



You start with an empty display window . . .



... then you add some props . . .

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# The making of a window display—1974

By JAY R. STUCK

There's a lot more to the art of window display than meets the eye.

Planning, creative placement of materials and a dash of inspiration form the basis of attractive retail store windows.

Crowley's-Birmingham recently devoted one of its seven large outside windows to advertise an upcoming R & K summer fashion show to be held at 2:30 p.m. Saturday. Three persons are responsible for the inside and storefront displays.

"THERE'S A LOT to do in a store this size," Cindy Keefe, display supervisor for the store said. "We're always busy."

"Window displays are extremely important," Rick Verriest, store manager said. "Windows do much for us — they bring people in to look at clothes, and in that way act as inexpensive advertising."

The genesis of the R & K window display began in Crowley's upstairs display shop one day before the actual set-up.

Window sketches and overlays were drawn, styrofoam materials cut out, color schemes agreed upon and the mannequins' dresses selected.

"The store manager approves the final sketches, but we usually have a pretty free creative reign," Ms. Keefe said.

MANY TIMES THE sketches form the basis for improvisation when the window is installed she added.

After all the materials are ready, the green and white styrofoam R & K letters, floral paper-wrapped columns and the mannequins themselves are moved quickly downstairs to the empty window.

A macabre pile of artificial limbs rests amid plastic ferns, fishing line, boxes of pins, staples, combs, wigs, ladders, masking tape, razor blades and pantyhose.

The full-sized mannequins, each costing about \$240, sport lifelike eyelashes, human-hair wigs and wear between a size 8 or 10 dress with size 7 shoes.

Wear and tear on the mannequins is a problem, Ms. Keefe and Verriest said.

BROKEN FINGERS, chipped

and scratches necessitate constant touch-ups and glue-ons.

Replacements are costly. A mannequin's new hand costs about \$20, Verriest said.

Ms. Keefe and her assistants, Julie Kirchner and Steve Crain, usually take two or three hours to finish a window.

"We each have our specialties," Ms. Keefe said.

"Steve usually dresses the mannequins, Julie is great at suspending and balancing letters, and I arrange the larger props," she said.

LETTERS, SIGNS and other hangings are suspended from a black-painted grid above the window by fishing line.

"You have to be sure the line is secure," Julie Kirchner said. "One day, after finishing a window, I was really pleased with the way the suspended portions looked. But when I came to work next morning, the whole thing had fallen down during the night. Either the knots had slipped or the lines broke."

The physical make-up of a window can be designed in three basic geometric ways in order to direct your eyes from one dress to another.

The triangle shape forces the eye to follow to its top, the zig-zag form compels the eye up and down, and the inverted pyramid emphasizes important pieces at the bottom.

"It's known as symmetrical and asymmetrical balance," Ms. Keefe said.

THESE MECHANICAL devices serve to highlight the most important part of the window — the dresses.

"I dress the mannequins to please customer tastes, not my own," Crain said.

"I try to have the jewelry be in keeping with the outfits," he added.

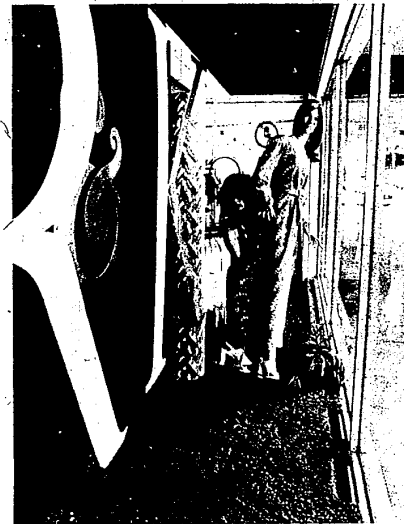
In the finished window the R & K sign is flanked by two mannequins wearing green and white accessorized print dresses and slack outfits.

"You get a good feeling once in a while — knowing you've done an especially good job," Ms. Keefe said.

"We get a lot of chances to experiment. There's always another window scheduled to be redone," she added.



... add some human know-how . . .



... move everything to its proper place . . .



... and finally you've got yourself a finished window display

By  
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