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Madonna shines on Fifth Avenue Two-story-high images of the "material girl" at H&M create an innovative window display By Sarah Kohl, Contributor

Dec 1, 2006

Known for its affordable "fast fashion" and innovative business model, Stockholm, Sweden-based H&M Hennes & Mauritz AB jumped ahead of the curve again in August with eye-catching window displays at its New York flagship store on Fifth Avenue. Two-story-tall images of Madonna, displayed in a stunning Light Emitting Capacitor (LEC) fashion, illuminated Fifth Avenue as part of this first-time collaboration between the Stockholm, Sweden-based retailer, LEC technology manufacturer CeeLite, and large-format graphics company Blue Ocean WorldWide.

Blue Bell, Pa.-based CeeLite's Michael Binder, senior vice president of business development, first presented its LEC technology to David Stadler, CEO of Blue Ocean WorldWide, New York, who in turn, thought that the technology could be applied to the H&M project. "When I first saw the product, I was blown away," Stadler says of the paper-thin, low-energy panels that provide 99 percent uniform surface illumination. "When I brought the product to H&M, they were really intrigued."

When H&M announced that Madonna had agreed to a long-term advertising arrangement, the retailer turned to Blue Ocean WorldWide to format a window display. The request sent H&M on its first steps toward an innovative series of backlit window displays impressive enough to befit the "material girl" herself—all created over a three-week span.

"H&M initially requested a backlit display for the second- and third-floor windows," says Gabrielle Santulli, marketing director for CeeLite."Blue Ocean took H&M's idea one step further by creating a light show by sequencing the 10 floor-to-

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ceiling windows with CeeLite LEC panels."

Blue Ocean WorldWide custom designed the graphics for the display, creating a simple yet powerful image—a stark white background, highlighting Madonna and the clothing. The simplicity of the image stands in contrast with the intricate suspension and lighting system.

The graphics were stretched across each of the 10 windows using a Blue Ocean-designed tension system. The tension system holds the backlit vinyl, which was adhered to each of the 72 CeeLite-manufactured, 3-ft.-by-5-ft. LEC panels, stretched taut against the 12-ft.-by-12-ft. and 12-ft.-by-24-ft. windows. The panels were then mounted to the ceiling 4 ft. behind the graphics to illuminate them from behind.

Stadler credits H&M's Luca Michelangeli with coming up with the idea for a sequencing lighting pattern, which created a seamless series of images backlit by a continuous source of light. A series of inverters were installed in each window and preprogrammed to generate a 14-second sequence of fade ins and outs, creating a window display that lit up the city street below.

The response to the displays has been astounding, Stadler says, and plans are underway to continue the window display collaboration. H&M continues to be hush-hush about the details of its future promotional plans, as it was with the initial Madonna campaign in August, but its plans for similar applications at both its San Francisco and New York locations are sure to make their mark during the holiday season.

PROJECT FILE

project file

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