, engage and elevate the runner's journey."

Organized into different settings that encouraged customer exploration and flow, the pop-up was defined by large-scale graphics and an energizing atmosphere. Several touchpoints, like a customization area allowing shoppers to personalize their New Balance apparel and a running track where visitors could try out New Balance shoes IRL, provided ample engagement. The retailer also collaborated with Feet Fleet, a running shoe brand, enhancing customer reach and providing added value.

"The space featured several stand-out design elements that brought the concept to life. A dramatic shoelace chandelier greeted visitors upon entry, made possible by the generous ceiling height. A large-scale infinity mirror created a sense of motion and depth, and a detailed map of the marathon route anchored the storytelling," says Sharifnia. "Upstairs, we offered test shoes for runners to try on real Central Park miles, complete with lockers for storing personal items – blending utility with experience."



LEFT A custom shoelace chandelier energized and elevated the entrance to New Balance's pop-up experience.

In-Store Apparel Presentation

"PUMA LAS VEGAS FLAGSHIP"

Thoughtfully crafted, PUMA's Las Vegas flagship hit the jackpot with its First Place win this year for its apparel and shoe presentations. The flagship certainly makes a statement with its on-theme designs and exclusive experiences, like the 48 Club, which is accessed by VIPs using hidden QR codes and the PUMA app. The layered zones were intended to surprise and delight exploring shoppers – and generate buzz.

"Based on our learnings from our NYC flagship, we wanted to deliver something that was truly special and unique that consumers couldn't experi-

ence anywhere else; get to know the PUMA brand more and have some fun while they're at it," says Russell Kahn, Sr. VP, DTC North America, PUMA.

The visual merchandising strategy is playful with special apparel (some of which is only available in Las Vegas) displayed on bespoke roulette and poker table fixtures in the Las Vegas Zone, essentially a PUMA-themed casino. Here, a PUMA logo wall, made from 32,000 poker chips, is on display and a video-wall slot machine offers the chance to win prizes. Other touchpoints beyond the Las Vegas Zone and 48 Club include the PUMA Arcade, which fea-

SUBMITTED BY:
EWI Worldwide
PHOTOGRAPHY: Joey Ungerer, Key Lime Photo

BELOW Emphasizing its Las Vegas location, PUMA's flagship includes roulette and poker fixture tables and a video-wall slot machine.

tures interactive games (with a spotlight on its sports products and partnerships, such as Formula-1), a customization studio and a light-infused, three-story brand wall.

The 48 Club is another area where ultra-limited product is on display for VIP shoppers. "It's a very exclusive area of the store with one-of-a-kind product you can only get here, it's not available anywhere else in the world," says Kahn. "It's super limited-edition product and meant to be the pinnacle of the brand that you can only purchase in the space – if you can get access to it. It's a super cool hidden experience."





THIS PAGE Adyaaye's murals honor historic landmarks, while vintage fixtures and hand-painted ceilings set a warm and inviting tone.



In-Store Apparel Presentation

“ADYAAYE”

Inspired by Marwar in India (also known as the cultural and historic region of Jodhpur), Adyaaye debuted a new store in Banhara Hills, Hyderabad, merging contemporary and traditional designs. Taking home a First Place win for its apparel presentation of options for women, men and children, the store showcases handwoven sarees, sherwanis and lehengas. Housed amongst soft pink and blue hues, 3-D

SUBMITTED BY: Four Dimensions Retail Design Pvt. Ltd.
PHOTOGRAPHY: Santhosh R, Bangalore, Karnataka

relief murals representing Rajasthan’s havelis – historic mansions typically constructed by nobles and wealthy merchants – add visual interest. Other unique elements include hand-painted ceilings, vintage-inspired seating and polished brass. Customers enter through a custom façade that spills into an area defined by arched, branded niches housing apparel. Metallic textures were used to define premium options, and carved saree displays add yet another pop of visual opulence. Vintage, tinted-glass chandeliers shed warm, ambient illumination on the col-

orful fabrics below. “Rooted in the cultural richness of Rajasthan, our research delved deep into Marwadi heritage – from Jaipur’s rosy warmth to Jodhpur’s regal blues,” says Shyam Sunder K, Principal Architect, Founder & MD, Four Dimensions Retail Design Pvt. Ltd. “Translating these traditions into immersive experiences was both a challenge and a joy. We collaborated closely with skilled artisans to reimagine heritage through modern forms ... every corner tells a story. And, yes, we had immense fun bringing this vision to life!”



