FRAME

THE GREAT INDOORS

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Brands *on* Show

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Content over commerce

Store Displays
Mannequins, shelves, lights

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Body *Language*

Window Mannequin's Cameleon collection combines realism with abstraction, offering retailers a host of removable faces, eyes and lips that can be mixed and matched to yield more than 70,000 looks.

Complementing the natural and relaxed attitudes that characterize Theory – a collection of male and female mannequins from Proportion London – are soft features and slender forms.

From customizable faces to athletic bods, *mannequins* bear a new likeness to the living.

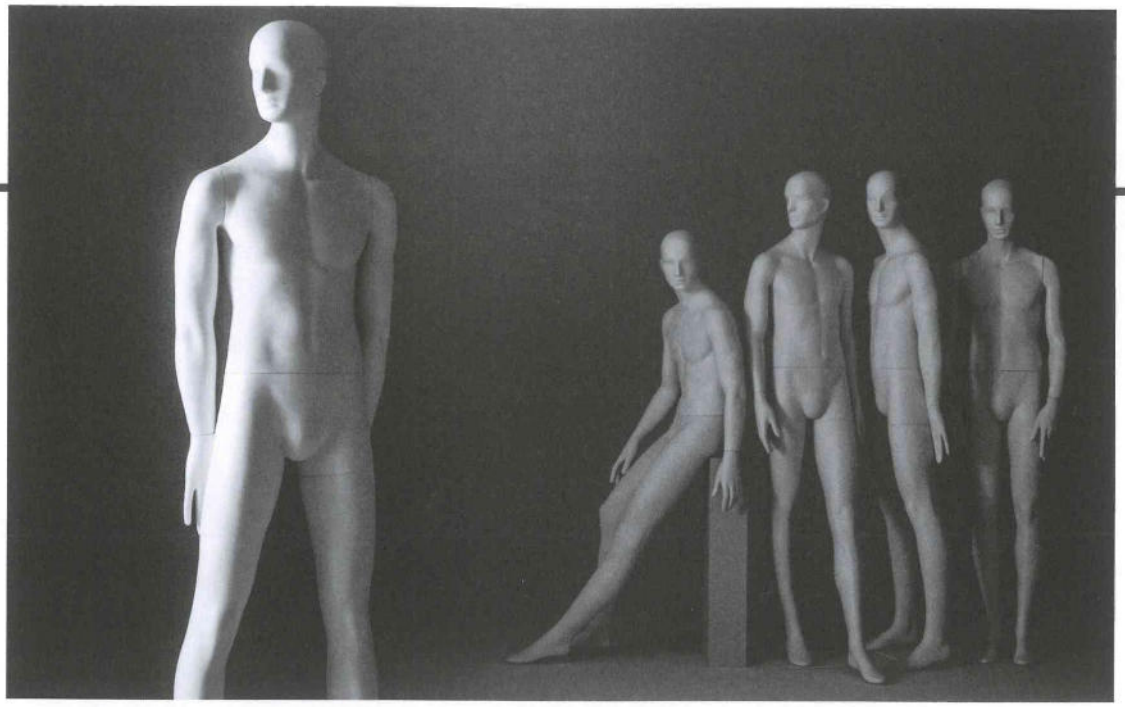
Words **Jane Szita**

Even in this age of online retail, 42 per cent of shoppers admit (in a recent survey by NPD Group) that what they buy is influenced by in-store mannequin displays. No wonder then that brands are so eager to capitalize on the ability of these 'silent salespeople' to reflect their identity. 'The watchwords today are customization and uniqueness,' says Alfonso Catanese of Almax. 'The ability to customize a product plays a key role in relationships with luxury brands. We have a team of creatives and sculptors working with visual merchandisers from fashion brands, so we can meet any request.' Almax's latest catalogue of finishes showcases a wide range of dramatic handcrafted effects – including metal, resin, fabric, marble and wood – which can add an idiosyncratic edge to any retail environment.

Bonami's Danny Bonami agrees that modern mannequins, produced through a combination of traditional crafts and cutting-edge technologies, continue to play a vital role in the industry. 'The future of physical display products is still very much alive,' he says. 'Some clients order online after being impressed by an attractive window display.' Bonami's versatile and graceful Fashion Queens series, which can be completed with various styles of heads and even high-impact detachable Design Shoes, contributes to the kind of striking 3D display able to help retailers drive sales – not only in brick-and-mortar stores, but also online.

