



hanger, she sent the samples to her design team and asked them to coordinate her custom fixtures with her hangers.

"Details are everything, and the hangers are very important," Mitchell says. "Anyone can open a store and use standard hangers. I wanted to set my store apart."

Store design includes fixtures, wall applications, flooring, and "fluff". Many designers spend weeks and months planning to merge all of these categories into one defining look, leaving their customer who has just invested tens or hundreds of thousands of dollars to source, you guessed it, the lowly hanger. Not that the hanger is lowly at all, but it is the minimal perceived value of the hanger as a visual merchandising tool that, in many cases does not make it part of the plan.

Typically, in order to purchase hangers, buyers pick up a catalogue or shops online, only to find that the products being offered are almost the same at every price and quality level.

Color is an effective way in which a designer can express a particular mood. Different color choices convey different sensory messages, and there are ways to use color and maintain neutrality in the process.

Linda Cahan, author of many corporate visual standards manuals, as well as "Feng Shui for Retailers", sees color as having a vital impact on the overall feeling and sales of a store. Red, in small amounts, energizes and creates more impulse sales. Soft greens indicate health and well being as well as calmness. Dark blue is strong and communicative yet not emotionally attaching for clothing. Medium or bright blue is lively and is considered to be one of the most favorite colors in the world, but it will dominate a color theme for a store. Light blue is unfocused and unemotional, yet highly imaginative. Yellow says "stop and think" and attracts very positive attention. Yellow also says affordable, as does orange. Orange is the color most preferred by trendsetters and creative people. Brown tones, usually found in wood, are trustworthy and stable.

A separate word on pink: Everyone reacts to pink on an emotional and/or physical level. Pink opens the heart and

makes people feel warm and fuzzy. Hot pink — the combination of red — life force energy — and blue — communication — is the sexiest color. **Victoria's Secret** uses the not so secret of pink to draw people into their stores and make them feel good while they're shopping.

Every color tells a story and encourages a different feeling and reaction. As soon as you tone down a basic color, it will retain much of its forcefulness and integrity, but with less intensity.

Cahan also recommends taking the color used in hangers and color-spotting it around the rest of the store in rugs, frames for art, decorative objects or as an accent color in signage.



A second way to personalize the hanger as a unique design element is to focus on the actual style of the hanger.

Traditionally hangers were only available in a few specific styles; dress hanger, pant hanger, coat hanger, etc. Now there are design choices in many categories — contemporary, vintage, traditional, "retro" and more.

The style is no longer simply functional. Again, different style selections create different moods.

A third variable in hanger design options is material. Lucite/acrylic can be neutral and/or powerful, radiant and/or subtle.

Wood hangers in specialty finishes have a similar effect.

If store planners and design teams educate their clients to the vast array of garment hangers to choose from and embrace the concept of retail color psychology as well as choices in style and material, they can set their design apart from others. The retailer will feel confident that every conceivable detail has been considered to consummate an integral look, and, that as a result, their store will create a positive state of mind for the customer. A complete store design has a definite impact on the sophisticated consumer, therefore giving that enviable and desired competitive edge to the retail establishment!

Bert Spitz is the president of B Free Hanger Design & Display Ltd., New York City.