

Window displays create interest, merchants say

JoAnne Klimovich Harrop

These windows are designed for peeking.

"The windows are my baby," says Carol Kinkela, owner of Carabella in Oakmont. "I love to do them, and I know that visual presentation is everything. What we do in the windows filters into the stores. The windows are our calling card. They have such a huge impact."

Because of that impact, window displays at clothing stores are changed often, some every week, others, at least every 10 days to two weeks. It's a way to keep things fresh with new merchandise.

Some stores hire visual teams to create the scenes. At others, store managers and owners take on the task.

"It is a little bit challenging to come up with ideas all the time, but that is what makes it interesting, too," says Casey Gaffey-Burkholder, manager of Crossroads Boutique and Cattiva in Greensburg. "It takes some time to come up with the props you use in the windows, along with the clothing and other accessories. But it's worth it."

Gaffey-Burkholder says she often gets questions about items in the window. When people see something enticing there, then come by later and it's gone from the display, they sometimes panic, she says.

Window inspiration can come from a color, print, pattern or even a season. Trends, current events or favorite charities have been featured through visual displays.

"It's all about creating an inviting visual," Gaffey-Burkholder says. "You want to create interest for people walking by. I spend a lot of time going outside and walking past the window I am working on to see if it is interesting, and then I often come back in and tweak a few things. Your windows are a reflection of your store."

Boutique windows should make a customer hungry for more, says Linda Bucci, owner of Linda Bucci in Shadyside. One of her recent designs showcased pieces from the collection of designer Annette Gortz.

Bucci usually updates her windows on Fridays so weekend shoppers get to see something new. Inside a second window is what Bucci calls "the party place" of fun and colorful gowns.

"There are times I come in, and someone has left me a sticky note on the door about something they like in the window," Bucci says. "It shows that people notice. I want my windows to tell a story about what's inside my store."

Renee Lingle, owner of Frog 'N Princess children's store in Peters, likes to create new looks for those in traffic on Route 19. She keeps the windows lit at night after the store is closed.

"People will come in and say they saw something when they were driving by, so you get a lot of business that way, by having something different in the windows," Lingle says. "It also shows you are getting new merchandise in the store all the time."

She starts with a theme - a birthday party, holiday or Holy Communion - and then adds toys and accessories, such as shoes or purses.

At The Limited, it takes a team to design a window, led by Debra Camarota, senior vice president of visual merchandising and store design and construction. She and her crew often work weeks, and sometimes months, ahead of time. She consults with Elliot Staples, senior vice president of design, and staffers from marketing and merchandising, as well as CEO Linda Heasley. The design is replicated nationally at Limited stores.

"We challenge each other to come up with new ideas," says Camarota, who has been designing windows for 33 years. "We also get ideas from traveling to Paris and London and New York. I am always curious about the world around me, and you need to be if you are designing windows."

Window design artists need to be in-the-know on pop culture, fashion trends, current events and - most importantly - your customer, she says.

"You want the window to grab her, to keep looking at the window," Camarota says.

Tom Michael, president of Larrimor's, says the Downtown store's windows are the second most important way customers come to his store. The first is word-of-mouth.

"The windows tell a story," Michael says. "They show how you can wear something, whether it's for casual attire or business attire. And there are little details in every window that add to them and make you want to look twice."

George Arnold works on a window display on a nearly daily basis. As window manager at Macy's Downtown, he's responsible for 27 windows.

"Windows are like billboards - they get people's attention - especially Downtown," says Arnold, who will celebrate his 30th anniversary in the business next year. "There are a lot of people who work Downtown who walk by every day. We also have a lot of tourists, and now there are more people who live Downtown, too. It's my job to educate and inspire them."

Arnold recalls a customer who asked about a pair of pants she saw in a window. She ended up purchasing the entire outfit because she liked how it was coordinated in the display.

"It's not just about putting a dress in a window," Arnold says. "You have to coordinate everything and know what looks good and what will be interesting to the potential customers looking in."

Fonte: Pit Tsburghlive, 19 May 2011. [Portal]. Disponível em: <<http://www.pittsburghlive.com>>. Acesso em: 23 May 2011.