“Ukrainian Christmas” SUBMITTED BY: TSUM Kyiv | **PHOTOGRAPHY:** Artem Mykhailichenko & Anastasiia Osipenko, Kyiv, Ukraine



“Kizik Pop-Up” SUBMITTED BY: MG2 | **PHOTOGRAPHY:** Emu Haynes



“Spring Window Displays Oles Derega x TSUM Kyiv” SUBMITTED BY: TSUM Kyiv | **PHOTOGRAPHY:** Artem Mykhailichenko & Anastasiia Osipenko Kyiv, Ukraine

“Easter Window Display, Silpo in Odesa”

SUBMITTED BY: Kosa Art Group | **PHOTOGRAPHY:** Eugen Chobaniuk, Odesa, Ukraine



“Holiday Windows 2024” SUBMITTED BY: Macy’s | **PHOTOGRAPHY:** Bill Waldorf Photography, Farragut, Tennessee



“Wine and Music - A Virtuoso Pairing” SUBMITTED BY: Mission Hill Family Estate, A Mark Anthony Group Inc. Co. | **PHOTOGRAPHY:** Davis Amos, Portland, Ore.



“Lunar New Year Windows 2024” SUBMITTED BY: Macy’s | **PHOTOGRAPHY:** Bill Waldorf Photography, Farragut, Tennessee

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— GINA WALTON ACCOUNT MANAGER, CD COMPANIES



"Being my first year attending, I went into the Shop! Ideation Retail Challenge prepared to be unprepared. The kickoff was swift and breaking into action with my team was inspiring. Witnessing the project come together and seeing my teammates execute it was incredibly rewarding. However, the highlight was undoubtedly observing the presentations from the other 5 teams - a priceless learning opportunity. So much growth and insight gained at this workshop."

