

LUXURY MEMO SPECIAL REPORTS

## Window displays Luxury Memo special report

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Harvey Nichols' 2016 holiday windows. Image credit: Harvey Nichols

By NANCY BUCKLEY

Storefronts can be an antiquated term in this digital age, but the detailed displays in shop windows often create a spectacle that pedestrians and potential consumers cannot resist stopping to marvel and admire.

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Creating an omnichannel display brings the in-person experience online and offers a cross between the traditional handcrafted artwork and digital creativity seen across different aspects of the luxury industry. Window displays are most noted around the holidays, but year-round themes and trends have created a spark in window art.

"The quality lends itself to the brand's status," said Gemma Bidaudville, head of creative retail at [Millington Associates](#), London. "The window should touch on how the brand wants to position itself in the market and give a peek of the offer available inside to entice a customer in."

### Top 5 trends in window displays

- **Art and windows**  
Famous artists, such as Andy Warhol, have gotten their start as window designers. Art has long been synonymous with luxury products, and many window displays feature an artist's talents and align the design with the brand.
- **Holidays**  
Each year luxury department stores and brands have an unspoken competition to boast the most elaborate, most creative and the most spoken-about holiday window display.
- **Social media**  
Creating a masterpiece that can be taken from in-person to online allows the stationary window display to reach more individuals. The Instagram-ability of the display creates a word-of-mouth marketing campaign that has unmeasurable reaches.

- Digital age  
Blending digital with traditional allows for complex, unprecedented window displays that are likely to create a buzz among consumers.
- New product releases  
Marketing around new products in recent times includes a multifaceted cross-medium campaign that often including a social video, social media posts, print advertising and out-of-home advertising. The in-store efforts can include a window display that is detailed, eye-catching and informative, creating a spark among those passing by to stop in and see the new trend.

## Happy Holidays

The holidays bring customers into stores, creating a unique time of year for department stores and standalone storefronts to connect with consumers. Creating a window display that brings people to the outside of the store sparks an aesthetic connection that will likely draw consumers inside as well.

Holiday window displays are often the most well-known storefront designs, creating stories that appeal to all generations.

For example, last holiday season, Neiman Marcus-owned department store Bergdorf Goodman wrote a love letter to its hometown of New York through its holiday windows.

The retailer's "To New York With Love" display paid homage to local institutions such as the New York Philharmonic and the New York Botanical Garden.



*Bergdorf Goodman holiday window display from 2016. Image credit: Bergdorf Goodman*

Bergdorf Goodman's fantastical displays took their inspiration from New York landmarks. In a pane dedicated to the American Museum of Natural History, a mannequin stood amid a crowd of bejeweled dinosaur skeletons.

The Brooklyn Academy of Music, known as BAM, was depicted in four windows on Bergdorf Goodman's men's store, featuring the art forms of music, dance, theater and film ([see story](#)).

Highlighting one's home city pays homage to the consumers visiting the store, but other holiday-themed windows stay true to annual traditions.

For example, Saks Fifth Avenue for its store across from Rockefeller Center in New York sculpted a landscape of colorful candy and festive fashion to usher in the holidays.

The theme for 2016's holiday season was entitled "Land of 1,000 Delights," and was presented by Mastercard. To ensure consistent brand messaging across its department store network, the Land of 1,000 Delights theme was unveiled simultaneously on Fifth Avenue and the retailer's 41 stores in the United States and Canada.



*Saks Fifth Avenue light show in 2016. Image credit: Saks*

Saks' decor for Land of 1,000 Delights included jumbo swirl lollipops, whipped cotton candy and mounds of rock candy. These sweet visualizations were placed through each store's displays to create an irresistible destination for the holiday season.

For the unveiling, Saks hosted 85 dancers from the American Ballet Theatre Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis School pre-professional division. The troupe performed a rendition of the "The Nutcracker Suite" in front of Saks Fifth Avenue's flagship ([see story](#)).

"Windows to consumers are the first glance at the look, feel and personality of a brand and it's an experience that lingers in the mind of the consumer when they buy from the same brand when online shopping," said Jason Traves, chief creative officer and co-founder of [Lucky Fox](#), Hove, England. "More than ever before, we're seeing brands make this first impression as accessible and inclusive to all generations and genders as possible, whether high street or luxury brands, with creative and of-the-moment window displays."

New meets the old

Creating an in-person, physical display is often against the modern marketing trends of 2018. However, developing a display that can incorporate the digital, social media-driven times while also being captivating to the eye will create a bridge between the old and the new.

Google took the opportunity to demonstrate to luxury brands how this bridge can be built. In December 2016, Louis Vuitton and Cartier were among the 18 New York storefronts that got a digital audience with help from the tech company.

