

Let's Get Visual

Retailers share creative ways to catch customers' attention.

BY SUSAN JOHNSTON

Visual displays are arguably the most important part of your merchandising plan—they are your chance to show product in the best light. According to experts, a good display should continually change, to offer shoppers a fresh view of the merchandise. Routinely devising new displays can be challenging, however. Here, several retailers tell us about their most compelling setups and offer some inspiration for your next creation.



**Darci Hemesath, owner
Star Dancewear
Orland Park, IL**

Several years ago, Hemesath helped create a live-model display in the window of a friend's store. It was so popular that Hemesath decided to repeat the experience last spring in her own dance boutique. "I just remember how shocked everyone once they realized they were looking at real people," she says.

Hemesath recruited five young dancers—the daughters of several friends—to pose in her store window one afternoon during busy hours. In 15-minute intervals, the girls modeled ballet, jazz, gymnastics and skating outfits.

Setup was minimal. "We had a background cloth that we use at conventions, and I purchased some pink sequined fabric to look like curtain," says Hemesath.

The live-model display was so effective that she plans to do it again this spring for National Dance Week.



**Donna Fuller, owner
Judy's Dance Shoppe
Reno, NV**

While cleaning out her store earlier this year, Fuller noticed she had a surplus of unsold pointe shoes. To save the inventory from going to waste, she created a display inspired by the famous Harvey Edwards photo of pointe shoes in a pile. "I painted some of the shoes red," she says, "and stacked them at different levels and hung some from the ceiling."

Fuller says that the display was easy to assemble at no extra cost. "I just used old pointe shoes, added a red tutu and a ballet barre from Home Depot and called it a day."

The pointe shoe display went up around Valentine's Day, and it garnered a lot of compliments. Fuller believes its simplicity and vibrant color were key. "Just make it simple and have a theme," she says.

**Shirley Soss, manager
The Dance Shoppe
Omaha, NE**


The Dance Shoppe's windows get a lot of sunlight, so Soss and her staff change the store's display just about every week to prevent colors from fading. This past Christmas, she was inspired by the Designs & Displays section in *Dance Retailer News*. Soss liked the idea of a long ballet dress hung on birch branches. She had one of her salespeople, Judy Farber, put together a similar display.

"We found a real branch, spray-painted it white and bought a long,

elegant tutu from Body Wrappers to put the whole thing together," she says. "It probably took about five or six hours to get the branch hung and make sure it wouldn't pull the ceiling tiles down."

Soss and Farber then added a few touches of their own. White cotton material doubled as snow, a mirror became a pond for skaters and glass garland was draped around the edge of the window for a winter wonderland look. "We spent a lot of time on the

details," says Soss.

The retailers saw the results of their hard work when several customers stopped to admire and compliment the display. In fact, Soss was so pleased, she adapted the design for Valentine's Day. "We left the branch and the garland up, and hung hearts and red merchandise from it," she says. 

Susan Johnston is a freelance writer in Boston, MA.