

STORES

Summer in the city

Covent Garden and Brent Cross have all guns blazing when it comes to summer visual merchandising. **John Ryan** reports

As the second week of Wimbledon kicked off, it was apparent across London that summer was with us and that retailers had deployed a wide variety of visual merchandising strategies in response.

Covent Garden and Brent Cross had both sprung into action, and for many it was Sale time (as it has been for some months, in a number of instances).

Visiting the shopping centre and wandering the streets of the popular tourist area, one thing stood out, however – there is currently no single thing that defines visual merchandising en masse.

Magnum Pleasure Store, Earlham Street, Covent Garden

This one is a pop-up store and is becoming something of a seasonal fixture in the capital, with both South Molton Street and Westfield Stratford having previously played host to the ice-cream brand.

For 2017, Magnum offers a Pleasure Store where those prepared to dig deep can get a Magnum double-dipped at a personalisation counter and then have it decorated with sparkly (and edible) accessories.

Having done this, they can place their purchase in an open-fronted Instagram box, complete with hashtag, and post a pic of the creation on the internet.

The store itself has outsize versions of the accessorised ice creams in the windows and a graphics package that takes the brand's signature dark brown colour to create a series of messages celebrating the season.

There are also a number of brightly coloured tote bags, bearing the name Moschino, housed in glass cases set into the wall.

Each bag has a correspondingly coloured Magnum model beneath it – and the intention is to inform shoppers that the interior of this store is an official tie-up with the Italian designer label.

The in-store environment itself is the handiwork of Jeremy Scott, Moschino's creative director, and it is open until September 10.

JD Sports, Brent Cross

JD Sports has recently opened a new shop in the heart of Brent Cross, allowing shoppers to browse its offer in the retailer's quasi-industrial environment.

A dominant feature is the bright yellow overhead metal beam that works as an attention-grabber, taking the eye from the front of the store to a large screen at the rear.

This is reinforced by a lighting system consisting of neon tubes arranged in rows running from left to right and acting as a ladder stretching away into the interior.

Lightboxes showing well-muscled sporty types run from front to back, and the dark grey tiles ensure that attention is focused on the merchandise, rather than its surroundings.

As an appeal to a generally youthful demographic, JD Sports treats sportswear in the manner that would be expected of a fashion retailer.

Nixon, Newburgh Street, Covent Garden

When it comes to personalisation, few retailers in Covent Garden do things better than fashion watch brand Nixon, if only because of the visual merchandising it employs to encourage shoppers to move away from standard watch models.

The store window bears the legend 'Custom Bar One of One', but it is not until the shopper enters that the customisation story is made clear with a neon 'Custom' sign directing visitors to the basement.

When it comes to personalisation, few retailers in Covent Garden do things better than fashion watch brand Nixon

Here shoppers can choose watch case, face and strap from a broad range of options, all displayed in wooden cases.

The basement is also noteworthy for the curved wooden vaulting at one end and the wall panel of watchmakers' tools.

Upstairs, the store is about wheelless skateboards acting as cupboard doors, and a long glass case featuring a display wave of watches.

Anthropologie, Brent Cross

Open since November 2016, the Anthropologie store at Brent Cross currently makes its mark in the centre with a giant blue whale. This is the major visual merchandising element in the store, fashioned from fabric and suspended just inside the window.

It is a statement of intent about design creativity and what lies within.

It also has almost nothing to do with the stock that is in the store, and shows the power of a prop to garner attention and make passers-by consider heading in.

As is customary in Anthropologie stores, the blue whale is the showstopper that ensures this is a retailer which does not get overlooked.

Tesla, Brent Cross

It is testimony to the pulling power of the major shopping centres that of the 18 Tesla showrooms in the UK, half of them are located within malls.

This branch boasts a pair of the shiny hi-tech vehicles, a display of chunky alloy wheels and a perimeter graphic dubbed the 'Design Studio' that allows customers to choose the car colour and trim.

There is also a wheeled chassis, which is in many ways the star of the show, acting as a 3D exploded diagram and following the 'tell by showing' dictum.

This store is, of course, about brand awareness, but given the well-heeled population that comprises the Brent Cross hinterland, it would be surprising if the visual merchandising in this store does not persuade a lucky few to open their wallets. **RW**

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