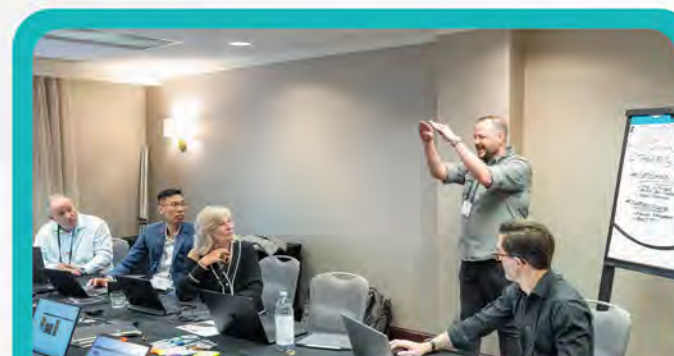
— GEORGE POVICH, VP INSTORE RETAIL DESIGN - PARTNER EDO AGENCY

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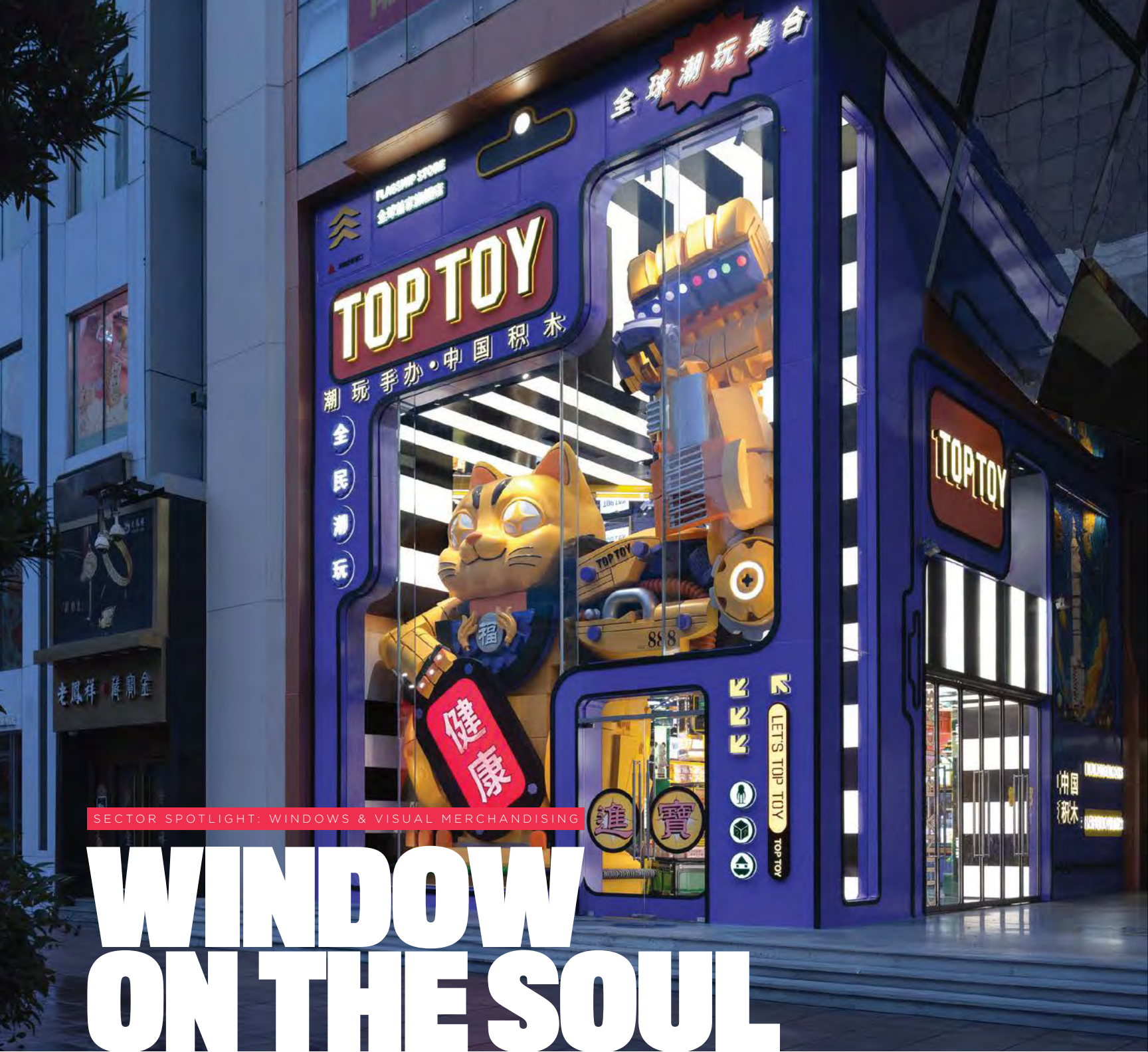
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SECTOR SPOTLIGHT: WINDOWS & VISUAL MERCHANDISING

WINDOW ON THE SOUL

Top Toy's Shanghai flagship is just one example of how visual storytelling begins on the street and continues, in this case through a gamified world of nostalgia and color-coded exploration.

BY GEORGIA MIZEN | CONTRIBUTING WRITER

IN A RETAIL LANDSCAPE where digital often starts the customer journey, the physical storefront still holds significant sway. "Window displays are incredibly powerful," says Johan Kiszonak, Director of Design at ZenGenius (Columbus, Ohio). "They've evolved into more than just a visual moment; they're now emotional entry points. That pause can turn curiosity

into connection."

For Eleanor Smith, former Retail Services and Store Design at Benjamin Moore & Co. (Montvale, N.J.), it's about multi-sensory consistency. "Windows begin the narrative and create a cohesive story from storefront to interior," she says. "To capture the five senses, scent and music should be included to create ambience and a full experience."

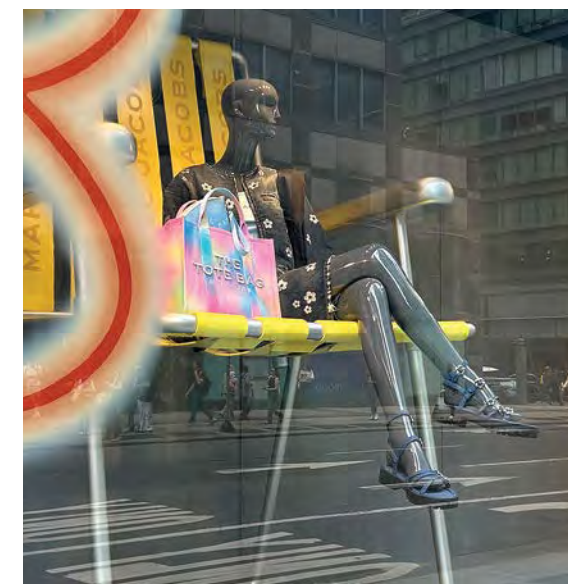
Enter Top Toy (Guangzhou, China), whose flagship on Shanghai's Nanjing East Road takes this philosophy to dynamic new heights. Dominating the storefront is a giant Fortune Cat – a playful, robotic twist on the traditional figure. It's not just a display for chief designer Li Xiang

of X+Living (Shanghai), but an opening scene. "The Great Power Fortune Cat is the beginning of the story, like the loading screen of a game before everything starts," she says.

