

Retail attraction

Sally Farmer runs through the principles of composition.

Composition

There are two main forms of balance used in window display: symmetrical and asymmetrical. These two main forms provide the framework on which all composition is based. Symmetric is a centred, equal balance and asymmetric is an off-centre, unequal balance.

The symmetric window

To obtain a symmetric balance the display area should be divided vertically down the centre to produce two equal halves. Merchandise, props etc; are placed in the display area to allow equal quantities in shape, colour, size, and so on to be positioned identically either side of the vertical from the 'centre line onwards'. The effect created is that of a mirrored reflection in both halves of the display area.

The asymmetric window

Asymmetric balance appears as an off-centre or uneven display that is optically acceptable. As a general guide, an asymmetric balance is obtained by dividing the display area vertically into three equal sections. The main grouping of merchandise is placed on or close to one of the dividing

third lines. It may be positioned slightly towards the centre point of the display area but never place the major unit beyond the third line and too close to the side wall. A secondary unit may now be positioned mid-way between the main group and the near side wall.

Start with Symmetrical Composition, and progress to Asymmetrical, which is very much more about what looks correct. Look at other retail window displays, particularly those of stores that have display staff and analyse how they achieved a well proportioned window.

Focal points

This is the area within your composition that you make your customer focus on and hold their attention in order to sell a particular item or group of merchandise. You may have to go out and re-visit your window to decide upon a good focal point.

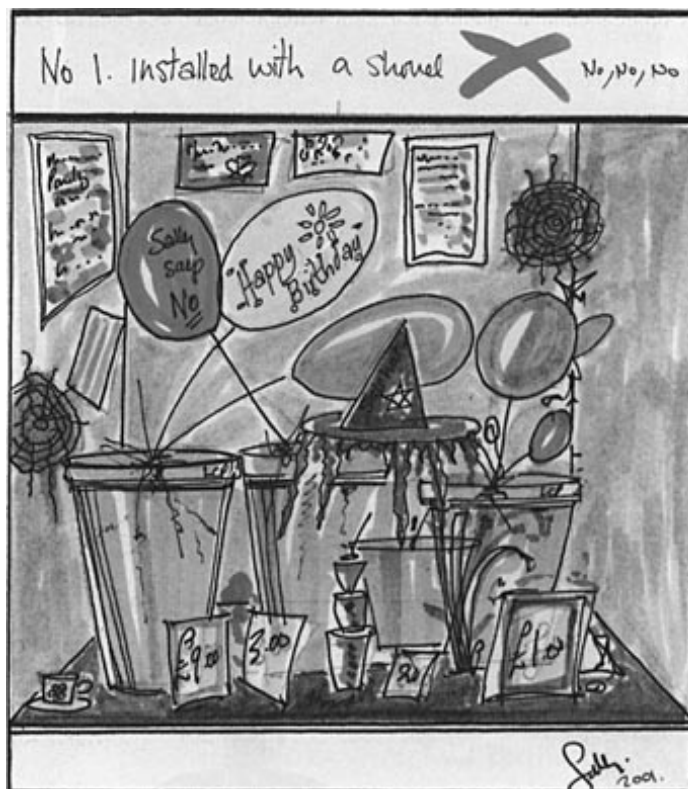
The focal point in a symmetrical composition is in the centre at eye-level, it is more complicated and needs practice when using an asymmetric composition.

Composition is the design (layout) of a visual presentation that enables the visual merchandiser (display) to transfer the attention of the viewer from the attention-holding features to an interest in the goods or services being promoted and make 'em get their money out!

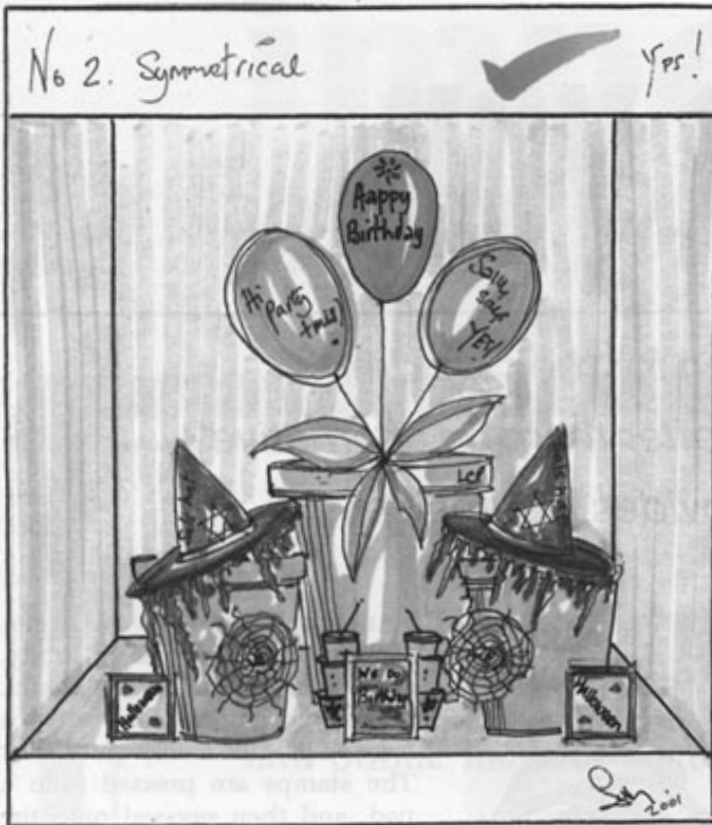
Of course, there is more: we use lines of sight, grouping, lighting, colour, and movement.

Using the guidelines and sketch diagrams I would like you to practice the basic composition techniques and in order that you can logically proceed we will move on to the most essential component of a display – the merchandise.

How do you decide what to put in your window? In addition to the preparation of the display area and the design and construction, there are equally important factors essential to the installation of a successful display.



The ultimate function of the display is to sell, therefore your choice of wow merchandise is very important.



Develop a selling theme which then forms the basis of the display design

the manufacturer/supplier, you can go for it.

Fittings that you need for the window, stands, a mannequin etc, should be selected together with the merchandise and sorted ready for installation. DUSTED and IRONED.

Always get yourself ready to install before you remove your existing display, nobody is going to buy from an empty window. Also get your tools ready. Every display magician needs the magic wand to install the window.

Merchandise selection

The ultimate function of the display is to sell, therefore your choice of wow merchandise (of which you should have plenty!) is very important. You should have a checklist.

Checklist

- a new product
- a special promotion
- season or time of year
- special local event; and
- quantity available

Pre-installation procedure

A display installation is the product of a planning procedure that has a simple and logical sequence. When YOU as the retailer have decided to organise your latest hip hop window display a sequence of preparation begins by selecting the merchandise to be displayed, then analysing and using its selling points, appeal and attraction to develop a selling theme which then forms the basis of the display design for the window. Once the design has been approved and accepted the necessary bits and bobs should be arranged, organised, nicked from skips and you have found all the POP (point of purchase showcard – posters – tickets, etc) supplied by

Sally Farmer is the former vice-dean at the London Institute of Retail Studies at the London College of Printing, where she has developed the largest Access to Design programme for visual merchandising.

