



Field Notes

Holiday Edition

BERGDORF
GOODMAN

LOCATION: Fifth Avenue, NYC
VISIT DATE: December, 2025
FORMAT: Luxury Department Store
ADJACENT STORES: Apple, David Yurman, Tiffany & Co
COMPETITION: Saks Fifth Avenue, Harrods, Selfridges, Neiman Marcus, Dover Street Market
WEBSITE: bergdorfgoodman.com
SOCIAL: @bergdorfs

About the Brand: Bergdorf Goodman is the last great American department store that still behaves like a *cultural institution*. Its power lies not in volume, but in **editorial authority**. Bergdorf has the ability to frame luxury as fantasy, ritual, and tradition rather than transaction. During the holidays, Bergdorf perfects the traditional NYC holiday shopping experience framed in a modern-day context.

Cultural Feel: Bergdorf’s holiday experience is **maximalism with manners**. The exterior windows exploded with theatrical energy. Sparkles, bedazzled craftsmanship, layered product density, and a multi-window “soirée” narrative that moved through different moments of a glamorous evening. Each window rewarded patience. This is I Spy for adults: linger long enough and the scene keeps revealing itself.

Steps inside, the mood instantly flipped. While the windows are vibrant and technicolor, the interior is restrained elegance and ethereal. Customers stepped into a winter fantasy of monochrome whites, lush garlands, and softly glowing trees.

“Oh my word this is beautiful!”
“I know, it is absolutely stunning, right?”
— An actual conversation I had with a stranger as she fervently snapped photos on her phone.

RATINGS

CULTURE



COMMERCE



STORE BASICS

STORE DESIGN & NAVIGATION

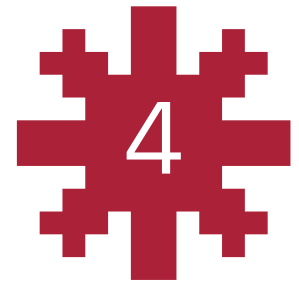
The experience unfolded vertically, with **escalators functioning as narrative transitions**.

Each floor greeted visitors with a distinct design moment:

- Cocktail dresses anchored by a giant martini glass.
- A children’s floor punctuated by oversized nutcrackers.
- Partywear environments framed as celebratory scenes, including dining room tables.
- The top-floor home section acting as the Holidaytide emotional centerpiece.

Unlike modern open-plan retail, Bergdorf keeps its walls intact, which, in the face of modern luxury brands overtaking Fifth Ave, feels like an intentionally bold choice. The result is a series of intimate “rooms” that encourage wandering, disorientation, and self-guided discovery.





Field Notes

♦♦ Holiday Edition ♦♦ ♦♦ ♦♦ ♦♦

BERGDORF
GOODMAN

AESTHETICS

- Exterior: maximalist, glittering, and theatrical.
- Interior: classic, monochrome, and heritage-forward.
- Décor felt collected, not staged.
- Paper-cut artistry indoors add to the winter wonderland enveloping most of the main floors.
- Large, maximalist décor and animatronics in the Holiday Shop insisted that customers notice and walk around.

The overall effect felt like being inside a beautifully overstuffed, elegant home, like you were stepping into your posh, eclectic grandmother's attic filled with beautiful things.

EXPERIENTIAL 'WOWs'

