

# Unique Boutiques

AMID A SEA OF RETAIL SAMENESS, KIEHL'S HAS DECIDED ONE SIZE DOESN'T FIT ALL. BY JENNY B. FINE

## SOUTH COAST PLAZA

Costa Mesa's South Coast Plaza may be located in Orange County, but the area actually used to be one of the major apple-growing regions in the country. A gardening display plays up the connection between the area's agricultural history and Kiehl's commitment to using high-quality natural ingredients, while a corrugated cardboard recycling bin echoes the down-to-earth attitude of the company and the community. Even the 1947 Harley perched atop product shelves in the rear of the store is bright red, just like the proverbial, well, Big Apple.



## LONDON

For a company that prides itself on its use of botanical ingredients, is there a better London location than Covent Garden? Numerous displays play up the connection, from the neighborhood-friendly blackboard featuring a chalk rendering of an English rose in full bloom to the topiary carved into the shape of a K. Still, Kiehl's hasn't completely abandoned its American roots, as evidenced by the presence of a 2002 Harley Davidson Sportster 1200 Custom, a contemporary bike based on an American classic.



If ever a beauty brand was a New York institution, it's Kiehl's, whose East Village store is as much a part of the community as the punks who patrol St. Marks Place. So when the 150-year-old company embarked on an aggressive expansion plan after being acquired by L'Oréal, the question wasn't how to export Kiehl's New York state of mind around the country—it was how to make the retailer feel like it had been a part of the local landscape forever. "We don't want to roll out cookie-cutter stores," says Edgar Huber, the departing president of Kiehl's who was recently named president of L'Oréal's Luxury Products division. "A key element of Kiehl's is its relationship with the local community. We do virtually no advertising, so we use our stores to express our identity, who we are, what we love and what we do." To that end, the company identified the core attributes of its DNA, then translated that information into a unique identity for each new locale. Creative director Victoria Maddocks and her team channeled the character of a new community by exhaustively researching the history of the nine new markets where Kiehl's opened stores this year. Despite their differences, there is one common thread: Each store features a motorcycle culled from the legendary collection of founding family member Aaron Morse.



#### ←...SANTA MONICA

Walk into Kiehl's Santa Monica store and the first thing you see is an enormous surfboard donated by surfer Dale Gelsy and autographed by 170 of the world's top surfing champions. "It's California—it's beach, it's water, it's sun," says Huber. "It's a link to the whole community." The surfboard isn't the only California connection: All of the furniture in the store was designed by California natives Charles and Ray Eames, while neon store signs were chosen to evoke the glamour of nearby Hollywood. Even the motorcycle is a hometown hero—the 1989 Harley Davidson appeared in the movie *Terminator 2: Judgment Day*.



#### ←...HONG KONG

In Hong Kong, shoppers are crazy for all things New York—so Kiehl's decided to shift gears and celebrate its hometown. From Empire State Building merchandising displays to the East Village hopscotch board embedded in the ground, the design emphasizes the company's all-American approach to beauty. The 1952 SL Hydra Glide was the first Harley with a foot-operated gear shift—a fitting technological breakthrough for its new hometown. ■