This year, window displays are doing more than catching eyes, they're setting the tone for immersive brand storytelling. At Top Toy, "the façade mimics toy blister packaging, using an oversized design language to blow up the brand's signature IP," says Li, making passersby feel as though they've shrunk to step inside.

This window-to-interior continuity is intentional. Inside, the journey continues with stacked displays, LED-wrapped ceilings and interactive storytelling zones

BELOW This summer, retailers such as Marc Jacobs in New York are using vibrant colors and oversized props in their windows.



ELEANOR SMITH

COURTESY OF X+LIVING



built around collectability and discovery. "Rather than simply copying the visual language or forcing a contrast, we transition the design from the outside to the inside – from macro to micro, allowing consumers to continuously feel the emotional narrative and design surprises as they delve deeper," says Li.

That seamless transition is paying off. Since its opening, the flagship store has

averaged over 12,000 daily visitors, with a transaction rate nearly 40 percent higher than that of other Top Toy locations, according to Li.

What makes this window design even more trend-forward is its durability. While many brands opt for easily swappable window vignettes, Top Toy's installation is made to last, with adaptability built in. A dynamic LED screen embedded into the

BELOW Saks Fifth Avenue utilizes window displays for scenes of visual storytelling.



ABOVE Top Toy's "gamified" journey begins with its Fortune Cat window display and unfolds with curated VM throughout.



Fortune Cat allows seasonal storytelling without altering the physical form. Looking ahead, Li sees potential for even greater immersion. "In the future, we may consider integrating technologies such as AI, motion sensors and AR into the design," says Li, "allowing the display window to interact with passersby and truly come to life, becoming an immersive and interactive brand interface." With its gamified energy and toy-meets-tech aesthetic, Top Toy is leading a new wave of window design – where what happens outside is just the beginning.

WINDOWS, WINDOWS, WINDOWS!

Window displays continue to be the first customer touchpoint for many retailers, especially those in walkable shopping thoroughfares like Fifth Avenue in New York or Rodeo Drive in Los Angeles. Holiday windows the past several years have relied on simple animations/animatronics, traditional motifs and interactive moments, while current summer windows are exemplifying trends surrounding sustainable design/upcycled props, biophilia, sensory minimalism (less is more), color blocking, maximalism through material usage and – as usual – emotional storytelling. Be sure to visit vmsd.com for a full gallery of windows to accompany this article. —VMSD Editors

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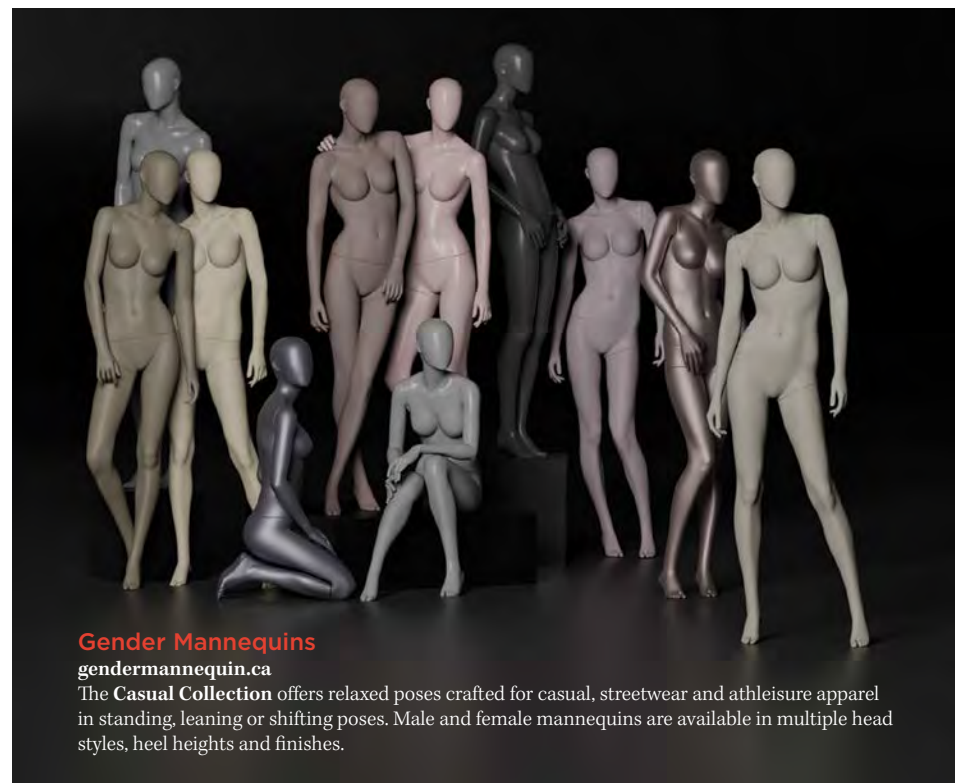
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MANNEQUINS AND FORMS, PROPS/DECORATIVES