"Window Wonderland" recreated the feeling of strolling outside iconic retailers on a consumer's desktop computer, mobile phone or tablet. While about 5 million tourists descend on New York over the holiday season, many consumers based in other cities, states or countries will not be able to get to see these in person, making this Google experience the next best thing.



*Barneys Window Wonderland. Image credit: Google*

For Window Wonderland, Google combined hundreds of high-resolution images to create an interactive panoramic display for each store. This allows the user to pan as if she was walking.

As they were virtually strolling, consumers could zoom in on details in the windows. For those with a virtual reality headset, a full 360-degree panoramic experience was accessible, complete with ambient noise from New York's streets ([see story](#)).

In 2017, Saks Fifth Avenue took a fully digital approach to the holiday window display featuring a fairytale theme in homage to Disney's classic animated feature "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs."

The retailer's "Once Upon a Holiday" campaign featured window displays that recreated the feeling of the film through animation, custom gowns and art. Commemorating the movie's 80th anniversary, Saks' campaign leaned on Disney magic to inspire shoppers of all ages.



*Snow White and Dopey. Image credit: Saks Fifth Avenue*

Saks' holiday windows along Fifth Avenue depicted vignettes from the film. These included the titular character dancing with woodland creatures, the dwarves returning from a day at the mines and the Wicked Queen's attempt to poison Snow White with an apple.

For the first time in Saks history, all of its 14 windows featured animation. Maintaining a consistency with the film, the window backdrops were created using a new 3D layering technique that allows the original artwork to be translated to this medium ([see story](#)).

Another way to link digital with traditional is to team up with a technology brand. For example, department store chain Bloomingdale's linked with electronics label LG Signature for a window display that combined technology and fashion.



*LG appliances. Image credit: LG*

The tech company's home appliances were showcased in a series of rotating vignettes that aimed to present not only their function and innovation but also the devices' design. While retailer windows typically center on fashion, technology affiliations are proving popular as consumers crave the latest gadgets.

LG Signature's windows displayed a number of its premium home devices, including a washer/dryer combo, a dishwasher, a refrigerator, oven range, air purifier and a television ([see story](#)).

The newest and brightest

Holiday windows are the most stereotypical window displays known to consumers, but window art is a year-round phenomenon. Stores most often create a new display when there are new products to showcase to the everyday passerby.



For example, Bergdorf Goodman was the first retailer to carry the newly launched Gucci Dcor line of home furnishings.

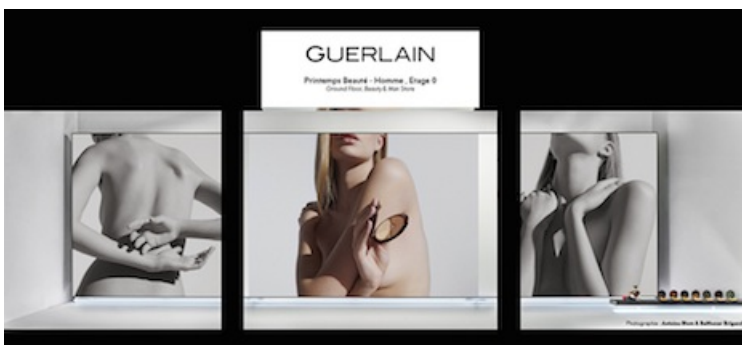
The Gucci Dcor line brought the codes, patterns and motifs that artistic director Alessandro Michele established since taking the helm in 2015 to a new category, ranging from furniture and furnishings to crockery. Gucci Dcor debuted in September 2017, with the Bergdorf Goodman shop-in-shop coinciding with New York Fashion Week.



*Gucci Decor chair. Image credit: Gucci*

Bergdorf Goodman had temporary installations, a permanent Gucci Dcor shop and two dedicated windows to introduce the line ([see story](#)).

Similarly, French department store Printemps highlighted seasonal beauty trends in window displays that opted for a less-is-more approach.



*Guerlain window display at Printemps. Image credit: Printemps*

The retailer's Boulevard Haussman flagship was turned into a showcase of form, with shots by photographers Antoine Blum and Balthazar Brigaud sharing the stage with products from brands such as Lancme and YSL Beauty. While the spotlight was on the cosmetics featured, Printemps' choice of graphic backdrop likely helped catch the eyes of passersby ([see story](#)).

New products added to a department store can often go overlooked simply because of the mass range of merchandise sold, but crafting dedicated windows can create a space for consumers to take note and inquire further.

## Windows art

Andy Warhol is most well known for his pop art, but the famed artist started his career creating backdrops for window displays. This connection between art and department store windows runs deep. Windows are often considered a place for stores to showcase artists with whom they align their reputation and products.

For example, Barneys New York brought together art and fashion in a window display combining the work of artist Louise Bourgeois and designer Rei Kawakubo of Comme des Garçons.



