

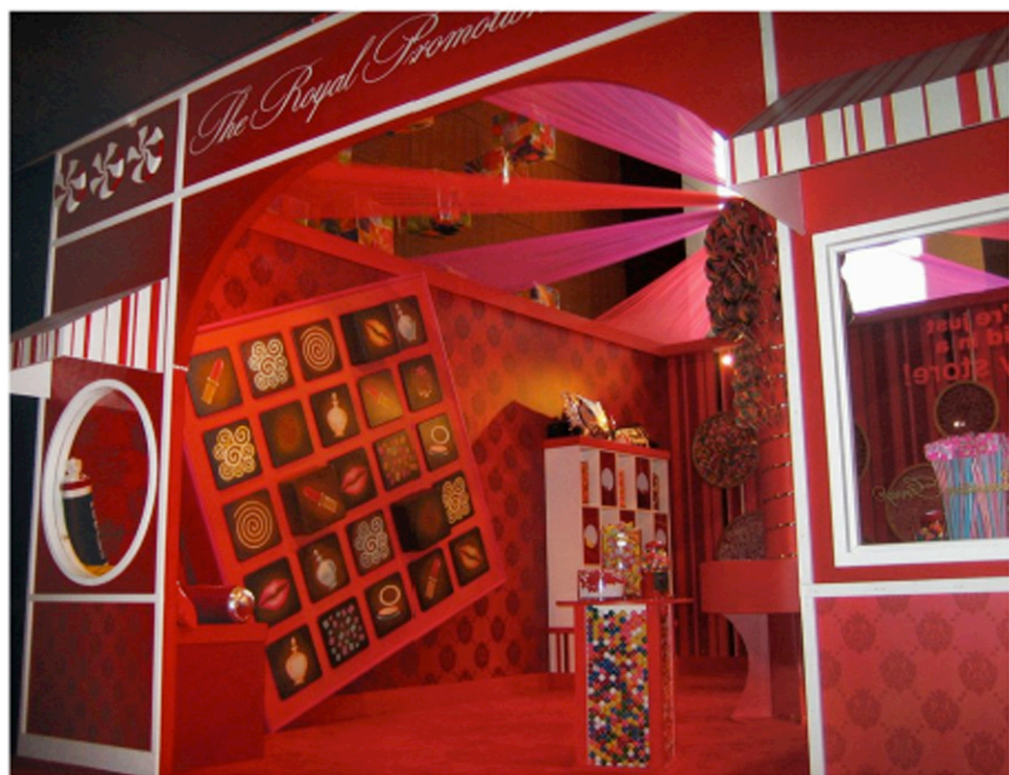
# 5 reasons theatricality will boost retail sales

The marriage of retail and fantasy is not new. Mention New York at holiday time and the always-wondrous windows of retailers like Lord & Taylor spring to mind. Tourists and New Yorkers alike line up for their dose of fantasy, with each window framing a mini-theatrical production where dolls in period costumes dance in stunning settings, transporting the onlooker to a Christmas scene out of Dickens. They ooh. They aah. And then, they shop.

Theatricality, once limited to Christmastime, is now popping up everywhere from stores to restaurants to libraries, employing all manner of themes—and for good reason. Along with boosting retail sales, a theatrical environment will:

**Make your store stand out from the rest.** In a competitive retail environment, there needs to be a reason that shoppers will choose your store over others. A theatrical theme—having shoppers walk into another world rather than just another store—is a can't-miss way to differentiate from other retailers selling similar or competing merchandise.

**Appeal to the customer's "inner child" (we all have one).** We look to books, movies and plays to make us feel part of another world. We love theme parks because 15 minutes of feeling like a pirate of the Caribbean or being beamed into the future is just plain fun. Instead of giving your customers a place to buy goods, draw them into a sunken ship, or a knight's castle, or a state fair. It will not only get them in the door, but might also cause them to return—and bring their friends.



Theatrical retail environments can transport shoppers to another world—and increase sales.

**Create a romance that surrounds your products and enhances their desirability.** You already know that something displayed well will sell better than something displayed poorly; now go a step further and imbue each display with the magic that comes with the overall experience of being on a desert safari or in an elegant Italian palazzo. Now it's not just a necklace—it's a necklace that makes your customer an adventurer or a countess.

**Make a joyous shopping experience.** Giving shoppers an enjoyable time under the sea, or in your 1920s speakeasy will greatly increase the chances that they'll want to take part of the fun away with them. If a candy store is just a store, they may only buy something if they're hungry. But if they're in an enchanted forest where the sweets are stored

in tree knotholes and in the windows of a gingerbread house, who can resist continuing the fun by buying some sweets to take home with them?

**Create a buzz.** The word on the street that your store is a must-see will be worth more than any ad or billboard. A creative approach may even get you mentioned in tourist offices and on bus or trolley tours. Don't open just another store—open another world, and customers may line up to get in. **DDI**

—Janice Davis, founder of Brooklyn, N.Y.-based Janice Davis Design, has been designing scenery for theater and television for more than 20 years, and corporate theater and events for more than 15 years. She also brings her theatrical sensibility to retail stores and public interiors.