Andreas Gesswein, CEO of Genesis Mannequins, says that web shops impact mannequins by creating the need for 'more emotions and greater differentiation and fashion affinity' in physical stores. The company's extensive new ranges, Icon and New Generation, are available in a variety of colours and finishes, providing retailers with a wealth of options to tailor to their brand message. 'For the successful business, the future will certainly be a mix of online and stationary trade, and retail has to pay more attention than ever to image-building, emotions and brand positioning,' says Gesswein. 'Mannequins must adapt to this trend and implement the corresponding messages.'

'Due to the online offer, you need a reason to go out and buy a product in a retail space,' says Marco Ouwerkerk of Hans Boodt Mannequins (see page 218). 'The physical retail environment should offer an ever-changing and challenging experience.' Mannequins can play an important role in this, he adds, with a strong trend towards customization and emphasis on brand value. The company's latest collections – Celebrate Life and »



Modelling realistic proportions and natural poses, the Noble line from Bonaveri – a collection of timeless male mannequins – avoids a look of exaggeration.

Blend Facet – therefore 'reflect a demand for high-end, specially designed products and the quest for individualization in current and bespoke products'.

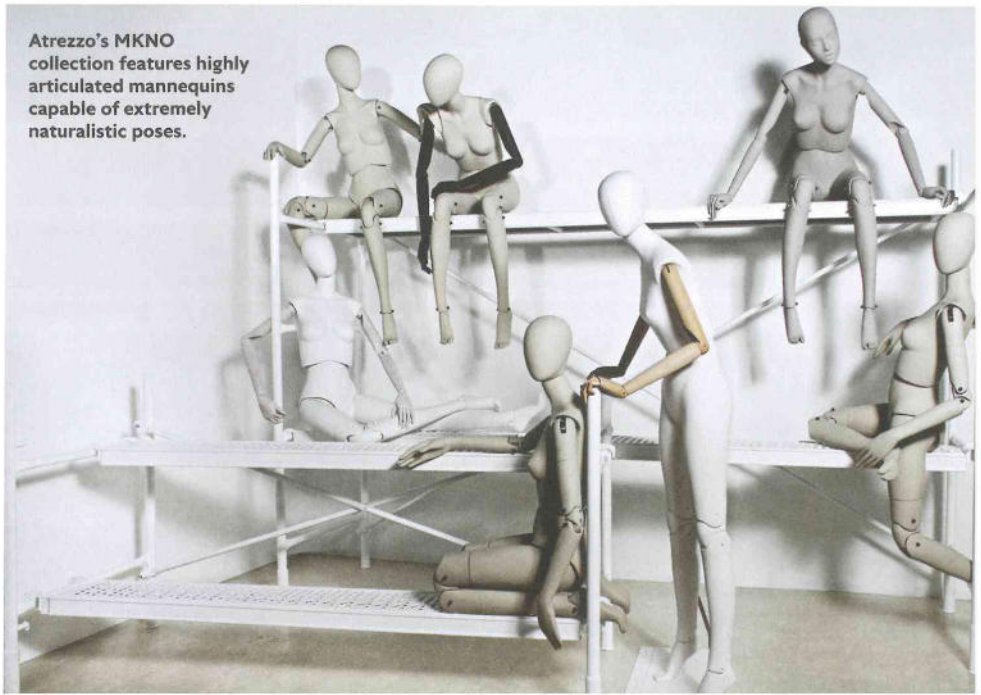
Bust a Move

With athleisure continuing to play a prominent role in fashion, today's mannequin collections also demonstrate an increased sense of movement. 'Our new collection, LDN Girls, is a departure from the straight poses that have been so popular over the past few years,' says Caroline Kelly of Panache Display. The London company's creative team relied on street observation for the dynamism that marks LDN Girls: 'Walking around London, we were inspired by groups of girls, their animation and body language.' The fluid natural movement of the collection can be adapted to suit a wide variety of brand images, thanks to three head options and a variety of finishes.