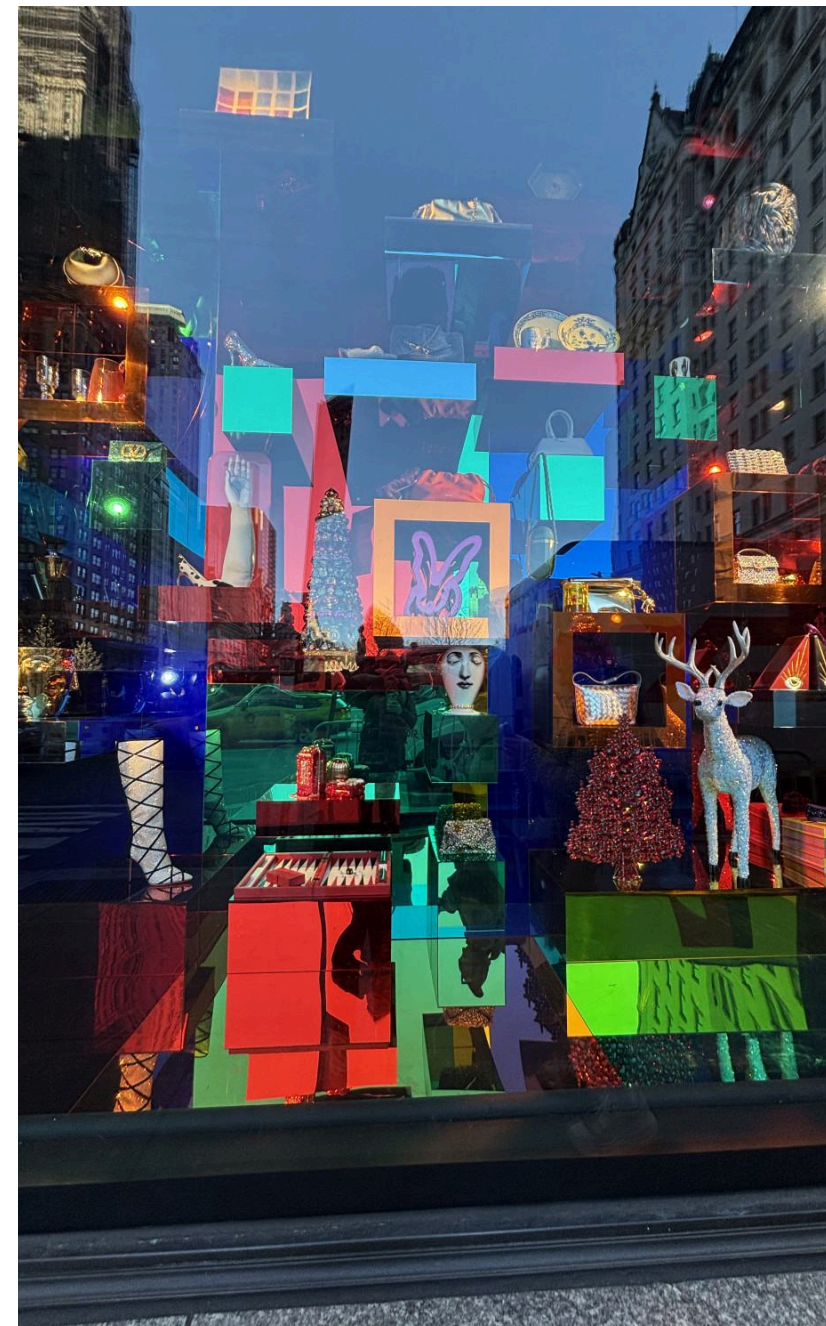
Window Storytelling: A multi-scene soirée theme unfolded across windows, each depicting a different hour of the night. Products blended seamlessly with non-sellable set pieces, reinforcing fantasy over inventory.

Ground Floor Winter Wonderland: On its own, the floor would invoke the White Witch of Narnia. But in context, sandwiched between the bedazzled, technicolor window displays and maximalist cozy holiday shop, it provides shoppers with a stunning reprieve that speaks Old New York Money.

Escalators-as-Stagecraft: Every ascent introduced a new world, making vertical movement part of the emotional journey.

Holiday Floor Spectacle: The top floor delivered a fully realized holiday environment. Ornate dining tables, eight Christmas trees with archetypal layered ornaments, and décor were displayed as if in mid-celebration.

Santa and Seasonal Characters: Present but understated, a wandering (real!) Santa enhanced the charm and kitsch without tipping into tacky.



EXPERIENTIAL NOTABLES

STORYTELLING

Bergdorf tells stories through **spatial sequencing**, not signage. There's no instruction and no guided path, just breadcrumbs. Cross-merchandising places unexpected items where curiosity can find them, prompting discovery rather than direction. The goal? Creating an up-sell moment that's simply too good to ignore.

