

STORES

Christmas is just around the corner and Oxford Street retailers have lifted the curtain on spectacular seasonal windows. **John Ryan** assesses

The West End get

As Christmas nears, London's West End is about to head into overdrive as far as visual merchandising and promotions are concerned. This is the time of year when Christmas is 'launched' amid high hopes that sales will soar right up to the big day.

The calendar for unveiling the windows and associated campaigns seems to vary widely but all retailers have usually got things wrapped up by mid-November.

For the moment however, the windows on Oxford Street remain varied, as some stores plug the season of goodwill, while others are content to simply run with their latest product campaign.

Selfridges

Luxury department store Selfridges' Christmas window campaign should ensure that passing shoppers are aware of the festivities taking place in store.

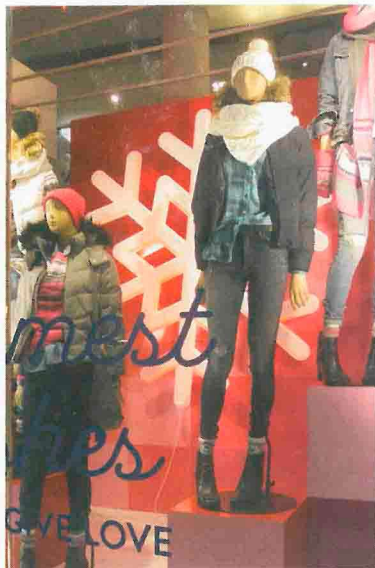
With Oxford Street's longest frontage, this year the store that heads *Retail Week's* Top of the Shops (Retailweek.com/TopOfTheShops) has opted to use black backdrops for its windows and focus instead on the mannequins, which are dressed in clothing themed around the zodiac.

The sets on which the mannequins are positioned include everything from large upright feathers to a geometric maze composed of white neon tubes.

This is, of course, about selling upscale designer labels, but there is nothing in-your-face about how each window's collections are flagged up and it would be possible to view any of the scenes without noticing the brands involved.

Worth noting too is the window that has no mannequin in it. Instead, there is a scheme devoted to Grey Goose vodka, which has a model of a blue delivery van, branded with the eponymous booze, placed in the snow in front of a white building.

Right: Selfridges' zodiac themed windows and the Grey Goose snowy street scene

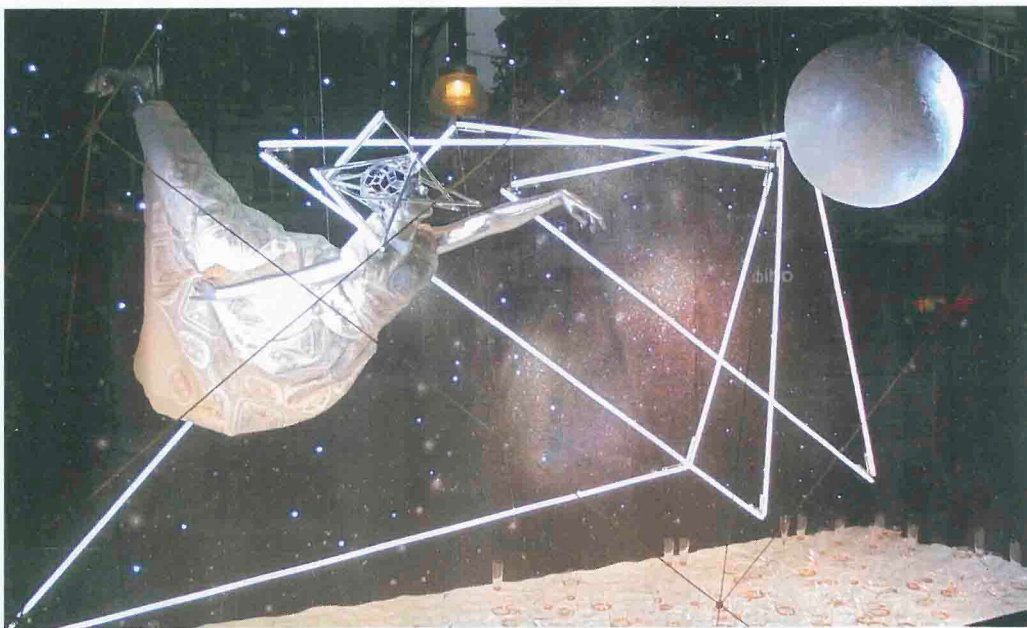


OXFORD STREET SEASONAL VISUAL MERCHANDISING

No real theme stands out for Christmas 2015. **Traditional Christmas** is absent with an emphasis on 'party'. **Silver** lighting and display schemes are dominant. **Technology** has its place but does not have the prominence it had in previous years.



