

Display Gets Creative as Retailers Move Forward

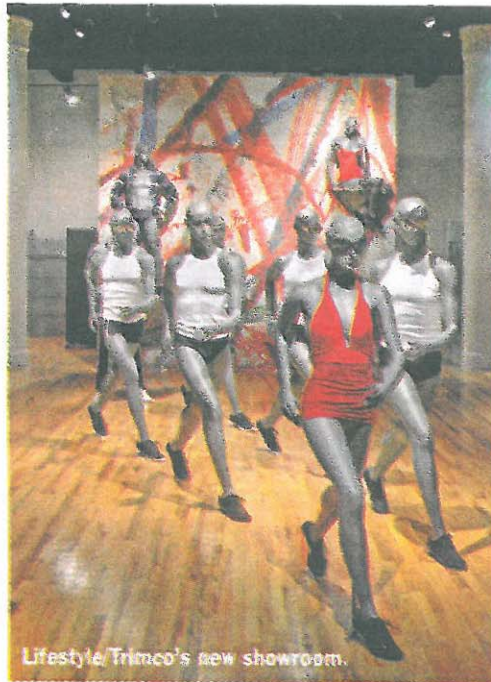
By David Moin

BUSINESS IS DOWN, BUT THOSE IN THE VISUAL display arena hope retailers replace the markdown signs with higher aesthetics.

"Everybody wants this year to be over, but retailers are ready to move onto new things," said Salvatore Lenzo, president of Lifestyle/Trimco, which creates Christmas and seasonal decoratives, custom fixtures, forms and mannequins, and sells to Macy's Inc., Dillard's Inc., Under Armour Inc. and other companies.

"Retailers seem to be looking for more decorative ideas, and then there is this whole vintage thing going on. Hopefully, all this interest will translate into sales," said Lenzo, who also cochairs the National Association of Display Industry's Retail Design Collective, a market period concluding today after a three-day run.

The market draws retailers from around the world who visit the visual display and store design showrooms, which are concentrated in Manhattan's Chelsea community and are critical in helping retailers set the image of their stores. This year for the first time, the market includes 10 temporary showrooms at 7 West 34th Street for companies that don't have permanent Manhattan showrooms, making for a total of 29 showrooms participating compared with 23 last year, according to Karen Schaffner, show director for Retail Design Collective, which is sponsored by the Association for Retail Environments. Schaffner estimated 900 registrants for the market, up from 700 in 2008.



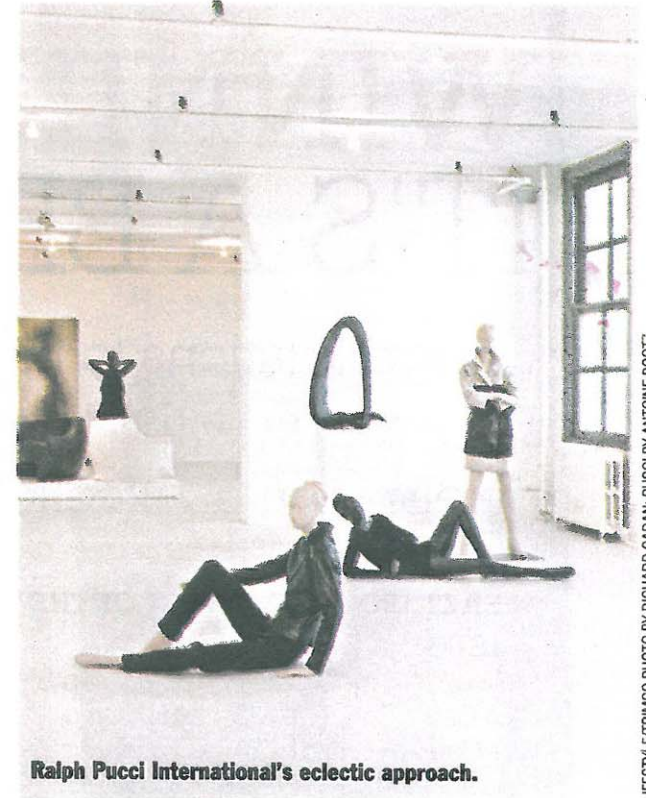
Lifestyle/Trimco's new showroom.

"We marketed the Collective more aggressively this year," she said. "It's reputation has grown."

Among other highlights of the market, Ralph Pucci International introduced an abstract, Asian-inspired mannequin collection called Madame, shown in black and coffee latte finishes and dressed in soft, creamy designs by Angelo Katsapis. The environment is enhanced by Vladimir Kagan's fiberglass collection of chairs, ottomans and sculpture, and sensual, minimal photographs by Lisa Spindler shown on concrete panels by artist Stevi Michner.

Lifestyle/Trimco recently relocated to 152 West 25th Street, doubling the size of its showroom to 6,000 square feet. It currently features a series of vignettes including vintage forms, lingerie mannequins holding perfume bottles, wire forms for sportswear and accessories and an "athletic collection" of mannequins inspired by "Chariots of Fire." Lifestyle also represents IDW mannequins in Lithuania, for unbreakable and recyclable mannequins.

The market began Wednesday night with the annual gala for the Planning and Visual Education Partnership, or PAVE, at the Metropolitan Pavilion, which drew 480 people and raised \$100,000 for 18 scholarships and additional funds to support needy students, according to Nancy Jackson, president of Architectural Systems and co-chair of the gala. "It hasn't been a year of building stores, but it's given retailers a lot of time to reflect and come out with really focused strategies that will put more attention into remodels," Jackson said.



Ralph Pucci International's eclectic approach.

LIFESTYLE/TRIMCO PHOTO BY RICHARD CADAN; PUCCI BY ANTOINE BOOTZ

Her firm creates interior finishes, including flooring, wood panels, decorative surfaces and specialty textural products such as stone mosaic. Retailers lately have been eyeing "very dimensional and textured surfaces, wide floor planks, eco-porcelain and sustainable products," Jackson said.

At the gala, Travis Burnham, senior manager of creative services at J. Crew Group Inc., received PAVE's Rising Star Award. Macy's, Bloomingdale's and Bergdorf Goodman received DDI Magazine's holiday window awards, and Paul Stuart received the VMSSD Magazine Award for visual and design, which was accepted by Tom Beebe, consultant for Paul Stuart on creative and windows.