*Ms. Bourgeois' famous Maman sculpture. Image credit: Barneys*

Barneys' display incorporated Ms. Bourgeois' sculptures into Ms. Kawakubo's designs to highlight the similarities between these two acclaimed women. The retailer worked with the Easton Foundation, an organization devoted to preserving Ms. Bourgeois' reputation and "cultivating new interpretations of [her] work," after she passed away in 2010 ([see story](#)).

Harrods similarly facilitated creative collaborations between home and lifestyle brands and contemporary artists for a Brompton Road window project.

The retailer's Art Partners saw its Brompton Road windows reimaged with artistically inspired displays. For Art Partners, some of luxury's finest home furnishings brands worked with acclaimed artists and designers to showcase how the two industries can intersect.



*Wedgwood x Lee Broom for Harrods' Art Partners. Image credit: Harrods*

Each window along Brompton Road featured a display collaboration from a brand and a partner designer or artist. Nearly all featured products included in Art Partners were exclusive to Harrods ([see story](#)).

Printemps spun window displays as art in a different manner. Channeling art auctions, the department store let consumers take home a piece of its holiday window displays through a charity auction in partnership with Christie's.

Printemps put 22 haute couture figurines from recent collaborations with brands including Chanel, Burberry and Dior on the block. With its window displays drawing crowds of more than 10 million, the interest in owning part of

the theatrical displays may have helped Printemps make a larger impact for its chosen cause.



*Burberry figurines for Printemps' 2015 holiday display. Image credit: Printemps*

Printemps' collaborators donated the figurines for the auction, which benefited Rose Association. The organization focuses on bettering the lives of women battling cancer through its informative magazine, Web site and online community, defense of patients' rights and its recently opened Rose House in Bordeaux, France ([see story](#)).

Bergdorf Goodman took a different spin to windows as art, enlisting its own sales associates to decorate its famed window panes as a testament to their internationally recognized expertise.

The department store invited 25 of its sales associates, both from its men's and women's wear stores, to style its legendary windows. Part of "BG Style Experts," the department store's spring campaign, the effort also included social media activations, in-store displays and editorialized content featured in Bergdorf Goodman magazine, in print and online.



*BG Style Experts window display at Bergdorf Goodman. Photo credit: Bergdorf Goodman, photo by Ricky Zehavi*

Bergdorf Goodman's BG Style Experts marked the first time the retailer had worked with its store associates in this capacity.

For the effort, Bergdorf tapped the stylish expertise of 15 women's store associates and 10 men's store employees. Each were asked to share their fashion philosophies alongside a favorite spring trend.

To accompany the window display, there was an online component that interviewed BG Style Experts for Bergdorf



Goodman magazine. Questions include "favorite style rule to break," "worst fashion faux pas," "can't live without" and "if you didn't work in fashion," among others ([see story](#)).

Highlighting the talent of the in-house style team with the window displays and the online component gave Bergdorf Goodman a chance to showcase the talent of its sales associate with a personal touch.

"[The three current top trends in window displays are] repetition, light and artist collaboration," Ms. Bidaudville said. "Right now, we are seeing a lot of window design concentrating on repetition in color and form to provide impact.

"Use of light has become increasingly important integrated in the 3D props to create a seamless effect," she said.

"Artists are designing windows for luxury brands to capitalize on the market."

#### Best-practice tips for luxury window displays

- Gemma Bidaudville, Millington Associates
  - "Quality material this is key to a successful window campaign. If the window looks inexpensive, it cheapens the product."
  - "Thinking about the negative space often brands make the mistake of not using the space in a window as part of the design."
  - "Making a hero of the product without excessive branding. Consumers don't want to feel sold to' and the luxury market does this really well by keeping branding to a minimum or styling it."
- Jason Traves, Lucky Fox
  - "Interactive VM powered by technology shows no sign of slowing down as a trend, with brands striving to make a powerful connection with their customers. From a designated selfie spot' in a window display, window vinyls displaying social media tags or live-streaming, technology has opened up so many more exciting new ways to build a narrative about a campaign or products on offer."
  - "Refreshingly, we're also noticing a lot of luxury brands adopting a more lighthearted approach to their window display designs with the fun use of mannequins and visuals. The use of humor not only gives the brand a more approachable and warm identity that appeals to all ages and cultures, but also enlivens the customers experience."
  - "We're also increasingly seeing editorial style looks appearing in luxury brand windows as retailers work to emulate key industry influencers such as bloggers, vloggers and stylists who are becoming 'retailers' for brands."
  - "Strive for the best possible VM display standards, where every minute detail should be of impeccable finish, however labour-intensive. Secondly, displays should be product focused. And, lastly, ensure the very best display tools and equipment."