Above: Gap's wintry seasonal offering. Right: Debenhams' starry display



More photos of the Christmas window displays on Oxford Street this year at Retail-week.com/ChristmasOxfordSt



s festive



Niketown

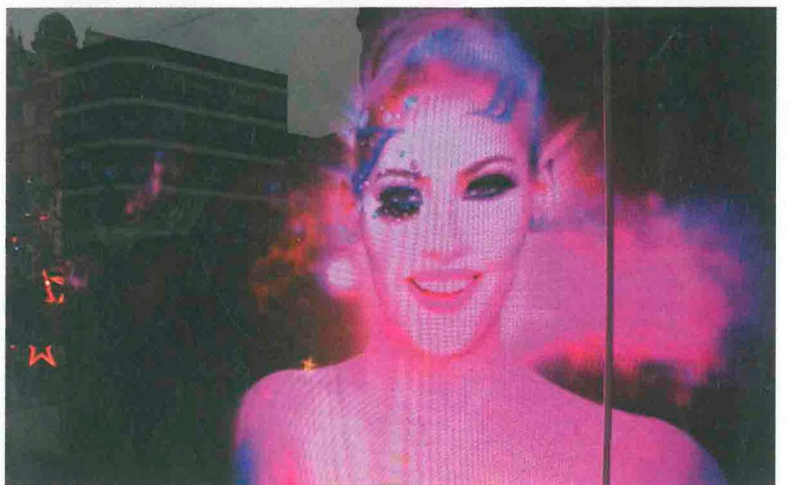
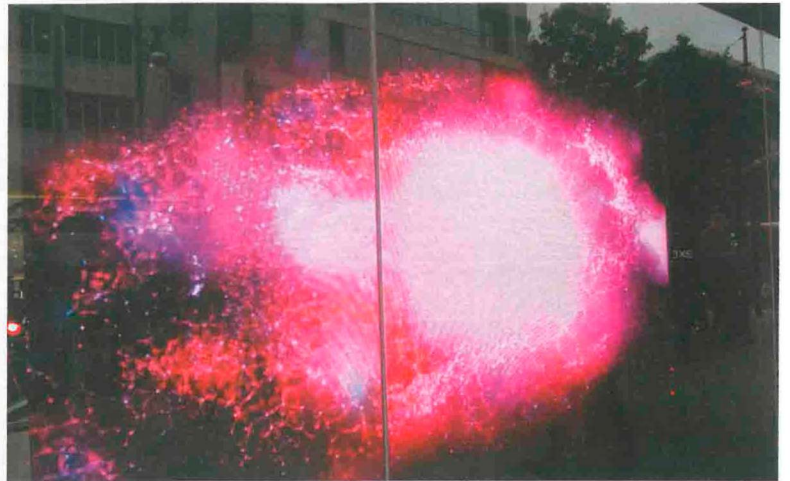
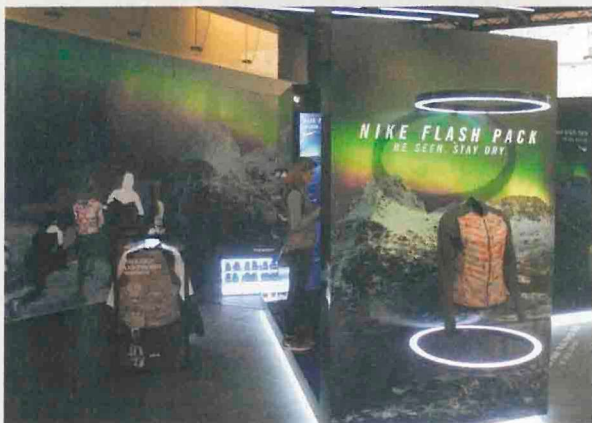
It's quite hard to imagine festive visual merchandising from Nike. The brand's unrelenting focus on performance sportswear precludes this kind of thing.

Instead, the current promotion centres on the Nike Flash Pack – a range of clothing intended to permit active types to 'be seen, stay dry'.

There is a wall display in the atrium at the front of the shop in which training shoes are given pride of place, followed by an installation in the area on the ground floor that is set aside for promotions.

White neon strip lighting is used to emphasise the mid-shop freestanding walls, where green is the dominant colour.

The effect is suitably high-tech and a backlit cabinet, flooded with white light, provides a high-profile setting for the products and stands out in the generally low-lit area.



Debenhams

Department store Debenhams has opted to kick-off its Christmas campaign with a series of glittery windows.

