



Trend „Mystical Myth“ in the holiday-window of Bergdorf Goodman

# Mythical transformations in the city that never sleeps

A trend report from New York City by Sonja Löbbel and Matthias Spanke, owners and founders of the Visual Merchandising agency INSPIRED in Cologne.



New York City is considered to be the Mecca of Visual Merchandising: nowhere else trends are staged and passed more diversified and more varied. "Especially during holiday season our focus goes to the USA. Other countries and cities also develop in a really interesting way, but Christmas is synonymous with New York City for us", Sonja Löbbel und Matthias Spanke of INSPIRED Visual Merchandising say.

The two owners of the Germany visual merchandising agency are always looking for new trends. The trends they find all around the world are translated by them for the European market. "Each country has its own stories and its own way of telling them. This fact has to be regarded to fulfil the tasks of an internationally positioned company like INSPIRED", Matthias Spanke describes the challenges.

Thanksgiving marks the turning point towards pre-Christmas season: around 5th Avenue a real wonderland of perfectly staged shop windows emerges with the highest level of creativity and perfection. "It is not only about professionalism here. It is obviously that

the work of the visual merchandisers is done with such a high level of passion", Sonja Löbbel praises the work of her American colleagues.

Despite of all the new impressions there are questions like: "What remains? Which trend makes the plunge over the big pond? Will one of these trends become a longer-range orientation for the story telling in visual merchandising? "In general it is always important to let people see and experience things in a new way. To bring well-known elements in a new context and in doing so to newly interpret stories for the observer – this is the basic tendency of variations like 'Modern Myth'", Matthias Spanke summarises and likewise names the most important trend.

## **Modern Myth – Wonderlands between fairy tales and science fiction**

Especially during holiday season it is a good opportunity to play with fabulous creatures like elves, wizards, and mythical forest animals. "Modern Myth" is characterised by some kind of Steampunk stylistics, which was very much and clearly more orientated towards the future some years ago. All



Trend "Metamorphosis" at Hermes

the big department stores use "Modern Myth" this year. Barneys presents oversized mushrooms and dancing elves in combination with a ghetto blaster. Macy's takes the observer on a trip through the planetary system. Bergdorf Goodman likes it frosty: a mannequin is draped in a world of ice, surrounded by ice sculptures of different animals. But also international chain stores like Massimo Dutti use it: A centaur is presented, a fabulous mixture of a human being and a horse from Greek mythology.

Sonja Löbbel states: "The theme is staged quite funny and playfully. With a more serious touch the theme could be easily turned into something scary, what does not fit into peaceful holiday season, of course. Perhaps a possibility to vary this trend a bit for the long term.

**Metamorphosis – little details very important**

"Metamorphosis" is a development that clearly concentrates on subjects like science, evolution and research. Molecules, crystals, ornaments – the finest natural structures play the lea-



Trend "Nature Configuration" implemented in the shop window of Anthropologie

ding part here. Patterns and grains are presented in oversize. Barneys for example uses spiral-shaped snowflakes, Hermes puts crystals into an exciting contrast with brass-coloured polygons. "Metamorphosis" needs a lot of finishing touch in design as well as for the observer who get a lot of inspiration especially in regard to details", Matthias Spanke describes.

**Nature Configuration – surreality ensures excitement**

Natural materials, warm colours and wood have been attendants for the worldwide visual merchandising for quite a long time. Now "Nature Configuration" breaks this style. Natural elements are brought into a new arrangement. Surreality finds its ways into the former very concrete and warm space of naturalness.

For example sheep painted in colourful chrome stand on each other and create a new shape in the store of "Ermenegildo Zegna". Tommy Hilfiger uses tree boles to create back panels and stylised firs.

**Light installations – art objects in the focus**

Throughout all the stores the continuation of an international trend can be noticed: neon tubes, screens, and LEDs are staged as art objects increasingly. "DKNY" for example built a tree made of screens. Valentino creates an installation using neon tube texts: the statement "peace" written in 16 different languages.

Matthias Spanke sums up the trends from New York City: "General rules of visual merchandising are carried to

extremes during Christmas season: it is all about surprising the observers and animating them to dream. Great visual merchandising is able to create a moment where people are transferred from everyday life into another world."

Sonja Löbbel is excited, too: "Oversized elements and something mysterious can be found everywhere. Technologies are not only used for their own sake but to tell stories: moving elements, changing colours, stroboscopes, screens, and interactive shop windows with touch screens serve the brand and the story."

Both experts of INSPIRED Visual Merchandising see a great potential especially in the theme of "Modern Myth". "There are so many links to continue the story over a long period. Even internationally this style will succeed: there are myths and fairy tales in every culture. If you integrate new media like interactive screens, you can create an enormous emotional connection between brand and observer – with a very individual background."



Light installation "screen tree" at "DKNY"

Matthias Spanke and Sonja Löbbel. Photos: Inspired

