

13 years of store fixture standouts

THERE WAS A TIME when all a store fixture had to do was hold merchandise. Today, they're expected to do everything but take out the trash. How did we come to demand so much of the fixture?

Blame advancements in materials, manufacturing equipment, and engineering. Or blame changes in consumer behavior, retail operations, and technology. Whatever the case, the fixture has undergone major changes in this century alone.

A.R.E. Design Award judges deemed them important enough to name a Fixture of the Year since 2001. Advancements in fixturing can be traced through these entries deemed the best of the best.

Multitasking.

Fixtures were getting technological at the turn of the century. Skechers USA's display at Universal City Walk in Universal City, Calif., integrated monitors to engage shoppers with multimedia. Yet it still held merchandise and reinforced branding—not the first such package deal, but one considered to be well executed.



2001

Ethereal quality.

All the illumination possibilities had begun to stir the imagination of designers. Small wonder we now saw this other-worldly presentation of eyewear at Oliver Peoples in Santa Ana, Calif. They floated against a brightly lit back wall, achieved divine presentation on side walls with concealed lighting, and flirted with shoppers from LED-framed bowls in the surface of the counter.



2006



2002

Integrated lighting.

While jewelry cases had been self-illuminated and backlighting had come into play for cosmetics, this forerunner of today's shelf illumination earned the Skinmarket's kiosk in Rockaway, N.J., the coveted title. Now the product itself was as brightly lit as the messaging.



2007

More timeless elegance.

Judges' choice of understated luxury in Lily Simon's Centre Rockland store in Montreal once again proved that subtle expressions of quality will always be on point, no matter what bells and whistles become available.

Live hands-on products.

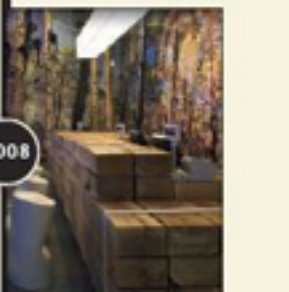
Consumers were accustomed to seeing TVs playing live in-store, but plugged-in products generally had been on utilitarian shelves set against walls to manage dangling wires. Not anymore. In New York's Chelsea, Best Buy displayed live cell phones and digital cameras (remember when those were two different products?) on a sleek display with changeable surfacing for added flexibility.



2003

Sustainability.

As the green movement gained strength for at least the second time around, retailers looked to show shoppers they were treehuggers too. Those early green stores had a decidedly granola look. Made from local park trees tagged for destruction, O2's Gulu Bar in London was cutting edge for its day.



2008



2004

Graphic identity.

By now, fixtures were becoming so advanced that beauty and functionality were expected. So it was a natural leap for Futuretronics to use them as the store design. Self-illuminated and self-powered, the vitrines in the Orlando store also served as the storefront.



2009

Visual geometry.

While complicated shapes were not unusual, they were eye-catching, and they remain so today. The sharp angles and geometric fractures of the fixturing in this Zu+Gements in Milan earned it judges' ultimate kudos.



2005

Timeless elegance.

In the midst of all the techno wizardry, sophisticated beauty still reigned supreme in luxury jewelry. Cartier's fixture grouping in Honolulu featured curved Starphire glass, concealed fiber-optic lighting, and secured storage.



2010

Experiential design.

As brick-and-mortar stores competed against the rising tide of online retailers, they began to create experiences in-store that could not be replicated online. Canadians were now able to test the subzero outerwear of Mark's in a Walk-in Freezer Lab inside the Edmonton, Alberta, store. The fixture had become the venue for an experience.

Iconic repetition.

If unusual shapes weren't enough to draw traffic, repeating them surely would. The collective effect of this treatment of wall display cells invited passersby to enter Carlo Paozini in Milan...and convinced judges to give it the top award.



2011



2012

Virtual runway.

With technological advances making a multitude of features possible in fixtures, designers began to consider merging old-school methods with new-fangled devices. In My Suit in Manhattan's Financial District, still shots of models on treadmills became flipbook videos in multiple screens as mannequin alternatives.

Space-smart design.

As downsizing retailers looked to maximize their real estate, flexible fixtures that could accommodate a lot of merchandise in a little footprint were in high demand. JanSport's kiosk in the Mall of Georgia in Buford, Ga., did that and more. The entire unit folds into itself for locked storage after hours.



2013

See larger images of these Fixtures of the Year at aredesignawards.com.

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