

WINNING WINDOW DISPLAYS

BY JULIE RULON-GREENE



(Photo of Vickers) This frame shop is located on a busy road, so window displays are changed frequently.

Philosophically, no one doubts the importance of a fabulous window display. But finding the time to “dress” your window on a regular basis takes planning and steals time away from framing pictures. The framer has to shift from craftsman to retailer and answer the question, “What will attract people into my store?” Here are some ideas from some pros in the picture framing business who have shared stories about their own successful window displays.

Know Your Customer

Ron Adler, President of Adler’s Art and Frame with four Virginia locations, emphasizes the importance of staying current and knowing your audience. “We love to show frames that people haven’t seen before,” says Adler. “The next window we’ve planned for our stores will showcase “galvanized” frames. We’ve framed a variety of art, everything from florals to abstracts, and we’ve collected watering cans and other galvanized tin objects to add to

the windows. The accessories will bring attention to the frames, which are very unique and fresh.”

Adler’s also knows its audience. Adler’s Art and Frame is located in an area with many military bases, so for Memorial Day the “Reflections” print of a visit to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial was chosen for their windows. They also like to show shadow boxes of framed armed services memorabilia to encourage local service people to bring in medals and other military keepsakes for framing.

At Vickers Gallery and Framing in Saint James, New York, owner Penny Ostrowski designed a spring window that included shiny, eye-catching “garden gazing globes” accompanied by large floral prints and metal animal sculptures for the outdoors. Ostrowski leaves lights on all night because passing commuters



Shiny globes suspended from an angled window draw attention. Larger globes are mixed in with attractively framed floral and landscape art.

to and from the train station are among those that comment on the window and come in to browse on the weekends.

Art Works, Even for Clothes Stores

Stores known for their window displays, like Lord & Taylor and Saks Fifth Avenue in New York City, have full-time designers devoted to window dressing. Clothes become the centerpiece and catch the eye with color and interesting props and accessories.

But even clothes retailers appreciate the allure of a painting. This spring at Lord & Taylor, the main feature of a window display was artist Larry Rivers, “Fashion Show Monte Carlo.” The painting graced the window before it moved to the

Checklist for a Successful Window Display

1. Establish a reasonable budget for your window display. Consider it an indispensable element in your marketing effort.
2. A well-lit window is as important as the display itself.
3. Change your window display regularly. Even the most interesting window grows old if potential customers walk or drive past your shop everyday.
4. If your window has side walls, use that area of your display to catch people’s attention as they pass by.
5. Keep windows clean and minimize distractions in the form of stickers and other signs. Post your store hours and phone number in a neat, attractive way.
6. A backdrop may help to give definition to a display. If you want people to be able to see into the shop, consider a half-wall, sheer material on a dowel, or any treatment that complements your window arrangement.
7. In general, one large, bold picture beautifully framed has more impact than multiple framed pictures in a window display.
8. Plan ahead. Make a list and collect props for possible themes. Window displays can be tied to favorite artists, varying styles of art, holidays and seasons.
9. Make sure that anything you display in your window is available in quantity for multiple sales.
10. To avoid fading of displayed art, use UV filtering glass on everything that goes in the window.

Marlborough Monaco art gallery. In addition, the artist made a personal appearance at the store.

Art succeeds in gaining the public's attention. As a framer, your creativity and your most eye-catching art work provide an opportunity to make window displays that celebrate art and advertise your services.

Kevin Milano, of Framera national sales, Bohemia, New York, who is also an artist, is always on the lookout for creative window design. He said, "When I see an effective window, it stays with me. It's always a plus if the retailer has a lot of window space for showing art. But even if the space is limited, a good designer uses the window as their canvas."

Milano referred to the owner of Future Art & Frame of Deerfield Beach, Florida, David Butters, who has expanses of glass from the floor up. Butters plans on using Framera's Brushed frames in an upcoming display. "I think the Brushed, in Gold and Silver will attract people into the store. It catches the eye with its width and sheen," said Butters.

Particular Successes

When Butters was asked what his most successful window display consisted of, he said it was a huge antique mirror, about 60 x 80 inches in size. "One, single dramatic mirror helped sell more mirror framing than ever before," noted Butters. "We had a simple sign announcing that we sell and frame mirrors alongside the display."

"We got in trouble for one of our most successful window displays," remembers Ostrowski of Vickers. "We didn't know it at the time, but live Christmas trees were against fire codes and not allowed in store windows. We had decorated a big tree with homemade silver and gold ornaments made from shells from our local beach. We included holiday art and accessories.

"The display brought in customers looking for gifts and everyone commented on the ornaments. When the local fire marshall told us the rules,



Windows are valuable real estate. While this unidentified shop has chosen to make signage their focus, other retailers might consider making framed art more prominent. Don't forget to consider outside fixtures like this pole here. They affect both foot traffic and visibility.

we changed the display. But it was great while it lasted."

Another success for Vickers was a huge French poster of a high-kicking Can-Can dancer that was given the whole window. In the short time the poster was displayed, four were sold.

Denise Conte, Creative Director of Franchise Concepts, Inc. of Houston, Texas, works with owners of Deck the Walls, The Great Frame Up, and Framing & Art Centers of Canada to support marketing efforts. Her suggestion? "Show

the wow. Think big and bold, large and colorful. You have three seconds to make an impression," notes Ms. Conte.

Conte suggests that mall-based stores change their displays every two weeks. At locations in outdoor centers, once a month is suggested." Heavier frames are preferred for "destination" locations, and she suggests interlocking frames to create a montage.

"You can make a display of your boldest frames. I have seen a successful montage of empty frames that only the owner knew were slightly miscut.

They were beautifully put together and showcased the variety of frames available in the shop," explains Ms. Conte.

One of her favorite windows in a mall location combined furniture and framed art. "The frame shop owner used a safari theme. She combined a chair, a plant stand, an accent lamp, animal print fabrics, framed African



At Adler's Art and Frame, a whole window display was designed around Galvanized moulding from Framera.

wildlife prints, and sticks of moulding. The attractive vignette captured the romance of art and home decoration.”

According to Conte, a pyramid design with a focal point at the top works well. “Cluster the art using the largest picture at the apex of the pyramid. Don’t be afraid to overlap corners. Include work with all different price points so there is something for everyone to buy.”

To sell shadow boxes, Conte has suggested displays accompanied by descriptive signs that inspire consumers to display and protect their memorabilia. “The ultimate goal is to educate the consumer on what could be,” notes Conte.

So along with all your other efforts, make your display window a priority for selling and sharing ideas that should be irresistible. ■