MERCHANDISE ASSORTMENT

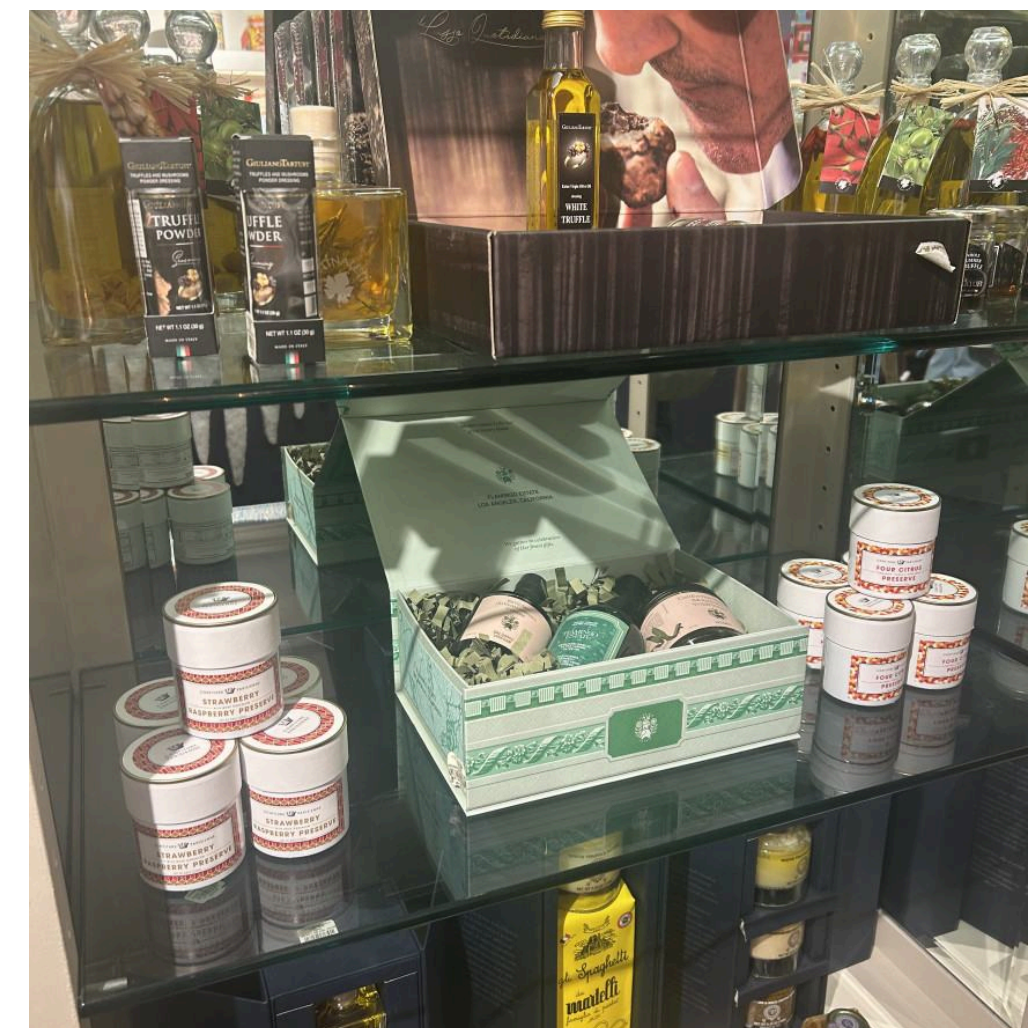
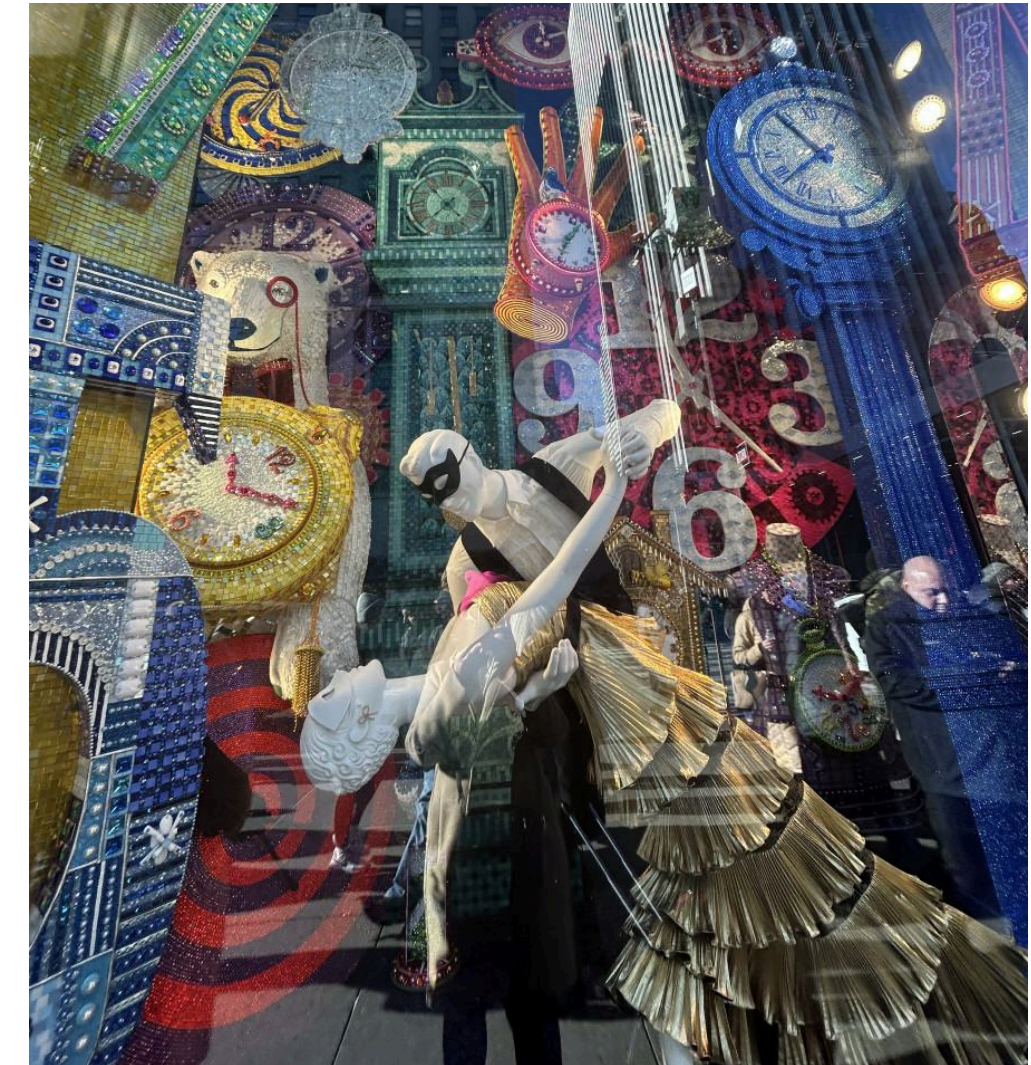
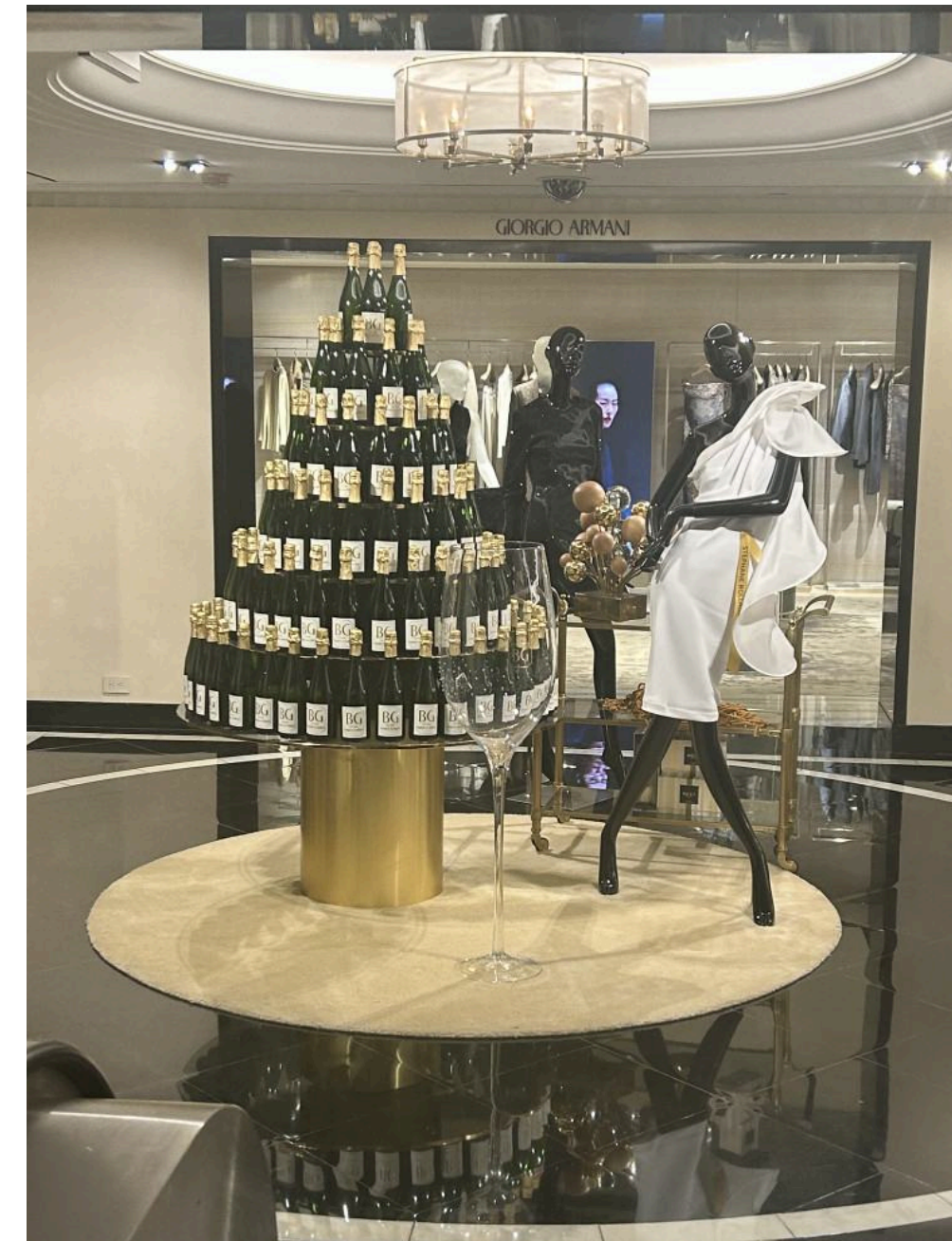
- Surprisingly wide price accessibility for a luxury department store. Customers can shop ~\$20 ornament giftables and ultra-luxury handbags and apparel.
- Candles, ornaments, books, and small treats anchor approachability.
- Designer fashion remained aspirational and true to the Bergdorf brand.
- Collaborations appeared thoughtfully integrated, like a Loewe candle and room diffuser moment, though some brand collaboration pop-ups felt visually disconnected from their surroundings.

