

# design:retail



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# On-Trend or Just Trendy?

**W**ITH HOLIDAY INSTALLATIONS just around the corner, it is anyone's guess what brilliant creative magic will be on view around the world. And, if you are directly involved in the planning, production and installation of holiday décor, you know that what seemed like a unique and brilliant idea when you started designing, can wind up appearing surprisingly similar in theme to what your retail neighbors down the street or across the mall have installed.

Call it coincidence, great minds thinking alike or the result of a merry prank by interloping holiday supply elves, but the fact that your holiday décor may appear to be following a trend is not something to lose sleep over. And, who in visual merchandising gets any sleep this time of year anyway? Given the ever-popular demand for the safety and comfort of traditional Christmas décor, the pressure to also be creatively relevant, fresh and on-trend can be daunting. It is something you can strive toward, but design trends can be elusive and ever-changing.

Being "on-trend" generally is perceived as a good thing, yet being noted as "trendy" can seemingly imply that you are less than original—more of a follower than a leader. However, don't despair. Technically both terms are positive with regards to visual presentation. A trend means something is developing or changing direction; trendy implies someone or something as being fashionable or up-to-date in style or influence. Equally good, right?

Let's take a look at what has been identified as 10 leading trends in holiday window and décor for 2014. Which will come true, and which will get buried under a pile of artificial snow?

**EXTERIOR GRAPHICS:** Using store façades as a giant canvas, complete building wraps over glass, stone, metal and wood are creating dramatic visual art and branding opportunities that expand the seasonal message outward.



**INTERACTIVE:** Incorporating technology to create a unique involvement with passing customers, interactive displays are a natural extension of the growing omnichannel world we live and shop in. These displays can include product or brand information, social media connections, manipulation of the display and even direct point-of-sale purchasing.

**RUSTIC:** Includes the current craze for all things handcrafted; artful use of humble, rough-hewn materials with a homemade appeal—think yarn, paper, barnwood and found objects.

**MINIMALIST:** Perhaps an extension of the current trend for all things '80s, a minimalist holiday décor might also be a result of limited post-Great Recession budgets. Regardless, the appeal of simplicity and a Zen-like aesthetic during all the holiday madness can't be overlooked.

**SNOWFLAKES:** A classic winter holiday design motif that is not melting away; snowflakes appear in all shapes and sizes in a range of retail environments.



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**ANIMALS:** Lions and tigers and bears, oh my! And would you believe a silver glitter-encrusted ostrich, as seen last year at Roberto Cavalli? Always a popular theme, animals continue to appear as stars.


**ROARING '20S:** Whether it's a result of last year's love affair with Baz Luhrmann's "The Great Gatsby" movie, the 1920s provide a jazzy appeal and sparkly design motif that seems right for this year's holiday season.

**EASTERN EUROPE:** Expanding beyond the traditional nutcracker theme, the use of Eastern European, Russian and Nordic folk craft and folklore lend the right amount of holiday spirit to a wintry theme. And, with last year's enormously popular animated movie "Frozen," chances are it will be hard to "let it go" anytime soon.

**NEW HOLIDAY COLORS:** Emerald green, plum, tangerine and fuchsia are examples of the colors that are being touted as the leading new favorites.

Moving beyond the traditional red and green, these colors stand to bring a new spirit to the season.

**SALE:** The use of "Sale" as a holiday season message in storefront windows is rather bold and new. Like it or not, early heavy discounting of merchandise, special sales incentives, coupons and other money-saving pitches steadily have been creeping into the previously sacred time for a more creative holiday visual message.

Which, if any, of the above forecasted trends might your holiday décor plans fall in? Whatever it may be, your look will no doubt be unique, delightful and do the job right—which is to drive sales while adding a little seasonal joy to someone's day. 

**BASED IN NEW YORK, PETER-TOLIN BAKER IS ACTIVELY INVOLVED WITH RETAIL DESIGN AND VISUAL MERCHANDISING VIA P-T B DESIGN SERVICES (OWNER), THE FASHION INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (ADJUNCT PROFESSOR), RETAIL DESIGN INSTITUTE NY CHAPTER (BOARD PRESIDENT), AND AS A REGULAR CONTRIBUTOR TO DESIGN+RETAIL.**