Each issue of VMSD showcases the latest new and noteworthy products from a variety of categories, from fixtures to mannequins to materials to lighting – and everything in between. Be sure to check vmsd.com monthly for additional product coverage.



Gender Mannequins

gendermannequin.ca

The **Casual Collection** offers relaxed poses crafted for casual, streetwear and athleisure apparel in standing, leaning or shifting poses. Male and female mannequins are available in multiple head styles, heel heights and finishes.



Mondo Mannequins

mondomannequins.com

Offered as a made-to-order line of fashion mannequins, The **Mirror Mannequin** collection showcases reflected poses, shown here in a variety of custom colors.



Ace Designs

acedesigns.com

Printed on white corrugate and layered with cut-out glasses, the **Smart Cookie** characters fit into back-to-school displays and promotions. Eco-friendly, these characters are lightweight for easy in-store installation and adaptability.

Tracy Glover Studio

tracygloverstudio.com

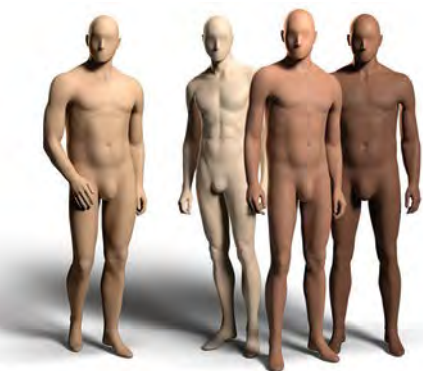
Inlets and Islands is a series of non-illuminated sculptural installations available in three standard configurations – two linear and one round. Inspired by the natural landscape, the series is crafted in four colorways, with the option for color customization.



Bernstein Display

bernsteindisplay.com

Expanding this company's series of inclusive body diversity, the **Men's 151 Collection** now includes male sizes 44 and 48 in dynamic poses.



Silvestri California

silvestricalifornia.com

The **Black Finish** series of mannequins holds striking poses and features a dark, velvety finish for a bold and eye-catching display.



Universal Display & Design Inc.

universaldisplayusa.com

For fun VM moments and displays that will make customers smile, this collection of prop emojis offers a range of cartoonish expressions with each piece scalable from 2-in. to 20-ft.



Schwam Sourcing Group

schwamsourcing.com

Add a sense of biophilia to your space without the hassle with the **Nature-Inspired Custom Trees**. Natural details are included for a realistic look, such as real wood trunks and embossed silk leaves. Color, height, width and leaf density are fully customizable.

CNL | Patina-V

cnl-patina-v.com

The **Golf Collection** gets into the swing with mannequins sculpted in natural-looking actions. Recyclable and made using PTL material, this collection is durable and lightweight for easy apparel changes.