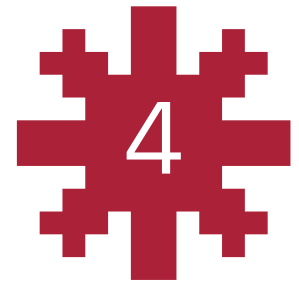
HUMAN INTERACTION

- Staff warmth was a wonderful (and frankly, surprising) standout.
- Associates engaged conversationally, not transactionally, and embraced that their store was a holiday spectacle.
- The store exuded luxury without intimidation. A rare balance, especially during the holiday season.

TECHNOLOGY ELEMENTS

- POS systems felt dated and fragile during peak traffic.
- Lacked visible clienteling tech, which raised questions about relationship tracking and possible personalization.
- Despite this, the experience remained intact, proof that tech is not the value driver here.





THE SENSES MATRIX

SIGHT

- Visual storytelling at its finest. Windows rewarded deep investigation; interiors soothed after spectacle.
- High amounts of detail, both indoors and outdoors.

SOUND

- Classical holiday music (the Nutcracker's, "Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy") played loudly enough to be recognizable, but wasn't grating on the ears.

TOUCH

- Mixed invitation.
 - High luxury goods were placed behind ornate glass displays and high on shelves, requiring service support.
 - Home goods section (where the lower-priced items were placed), begged the customer to interact.
- Constant tripping over décor in the Holiday shop. Impossible to ignore.

PALATE

- The luxurious fragrance section communicated wealth upon entering.
- The Loewe pop-up on the ground floor invited customers to smell seasonal scents, without the pressure of a purchase.
- The restaurant on the top floor invited customers to make a day of their shopping trip. A faint smell of salmon when walking by the dining room entrance stayed contained (thankfully!).

SIXTH SENSE

- Bergdorf radiates confidence. It knows it doesn't need to modernize aggressively. It doesn't even try to modernize. The magic lies in the institution, and that is what its customers want.