'The industry is going through a period of change,' notes Alejandra Silva of Barcelona-based Atrezzo (see page 215). 'After years of minimalism and abstraction, we are heading towards a transition in materials, differentiation, colours and movement.' Physical energy is the theme of Atrezzo's Gym collection, which freeze-frames a series of running, skipping and stretching poses. The company's MKNO collection, meanwhile, opts for maximum movability, with highly articulated mannequins that are capable of extremely naturalistic movement. 'They can imitate any gesture, however extreme or subtle,' says Silva.

In Paris, Cofrad Mannequins is producing collections with the same dynamic tendency. 'Sport in fashion is a major trend today,' says Cofrad's Stéphanie Lacroix. 'It's part of everyday life. Our mannequins have chiselled and sculpted bodies coupled with dynamic and active poses.' Cofrad's Sport mannequins strike the action stances of runners, footballers, trekkers, boxers, body pumpers and a whole series of yogis, performing various asanas from the lotus to a gravity-defying scorpion. They are available in a series of chic matte finishes, including gold and slate. »

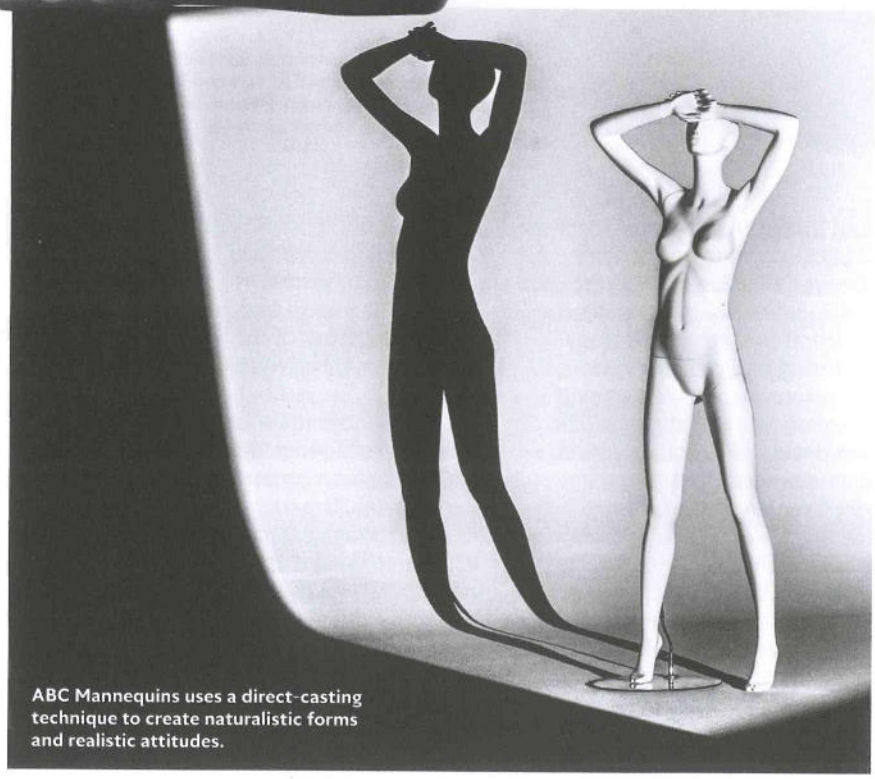
> **The future of physical display products is still very much alive**
>
> Danny Bonami, BONAMI



Atrezzo's MKNO collection features highly articulated mannequins capable of extremely naturalistic poses.

Bonami's versatile and customizable Fashion Queens series includes various styles of heads and accessories.

The athletic, sculpted bodies in Cofrad Mannequins' Sport series strike multiple action stances.



