



...as seen in...



Finding The Spark

By Emily M. White

The relationship between your store and your customer should be like a romance—it's all about attraction, desire and loyalty. The best in store design and visual merchandising are spaces that reflect an understanding of how a shopper's mind works. The trend now is destination shopping, where customers not only stop in for product, but for an experience in discovery.

Metropolitan Window Fashions also understands the shopping habits of its clientele. The family-run business has had the advantage of being in the custom window fashions industry for 75 years with three stores in New Jersey and two in New York City. The newest one opened on the upper East Side of Manhattan in March 2008.

With stores in the suburbs and in an urban setting, each store receives a different base of clientele, so president Bruce Heyman and director of design Lois Croce understand the necessity of tweaking the design schemes according to each store's surroundings. In New Jersey, where stores are destinations near highways, more emphasis is put on creating interior displays. In the city, it's more about the store front.

"For our brand new store, we went for a more traditional look with draperies, silks and embroideries because that's what the customers in that neighborhood look for in custom window treatments," says Heyman. "We specialize in one thing we do really well—custom window treatments—and that has made us very successful, but you need to be able to create a setting to sell your product."

Croce pulled out all the stops for customizing the design of each store. In comparison to the new store, the West Side store has an edgier, more contemporary feel for customers in that neighborhood. Croce has used materials ranging from black-and-white linoleum and bright colors for bold window displays, to bright orange LED lights to attract passer-bys.

It's also essential to understand how to maximize the space you have for your design scheme.

"For our West Side store, we focus much more on our front window display. On the East Side, it's so small, we leave the window open so that passer-bys can see the inside, so it's our interior displays that act like a window display. Our whole store is on display," says Heyman.



Metropolitan Window Fashions store on the upper East Side of Manhattan is designed to match the neighborhood's more traditional style and spending habits.

The Metropolitan Window Fashions store (below) on the upper West Side of Manhattan, its store designer asserts that with an urban location, it's important to have an eye-catching window display to attract passer-bys.



When the entire store is on display, Croce and Heyman assert that you really have to "up the ante" when it comes to vignettes to entice customer interest. Croce says that the "show-stopper" display in the new store starts with interlined rod pocket drapery panels in a bright olive green ribbed silk ottoman, embellished with tasseled bouillon fringe, mounted on a gold wood pole with full lead crystal finials and tied back with tassel tiebacks. The under drapery of coral interlined silk dupioni is double trimmed with beaded tassel trim and a striped grosgrain band, also secured with tassel tiebacks. Underneath it all is an interlined embroidered silk check balloon shade in coral, green and gold, also finished with beaded trim.

"We also want our customers to get the sense that 'these guys know what they're doing,'" says Heyman. "Our displays exude that confidence. Especially as a 'new guy' on the block, we have to educate them about our 75 years in the business. We have to tell them about our specialties, that we sell to retail and trade, we have our own fabrics, have won awards and honors—it's all about credibility. We are specialists and need to show it."