

# Visual storytelling does the trick

With a smart visual concept that appeals to your target market, you can easily increase your turnover as a retailer. Visual merchandising will be vital in the future, says marketing expert Klaus Lach.

Text Helena Sæter, Lene Rustad and Siv L. Seljevold

"Visual marketing is my life. It is a science that is used every day, all over the world, whenever a customer is being presented with a product. It is a science that holds the key to enormous opportunities," Lach continues.

Few people know more about the subject than Klaus Lach: his CV includes projects for prestigious brands like Triumph International, Carl Zeiss, Wertheim and Hertie. In 1993, together with his colleague Claudia Köditz-Habermann, he founded the visual marketing agency OWD GmbH. Lach is also Vice President for the European Visual Marketing Merchandising Association. As a manager at OWD, Lach is able to exercise his passion for visual marketing every day.

## Tell a story

Lach thinks that shop window dressers are becoming increasingly professional, and many achieve a very high standard. They

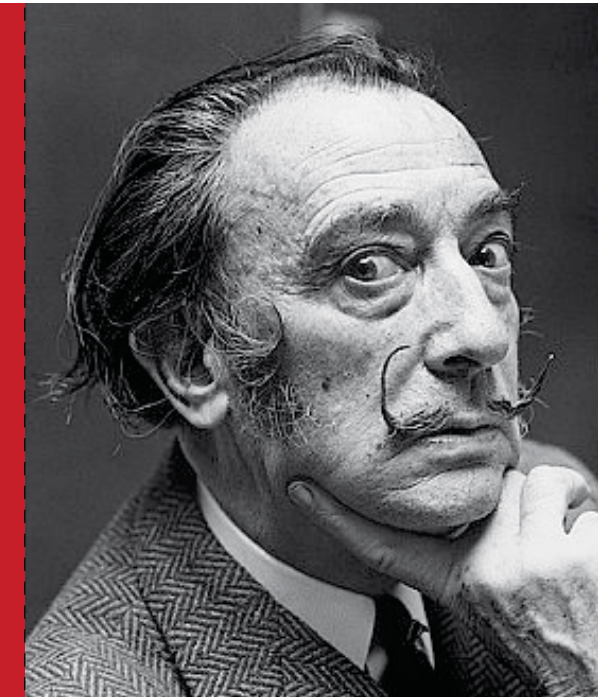
employ powerful visual tools to market their products, and involve the customer on an emotional level, adding value to the product they are purchasing.

"Whenever you present a product to customers, you have to give them a positive experience that makes an impression. By presenting the seasons' goods through a conceptual framework, you create a storyline based on a product and appeal to the customers' emotions. It is fun to be able to excite people when they go shopping," says the visual marketing expert.

"The customer must feel good at all times during a shop visit. Scent, music, lighting and atmosphere must be just right in order to put people in a shopping mood. That is visual marketing at its very best."

## Excite within seconds

Visual marketing is all about catching the



Creative and famous artists like Andy Warhol and Salvador Dalí began their careers as shop window decorators, according to Klaus Lach.



1: Liganova made this special installation for Tommy Hilfiger at La Rinascente in Milan. 2: The high-end department store Selfridges in London. 3: Unconventional window display at fashionable Barneys in New York.



Klaus Lach represents the epitome of European expertise within the field of visual marketing. He believes the visual aspects of shops will become increasingly important as competition for people's attention grows more intense.

customers' attention to encourage them to enter the shop. The competition for attention is now tougher than ever: most people today live hectic lives – each day, an average person is bombarded with more than 3000 messages, and a staggering 50,000 brands try to communicate with us.

“This makes people selective, and a retailer only has two seconds to catch the attention of a passer-by. But if you can catch someone's attention for nine seconds, there is an 80% chance that the person will enter your shop. When the design of your shop window has that kind of 'stop' effect, you can consider it very successful,” Lach concludes.

**Don't cut the visuals**

During the global recession, many business owners have been cutting marketing costs, including their budgets for decorating. Klaus Lach is sceptical of using fewer

resources to attract customers' attention.

“In times of crisis, retailers have to invest more to stay in business. We must remember that customers still want to be entertained, seduced and challenged on an emotional level. Everything from store fronts and shop windows, to the store interior, must be coherent and give the customers an uplifting experience,” Lach emphasises.

Lach strongly believes that when it comes to visual marketing, it is important to keep up the pace and update visual displays on a regular basis. He encourages retailers to make changes as often as possible. This can be done by adding new elements to the window displays, as well as the shop interior.

“It is possible to design shop windows that are both conceptual and effective on a tight budget. One only needs a visual con-



4



5

4: A 5th Avenue window display. Fashionable Bergdorf Goodman, New York. 5: Puma's «love equals football» campaign is also promoted in the retail venues. A London store window is depicted.

cept containing a solid strategy and good ideas. Many stores have had great success with simple ideas. Retailers must challenge themselves to find optimal, low-budget solutions,” Lach says.

**Interactive window displays**

The competition for customers will only increase in the future. People will be moving even faster than today, and the number of retailers and brands fighting for attention will be enormous.

“This means that shop windows have to be more effective, visionary and interchangeable in order to catch the attention of potential customers.”

In Lachs opinion, modern technology will also play a much larger role in the shop windows of the future.

“We have only seen the tip of the iceberg for what's possible with interactive window displays, although some of them are already reaching a fairly high standard. For example, customers can already play games, or even start their own fashion show in an interactive window, simply by pressing a button,” Lach explains.

Klaus Lach thinks that we will soon see interactive shop windows that are run by technology that doesn't yet exist. He is convinced that complex lighting concepts will play a big part in the future science of catching customers' attention.

“The possibilities are already there, the retailers only need to seize the many opportunities that the future holds for visual marketing,” Klaus Lach concludes.

6: Diesel and Liganova launched an interactive store window campaign in Berlin. Passers-by are invited to take an active part in the window installation.



6

**European Visual Marketing Merchandising Association**

- Represents the profession of visual marketing and merchandising design
- Originally a syndicate for employees, trainees and freelancers
- Founded in 1900
- Has several hundred members
- Works in partnership with industry, local authorities, businesses, unions and schools