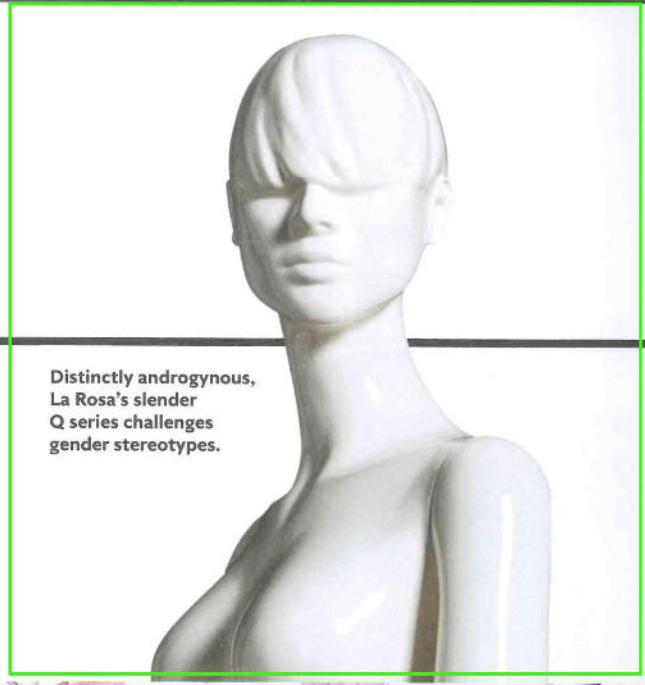
ABC Mannequins uses a direct-casting technique to create naturalistic forms and realistic attitudes.

At Rootstein, the new Défilé collection is based not on sport, but on a performance of a different kind: the fluid movements of models on the catwalk. 'What is lost in many display products is a sense of individuality, romance and a touch of coolness or drama,' says the company's Joe Tate. He points out that today's retailers have rather contradictory requirements in terms of mannequins: they want displays that are as high impact *and* as functional as possible: 'With our Défilé collection, we can meet both needs – the drama of realistic mannequins and the usability of abstract ones.'

Body Doubles

After a long period of domination by abstract mannequins, realism has returned with a vengeance – albeit in a softened, idealized form. Many manufacturers are showcasing modern wig and make-up options, as well as lifelike 'socializing' poses. ABC Mannequins uses the direct-casting technique – plaster is applied directly to the body of a live model – to create naturalistic forms and multiple realistic attitudes. Its Ophelia collection includes a female line available in 28 poses, plus a male series with a rapidly growing range of gestures. So much variety means that the collection can be used to assemble lifelike scenarios in which mannequins interact with one another. Customizable finishes enhance Ophelia's versatility. »

Almax's latest catalogue of finishes showcases a variety of dramatic handcrafted effects in metal, resin, fabric, marble and wood – a range with something to suit virtually any brand identity.



Distinctly androgynous, La Rosa's slender Q series challenges gender stereotypes.

Genesis Mannequins offers its New Generation line in a wide range of colours and finishes, providing retailers with a wealth of options to tailor to their brand message.

Combining realism with abstraction generates fresh possibilities

Over at Bonaveri, Noble – a new male line for the Schläppi collection – pursues a similar idealized realism. Noble is intended to be the male companion to Aloof, Bonaveri's previously released Schläppi female series. 'We set out four guidelines for the development of Noble: a sense of presence, dedicated thought, elegance and an ability to group with other mannequins,' says Andrea Bonaveri. Noble avoids extremes to produce a timeless attitude, he adds, while the series is designed to work as a group, as well as individually, 'giving visual merchandisers and designers the opportunity to achieve unlimited combinations by arranging the mannequins in different groupings'.

Combining realism with abstraction generates fresh possibilities. Window Mannequin's Cameleon offers 'removable faces, eyes and lips to enable stores to create more than 70,000 styles from the same mannequin', says CEO Jean Marc Mesguich. Meanwhile, Window's Voluptuous 91 series reflects the fashion industry's ongoing challenge involving body stereotypes: the new line presents a more realistically sized, yet still glamorous, body type. The collection was designed in collaboration with a top plus-size model.

Gender stereotypes are also questioned in the new realism. La Rosa's lean Q collection is notably androgynous, and the company's Sabrina Ciofi calls it 'a milestone towards the definition of a new body type, typical of today's generation, which tends not to tolerate constraints in terms of name, category, age or gender'. The result is 'perfect for today's fashion standards' while remaining 'a neutral shell that speaks all the languages of the world and will prove commercially adaptable, yet also close to the fashion world'.

'The visual-merchandizing industry is at the forefront of the blurring of genders through provocative fashion presentation.' Speaking is Tanya Reynolds of Proportion London, whose male and female Theory collection obscures 'the lines between boy/girl fashion presentation'. The trend, she explains, is partly down to 'a more relaxed and educated set of consumers', but also to budget constraints: 'The display industry is a lot more savvy when it comes to buying and building chameleon presentation kits that can be reworked season after season.' Could morphing mannequins be the next big thing? ●