

All the world's a stage for selling

BY LISA CASINGER

COMPETING FOR consumers' disposable income is a tough job and it involves many variables. Everything from product, employees, location, prices and lighting to music and services can and do affect whether people shop your store and hopefully become frequent buyers.

How your store looks and feels can be a big influence. The store environment conveys a lot about you and the product. If you're a specialty store, you certainly aren't going for a Wal-Mart ambience, though that is the image many retailers portray.

Retailers can work magic with paint, proper lighting, inviting displays and music but there is another level of retail display that goes above and beyond all of that — theatrical retail.

Janice Davis of Janice Davis Designs in New York made the leap from set designer to retail/public space design and has worked with clients like Bloomingdale's and The Disney Store. She also has done installations for libraries, candy stores, corporate meetings, showrooms and more. Starting her career in set design gave her a wealth of knowledge on how to be creative and effective on a low budget. Though the installations she does today cost more than the \$250 budgets she often had for theater sets, there still are ways to get a lot of bang for your buck.

Recently she did a makeover of a children's library and if you simply use your imagination, there are applications in these images that can work for a home furnishings store as well. While one can get wrapped up in the excitement of the displays, the key is to not let them overshadow the true stars of the show — your product. Rather these displays, like any others in retail, are meant to frame the product and set the stage for an inviting, exciting shopping experience, one that will encourage repeat business and make your store a destination.

"These elements — color, signage, displays, etc. — must stand out as uniquely signaling you store, and therefore your consistent quality and service," Davis said. "What's needed is a unique, identifiable, iconic retail environment. The physical plant of the store as well as the display fixtures and signage should be recognizable, and in that way be outstanding, however, they should clearly feature and never overshadow the products themselves."



Bring the outside in with a faux tree. Use it as the focal point for a display packed with garden themed product; the backdrop for a bistro set and tabletop display or simply to add a natural touch to your store.



Use awnings and add faux painted windows to a windowless shop or draw attention to a piece of art or wall decor grouping. Paint the awnings in colors matching your bags and logos to carry your brand through.

As Davis says, creativity does not have to have a high price tag.

Of course with a bigger budget you can achieve more lavish and elaborate results, but Davis stresses the important point is to have a well thought out concept and to be consistent with it. Theatrical displays are a way to differentiate your single store from others in your market or to carry a brand image throughout your chain.

If you've created some knock-out displays you'd like to share, e-mail pictures to me at lcasinger@reed-business.com. For more information on theatrical displays, contact Janice Davis at JDD 212-966-4343 or visit janicedavisdesign.com. ■