Bonami

bonami.be

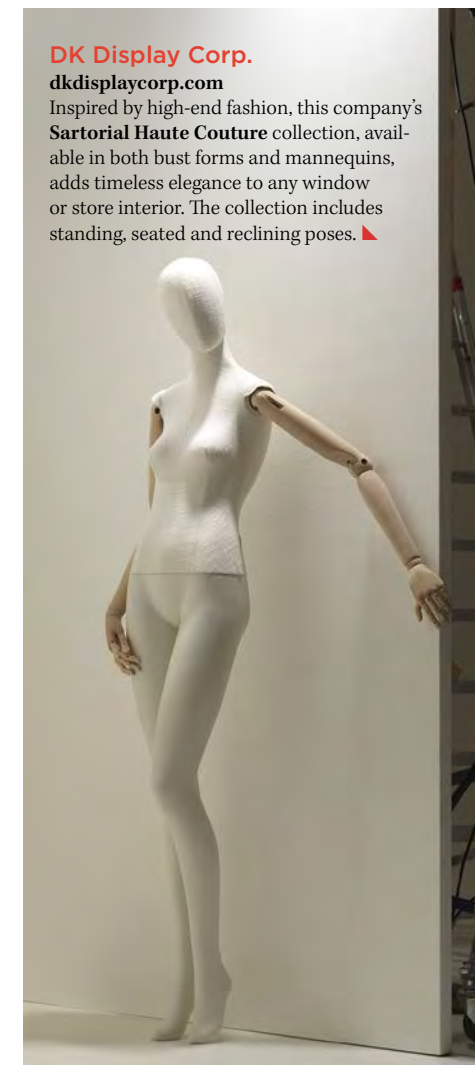
The **Transparent Future** collection introduces fully transparent mannequins, allowing garments and merchandise to take the spotlight. Durable and lightweight, the collection comes with a magnetic interlocking system for easy assembly.



Greneker

greneker.com

The **Lifestyle Trends** collection features a range of athletic mannequins in a variety of stances. Available in assorted finishes, mannequins can come with or without heads.



DK Display Corp.

dkdisplaycorp.com

Inspired by high-end fashion, this company's **Sartorial Haute Couture** collection, available in both bust forms and mannequins, adds timeless elegance to any window or store interior. The collection includes standing, seated and reclining poses. ▲



COURTESY OF COACH

Giovanni Zaccariello

The head of Coach's Global Visual Experience is innovative, chance-taking and soaring up, up and away.

Gio, how did this all start for you?

I was at Oxford University studying branding, marketing, economics and consumer behavior. And I had a part-time internship at Uniqlo. They had this multi-color fleece promotion, and I was able to put it all together in a short time, so they asked me to join the team. The day I finished my degree, they offered me a full-time job. From there, I followed a boss and moved to Mexx, followed another boss to Esprit, then I met others and moved to other things. I've never had to apply for a job.

Except you did apply for the Coach job.

Yes, though I wasn't familiar with Coach because it hadn't had much of a presence in Europe. When the opening

came up, I told my boss about 'this Coach job' and she said, 'Oh my god, you have to take it!' I said, 'Wait, I work for you. Do you really want me to go to another job?' She said, 'Yes, you have to go for it. It's so much bigger,' and a chance to move from high street to luxury. So, I took it and was sent to

Hong Kong, where there was the regional Asia office. During my four years in Asia, we opened 200-plus and transitioned multiple markets from wholesale to retail.

It's always interesting how things work out.

I don't think I could have done what I'm doing today if I hadn't had that full experience in both Europe and Asia. But in



YOUR BEAUTIFUL BALLOON

I guess you'll always be remembered as the guy who sent a Coach bag soaring into the air.

[Laughs] You mean the Tabby air balloon in Taiwan? It all started with sketching on a napkin. The Tabby is a quilted bag, and when I touched it, it looked and felt like a pillow, so my first idea was a pop-up idea for a giant bag that people could go inside and jump around in. From there came bigger ideas, eventually leading to the hot air balloon. If it's remembered in a good way, that's the essence of branding. Coming up with something integrally tied to the company product that people talk about and enjoy. Excitement, identification, creativity - that's the essence of it.

retrospect, I liked marketing in school. Now that I'm doing experience, I'm part of the larger marketing thing, so everything has come full circle.

This is much more than Christmas windows and seasonal promotions, isn't it?

One of the things we've succeeded at with Coach is being able to move with the speed of the consumer, changing our focus, developing new products, being present in our consumers' lives. Three years ago, we had this big market research project before our re-branding started. It involved meeting consumers in their homes and asking what Coach meant to them and about their lives in general. After that project, everything changed for us. When we started, we'd ask 18-year-olds about a Coach bag, and they'd say, 'No, that's for my mother.' Now they say, 'No, that's for me,' and actually go into their mothers' closets to bring out an old classic Coach bag, which we love. It's been five or six years of transformation, but it started with going into homes and having a conversation. ▀



Introducing PATH ZERO emissions

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The new SHOP! Path Zero emissions calculator helps easily assess your facility's environmental impact by calculating Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions using GHG Protocols. It's the simplest way to benchmark your sustainability efforts and gain recognition as a sustainable business.

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Measure Impact:
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SCAN TO LEARN MORE

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shopassociation.org/path-zero



Contact us to learn more:



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