Mannequins are displayed sitting among illuminated stars with a different colour featured in each window. Emerald green, warm purple and sapphire blue form the bulk of the

colour scheme, while a digital screen occupies the whole of the eastern window that fronts Oxford Street.

The screen demands to be watched. Initially, it shows a nebulous swirl, but over the course of about 30 seconds this morphs into an animated female face, intent on opening a present (pictured).

This is possibly the showiest window on Oxford Street.

STORES

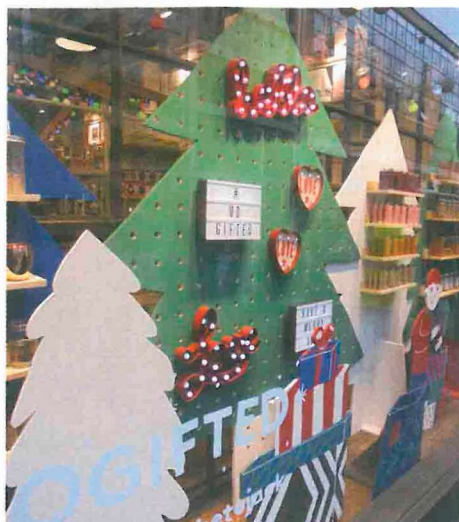
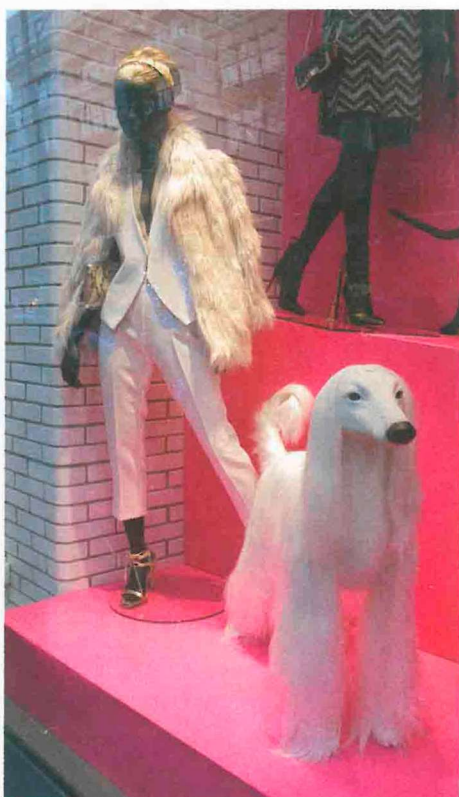
River Island

► 'Style is not just for Christmas' is the strapline at River Island. The campaign is a nod towards the popular maxim that a dog should not be given as a present unless the recipient is capable of looking after it.

In case shoppers miss the point, the windows and the interior are filled with life-size model dogs, from French bulldogs to Afghan hounds, all reinforcing this link.

The windows feature a hot pink backdrop and there is not a hint of holly or glitter. This is an arresting theme and the fact that there are separate windows above the street-level displays makes it a showstopper.

There are two other branches of River Island along Oxford Street, but this one wins in terms of visual impact.



Urban Outfitters

Sometimes simplicity is the order of the day and the handmade 2D appearance of the Christmas windows in the Urban Outfitters store at Oxford Circus are a case in point.

Plywood or cardboard cut-outs of stylised Christmas trees have unfinished chipboard shelves attached to them on which very few items are displayed.



An equally simple 2D male figure is placed in front of this, clutching gift-wrapped presents and looking content.

Urban Outfitters is not about being flash and this display is both seasonably to the point and on brand for its shoppers.

It's a trait that it shares with its sister brand, Anthropologie, which also concentrates on creating window displays where low-tech materials and craft take prominence.

Christmas is paramount for retailers and on Oxford Street it looks like the loudest shout will stand a better chance of winning

Pandora street promotion, Marble Arch

While not the entire shop it's hard not to admire the way in which jewellery retailer Pandora has taken control of the space in front of its shop.

Look closely and you'll find trees at various intervals along the street. Although it is easy to overlook this greenery given the surrounding retail razzmatazz, Pandora has ensured that this is not the case outside its doors at the western end of Oxford Street. The trunks of the trees have been wrapped in Perspex and silver lights placed inside.

Not only does this capture the eye, it also ensures that shoppers register Pandora's brand presence.

Christmas is paramount for retailers and on Oxford Street it really does look like the loudest shout will stand a better chance of winning.

It's the same principle used by John Lewis further along the thoroughfare, which has draped the upper reaches of its building in strings of silver light.

