

New York dazzles during the holidays

BY JUDITH DONER BERNE
SPECIAL WRITER

No city wraps itself up for the holidays quite like New York. If you are traveling to the Big Apple anytime between now and New Year's, you are in for a treat.

The bright lights that always shine in Times Square are rivaled by the dazzle coming from streets and stores, plazas and parks throughout the city at this time of year.

Rockefeller Center is a traditional focal point of the holiday hubbub. The giant Rockefeller Center Christmas tree boasts 30,000 light bulbs on five miles of wire. This year's tree, according to the center's holiday hotline, is a 100-year-old, 100-foot-tall, 65-foot-wide Norway spruce, imported from Connecticut.

And you'll most certainly want to check out the windows of the big department stores: Barneys New York, Bergdorf Goodman, Bloomingdale's, Lord & Taylor, Macy's and Saks Fifth Avenue.

Innovative Christmas themes abound, but because this is also the turn of the century some stores have chosen to focus on the millennium.

Lord & Taylor looks toward the future through the eyes of children from around the world. Five of its Fifth Avenue windows recreate familiar landmarks from various countries and continents, with the sixth window a global tribute. Each features animated figures of children, dressed in fashions appropriate to their heritage.

Barneys New York, living up to its cutting edge reputation, isn't content to confine its windows to one century. Entitled "Two Thousand Years of Talk," they pay homage to five icons of communication from the past 2,000 years. Each icon is represented by a seven-foot-tall head, made up of and surrounded by a variety of materials, with a mouth that constantly moves.

Cleopatra represents "Girl Talk" and is constructed from more than 1,000 bottle caps,



Talk: The "Girl Talk" window is one of a series on the theme "2,000 years of talk," which drew crowds to Barneys New York.

many filled with the image of Hollywood beauty queen Elizabeth Taylor. Other talking heads are of William Shakespeare (Sweet Talk), Queen Elizabeth II (Tiara Talk), James Brown (Jive Talk) and Millennium Man (Cyber Talk).

Truer to the Christmas theme, Saks Fifth Avenue's windows feature an animated interpretation of a new book, "Auntie Claus," by Elise Primeval. The windows tell the story of Sophie, described as a rather precocious

New York child. She learns the true meaning of the holiday spirit from her aunt, who turns out to be Santa's sister. Hand-sculpted figures are dressed in costumes made from velvets, fake furs and silks. (The book for children ages 4 to 8 was reviewed favorably last week by the New York Times.)

Displays at the Waldorf Astoria hotel reflect its history as "the largest and most opulent hotel in New York" at the turn of the last century. In the newly-



Window shopping: Bergdorf Goodman windows depict a version of the Twelve Days of Christmas (note partridges and pears).

published book "New York, An Illustrated History," authors Ric Burns and James Sanders report on its relocation from Fifth Avenue and 34th to its present Park Avenue site in 1931.

The lobby, adorned with art deco murals and mosaics, is the setting for the re-creation in

miniature of wintry street scenes from the Waldorf's past set against blow-ups of vintage photographs of the original hotel.

The windows at F.A.O. Schwarz toy store depict various adventures of beloved author E.B. White's "Stuart Little," obviously well-timed for the film

that opens this month. And Tiffany & Co. continues its impressive run of highlighting spectacular pieces of jewelry in sophisticated wintry settings.

Much as I enjoy the windows, it's the street scenes that I really love: the delicately lighted trees on the grassy median of Park Avenue, with the limestone and brick facade of St. Bartholomew's Church (1919) as backdrop; the parade of candy canes on 57th Street west of Fifth Avenue; the golden snowflake dangling high above Fifth Avenue at 67th Street.

New Year's Eve

On New Year's Eve, two million people are expected to congregate in Times Square. Their eyes, indeed the eyes of the world, will be trained like never before on a ball gliding down a 77-foot rooftop pole at One Times Square Plaza.

It doesn't matter what time zone you're in. The 21st century is official only when it hits New York.

Judith Doner Berne, a West Bloomfield resident, is a former managing editor of the Eccentric Newspapers. Your comments are welcome by calling (734) 953-2047 or e-mailing jdberne@att.net.

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