From the Store Window to the Gallery:
The Legacy of T. S. Martin

Introduction

To honor the legacy of T. S. Martin, the Sioux City Art Center drew its inspiration from the sophisticated window displays of T. S. Martin Company. This most stylish of Sioux City’s downtown department stores was owned and operated by the Martin family from 1880 to 1944, and continued through 1970 under the ownership of the May Company and Younkers. The Art Center has partnered with six Sioux City retail and design firms to create unique, imaginary department store window displays within the Main Gallery. 6 South Designs, M+ Architects, Miller Bros. Furniture, Mod House Interiors, Spaces Interior Design, and Studio 427 have brought their creative talents to this unusual challenge.

The focal point of each window display is an artwork from the Art Center’s permanent collection. The designers were asked to select one artwork of the 80 artworks donated either by Hubert and Margaret Ann Martin Everist or by Mrs. Everist’s children. Margaret Ann Martin Everist was the granddaughter of T. S. Martin, and she continued the Martin family tradition of supporting Sioux City cultural organizations. In addition to being an important donor of artworks to the Art Center’s collection, she was also the most important significant contributor to the campaign that led to the construction of the current Art Center building.

After making their selections of art, designers were asked to work within a space no wider than 20 feet, but beyond that there were very few limitations. Paint, wallpaper, chandeliers, massive Styrofoam constructions, clothing, furniture, and a wide variety of accessories have all been employed to present art in a brand new context.

The Art Center is grateful to all of the participating companies that have made this project come to life. This exhibition has been generously sponsored by the M. A. Martin Everist Foundation.
We selected *Siena Apartment* by Andrew Langoussis for a number of reasons. First, we knew we were going to create an installation within a large gallery space, so we chose something that was large-scale. We also were intrigued by the fact the painting represented an interior. So we created a space around the painting that would complement the scene created by the artist. We were inspired by the floor within the painting to use black and cream as our major colors. We felt that an additional bonus for choosing black and cream would be that it would help showcase the beautifully vivid colors within the painting.

In terms of the overall style of our window setting, we chose to go with a more traditional look. We pride ourselves on selling merchandise and designing spaces that satisfy a wide range of tastes, materials, and ideas. However, we felt as if the classic look of the interior depicted within the painting deserved an equally classic look for its window setting.
Spaces Interior Design

We as designers wanted our interpretation of He Dreamed of Sky by James Drake to be as unconstrained as possible and open to each individual’s personal experience. To us, the artwork, and its accompanying poem by Benjamin Alire Saenz, evoke a certain air of nostalgia, which lends itself to the fond memories patrons have of T. S. Martin’s store many years ago.

We felt the artist was at a crossroads. The poem is relatively optimistic but the subject matter was up for discussion. Was our little bird friend falling? Dead? Alive? Is the overall subject matter one of hope or despair? We pictured the artist pouring upon books by candlelight while analyzing, reading and writing things that cannot truly be expressed in any language, only felt.

As the holidays come and go, you may also feel that familiar pang of nostalgia. The season evokes a blend of memories—pain remembering those who have gone before us, at times melancholy feelings in the present but always hope and promise for the unbeknownst future. This time of year, the artwork and the stories of Martin’s reiterated that we wanted our window display to be beautiful, simple and humble.

Patrons of Martin’s recall special occasions celebrated in the Tea Room, the sweet smell of candied almonds, the vaulted grand entrance, the lovely elevator operators and staff and the delicate sound of the piano echoing through the store. Martin’s was more than just a place to make purchases; it was a destination in itself and left a lasting impression on all those who entered. Martin understood the value of design and this feeling is what we at Spaces hope to evoke within you, both in your personal lives and right now as you absorb our window display.

Designers:
Melissa Flynn, IDAA
Marissa Merchant, IDAA
We chose to display *Studio Secrets: A Day in the Life* by Marlene Mueller because the scene reminded us of days in our lives. As architects we can become absorbed in a design… working for unique solutions that meet every need and want and fit the site… only to look up hours later to find ourselves surrounded by tools, coffee cups, and piles of tracing paper covered in discarded ideas. This scene appears to show the moment when her concentration is broken and the artist looks up.

Mueller’s work interested us not only because we found the scene relatable, but because of the colors she chose to use. The brilliant hues, so carefully applied, really captured our attention. We chose to create a scene from our studio and enclose it in “walls” - gradually getting closer to the painting and picking up more of its hues as they go – that would draw the eye to the painting and its colors while serving to shape our studio space, our window. The desk is covered with some of the tools we use to design before we draft in AutoCAD or make any digital models - in the stage when an initial thought can shape the entire project, and we just need to get it onto paper.
6 South Designs

We selected *After the Ball* by Judith Whipple because we felt it represents a little bit of what our company offers. The title of the artwork along with the long white, glove, ribbon, and glass cup reminded us of many of the weddings and events that we have decorated. We carry a stylish clothing line as well as a variety of accessories to make sure our customers are ready for their big event. We designed our display to serve as an elegant setting that portrays our sense of what it would be like “After the Ball.”

Designers:

Kaite Barkley
Sara Sorensen
We selected *Past Rituals, Present Enigmas: VI* by Dan Howard because of its intensity and size. We felt like it would be a challenge to create a relaxing space that worked well with such a dark painting, but knew that we could bring together a collection of furniture and accessories that would do exactly that. We used many of the earthy tones within the painting to serve as a scheme for many of the display elements. And then we expanded upon those with additional pieces that brought to the overall space a sense of balance between comfort and style, upscale and casual, and traditional and modern.

Designers:

John Miller  
Justin Miller
Mod House Interiors

When we selected *Wrapped Armchair* by Christo and Jeanne-Claude we wanted to create the feeling of two different types of scenes in our window. The first scene reflects the traditions of high-end store windows displaying their newest items in an eye catching manner. The contrast of one attention-grabbing product against layers of bold patterning within a simple black-and-white color scheme is a visual merchandizing strategy that helps attract consumers.

The other scene is inspired directly by the artwork, presenting a glimpse into the artists’ studio as they were preparing to go from sketch to final artwork. The audacious design was also meant to be a nod to the larger than life environmental works of art created by Christo and Jeanne-Claude, who were known for covering large buildings or land masses with cloth or other unexpected items.

Designers:

Donna Behrens
Lisa Kalaher