

## Success Is Sweet

To unveil Cartier's new line of candy-colored jewelry, Benjamin Noriega-Ortiz concocted a delectable boutique



*Above: In a temporary New York boutique for Collection Délices de Cartier, Benjamin Noriega-Ortiz deployed fanciful touches such as acrylic chairs and turkey-feather lamp shades.*



PRODUCT LAUNCHES entail more than star-studded events and overstuffed goody bags:

Highlighting a new product within an existing display scheme poses a huge merchandising challenge. Cartier, however, has come up with a successful formula for introducing lines by creating short-term, high-concept free-standing boutiques. For the new Collection Délices de Cartier, the jewelry house found a 1,000-square-foot New York storefront and a designer who seemed ideal to do it justice. Not only was Benjamin Noriega-Ortiz renowned for uninhibited, playful interiors targeted at the fashion-and-entertainment set but his office was just around the corner from the SoHo site as well. There was only one small problem. "I don't do retail," the designer firmly informed his suitors. Ah, but there's a first time for everything. After hearing more about the potential for complete creative freedom, which permanent spaces rarely afford, he was suitably intrigued. Noriega-Ortiz may not do retail, but he always loves a challenge.

The temporary boutique, like Cartier's colorful new gems, was designed to satisfy those with a sweet tooth for the lighthearted side of luxury. "It was like walking into a piece of candy," Noriega-Ortiz explains. Since he had only one month to complete the space—and it would last a mere three months—methods at his disposal were →



limited to surface treatments such as paint. "Shoppers in SoHo are tired of white, so we picked a vibrant, avant-garde color to pull people in," says the designer, who bathed the space in a warm citrus hue, down to the custom-colored rubber floor. Only when Cartier president and CEO Alain Viot pleaded for a little bit of white did Noriega-Ortiz agree to leave the ceiling and two structural columns alone. "A good compromise," he says with a laugh.

Once the work was nearing completion, Noriega-Ortiz dispatched senior designer Marla Pasáreno to scour the city for a selection of sweets. Shiny, cellophane-wrapped suckers heaped in the front window paid homage to the famous Felix Gonzalez-Torres installation. Tall glass jars filled with rock candy and candy orange slices were placed in wall niches and along the floor, while ersatz lollipops, made of soap, swirled around the columns. Michael Landon and Steven Wine of ...And Bob's Your Uncle hand-glued candy-coated almonds to the back wall. ("They do all our weird installations.") Ever practical, Noriega-Ortiz applied a thorough coat of insecticide to all edible elements. That may have kept the bugs in check, but not the crowds. Like a sugary treat, the fanciful design left fans craving more. —*Jen Renzi*

*Top, left: Surrounded by a wall of candy-coated almonds, glued one by one, a plasma-screen TV showed a film on the making of the collection.*

*Top, right: Noriega-Ortiz placed candy in preexisting display niches and in tall glass jars.*

*Bottom, left: Mahogany cases and desks specified by Cartier's in-house display department played straight man to Noriega-Ortiz's decorative flourishes.*

*Bottom, right: The store's bright, cheery interior made a bold impression on SoHo.*

PAINT: BENJAMIN MOORE. RUBBER FLOORING: ARCHITECTURAL FLOORING. LAMP SHADE: ...AND BOB'S YOUR UNCLE. ACRYLIC CHAIRS: PLEXI-CRAFT. GLASS JARS: PLANTER RESOURCE. CANDY: ECONOMY CANDY.