

# STORES

This season's themes in visual merchandising are simple but effective. **John Ryan** visits Bluewater and Westfield London to see what is on view

## Shop windows get

**F**lowers, house shapes and white neon. This is more or less the sum total of spring visual merchandising in the mass market at present, or at least that would seem to be the case on the evidence of visits to Bluewater and Westfield London.

At the time of writing, shoppers continued to walk around in parkas, long coats and the occasional scarf – which is counter to what retailers will have been hoping for as the close of the first quarter of 2015 draws near. But no matter – for retailers spring has well and truly sprung.

The interesting point from a visual merchandising perspective is how relatively few major themes there are and how many retailers seem to have opted for what might be termed the display consensus.

That may be to do with the zeitgeist, but it seems more probable that it is related to the suppliers of VM props generally agreeing on what is needed to mark the season of lukewarm sun and nature coming back to life.

### Marks & Spencer, Westfield London

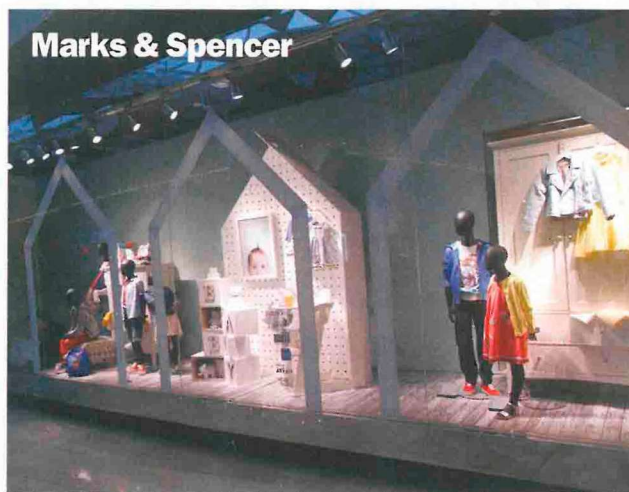
The outline of a house gable is used as the basis for this Marks & Spencer window, which is devoted for the most part to childrenswear and items that kids might need.

It is a very simple scheme but it is eye-catching. The clever part is the way in which the gable has been attached to the glassline, which is then mirrored by an illuminated backdrop that picks up on the theme.

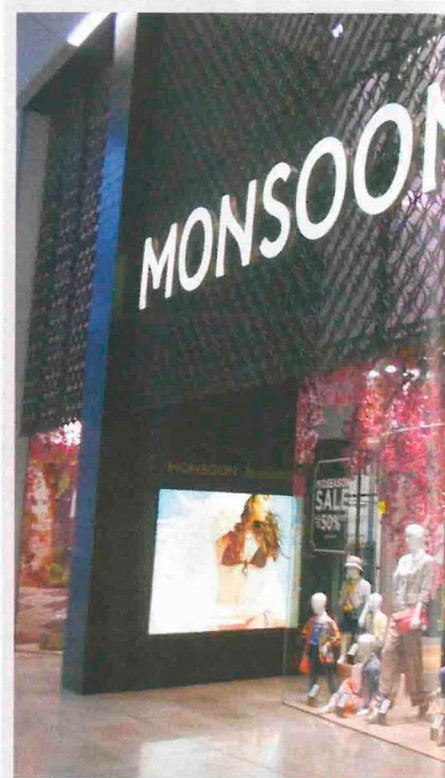
Aged floorboards have been put in the base of the window, in keeping with the idea of a simple beachfront New England house. Other than that, there is little to distract from the clothes that are on view.

Props include an off-white chest of drawers, a cream wardrobe and a baby's face staring from the lower part of a white-framed picture.

If simplicity in a domestic setting is required, this one fits the bill.



**Aged floorboards in the base of the window are in keeping with the idea of a simple beachfront house**



For more pictures of spring window displays visit [Retail-week.com/springwindows2015](http://Retail-week.com/springwindows2015)



# a spring clean



## Monsoon Accessorize, Westfield London

This Accessorize store, as in a number of other locations, is an adjunct to the greater Monsoon whole, yet it is almost entirely discrete and the windows are also kept separate, although they are contained by the same frame.

Both in their different ways use faux foliage to promote the idea that spring is upon us and that perhaps it might be time to consider renewing the wardrobe.

It is a moot point whether jungle palms are needed as a backdrop for handbags, but the manner in which the window as a whole is divided up is bound to turn heads.

These are brightly lit windows that look completely different from each other, yet they work as a whole.

## Thomas Pink, Westfield London

Just to prove there are retailers that are happy to buck visual merchandising trends, Thomas Pink has made a fox mosaic the centrepiece of its window.

The fox is not sharply defined by the individual pixels/mosaic pieces that form the image, but that is deliberate as the total effect is of checks.

This marries with the window's strapline, which states 'any check as long as it's... Pink'. In the foreground are torsos wearing, yes, checked shirts.

The effect is arresting and, just as importantly, it is low-cost meaning that rolling out a scheme that promotes a luxury product can be kept within the bounds of visual merchandising budget responsibility.

This Thomas Pink store serves as part of the introduction to the luxury area at the mall's southern end.

On the day of visiting Thomas Pink was proving more successful at attracting shoppers through its doors than many of its luxury neighbours, helped no doubt by this window.

## Boux Avenue, Bluewater

With theatre-style curtains as a frame and a more subtle pink than is used in Victoria's Secret Pink, lingerie retailer Boux Avenue uses flowers along the base of the window to get the spring message across.

There is a bicycle in the window and in case the message is missed the strapline reads 'petal power'.

A sense of humour and pastels are what this window is about – less sex and rather more spring, which again provides a sharp contrast with the other lingerie retailers in the centre.

There is a lot of competition in Bluewater for Boux Avenue with Marks & Spencer, Rigby & Peller and Victoria's Secret all vying for a slice of the market.

This display succeeds in enabling Boux Avenue to distinguish itself from its lingerie rivals.



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## ► All Saints, Bluewater

The upper end of mid-market fashion has always had something of the industrial about it, so it is perhaps little surprise that All Saints has taken the white neon tube trend and created something akin to the ambience of a factory.

Practically, that means a window where one of the mannequins sports a pair of dungarees that might not look out of place on a production line, but which probably wouldn't find favour in terms of price in an industrial setting. The colours are subdued, verging on the monochrome, but a high-contrast backdrop is provided by the white neon tubes.

The effect is almost penitential but, if nothing else, it shows the power of simple white neon.



## River Island, Bluewater

Few retailers have devoted themselves more to the white neon trend than River Island. Its womenswear window and smaller men's window both use neon strip lights in a variety of arrangements.

In the women's window the tubes are a cat's cradle-like affair and the bulk are used to frame the left-hand side of the scene.

The mannequins are dressed in white and at the far right-hand end is a kid's area complete with neon climbing frame.

The men's window offers a more geometric vista as horizontal neon lines create a bright ladder behind soberly dressed figures.

## Evans, Bluewater

Although Evans eschews the white neon strip lighting trend, the candy-coloured louvre-like feature that serves as the backdrop to this window has more or less the same effect as can be seen in All Saints and River Island, albeit aimed at a different customer.

Evans has come of age as far as fashion windows are concerned and its schemes are a long way

from the floral tunics of old.

For a niche retail offer, this is firmly part of the mainstream.

The logo on the window is also noteworthy insofar as it might almost appear to be made from neon tubes that have been bent to shape.

As part of Arcadia, Evans is picking up on the strengths of the window displays across the wider group.

