



New York Transit Museum layout at Grand Central Terminal

Since 2002, T W Design in Dallas has been Lionel's partner in the design and creation of eye-catching layouts for special events and locations. We asked Roger Farkash, whose semi-official title is Creative Director and Train Enthusiast, to share his approach to creating great layouts.

Every Layout Tells a Story

by Roger Farkash

When T W Design builds a layout for Lionel there are many physical things it has to BE: easy to assemble and disassemble, portable, structurally durable and electrically reliable, and of course, a showcase for trains and accessories. Perhaps because we come from a theater background, for us the most important thing a layout has to DO is emotional: engage and captivate the viewer.

Our goal is to create action with as many loops of operating trains as possible, without crowding the space. And we want visual variety with interesting track paths that incorporate trains emerging from tunnels or around corners where you don't anticipate – unexpected surprises and visual illusions that elicit little gasps of wonder.

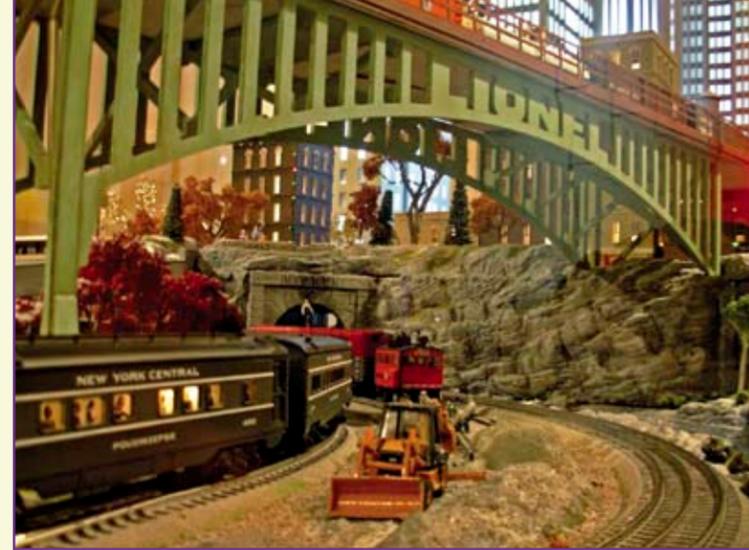
Most of all we want drama. We think of layouts in terms of

themes, even story-telling. The Grand Central Terminal display packs a three-act tale into 32 feet. Inspired by Jerry Calabrese's dream of again having a Lionel train under every Christmas tree, 'act one' opens by evoking that golden era. There are trains running on a wooden floor among and through the wrapped presents beneath the tree. We want viewers – old and young – to think, *I remember that; I can do that.*

The track – and the story – travel from celebrating Christmas at home to the holiday season in New York. This section of the layout has a more hi-rail scale look with a detailed cityscape of snow and lights, and pedestrians and taxis, and replicas of the Empire State Building, the SONY – formerly AT&T – Building,



Shoppers wait for the trolley on Macy's Santaland layout



The illuminated spires of Manhattan rise above the detailed railroad right of way into the city

and Grand Central Terminal. We hope to excite the experienced hobbyist to think, *I want to do that!*

At the far end of the layout, bridges connect the city to realistic looking mountain scenery, bringing this compact drama to a surprise climax. As you circle the mountains, a North Pole fantasy is revealed, with reindeer, candy cane cars and ultimately Santa as the finale.

Every layout has a guiding theme. The FAO Schwarz layout is about the world you can create in just a 5 x 9 space. It is both inspirational and nostalgic. Harking back to the look of the 1950s dealer displays, it has resonance for fans of both Lionel and FAO Schwarz.

Macy's Santaland is all about the magic of Christmas and so is the layout. The central focus of the layout goes beyond a train under the tree, to four loops of track built into the tree. (Cover Photo) It has definitely enhanced the magic of Christmas for quite a few hobbyists, who have been disappointed to find out that there is no *track-in-the-tree* kit they can take home. We built the tree from scratch to hold four different diameter track loops.

The Macy's display is a complete 28-foot enclosed freight station that protects the layout but also gives the feeling of looking in on Santa's trains. To finish off the magic, outside the freight station there is two-loop layout on a baggage cart with an elf polishing its protective case.

We usually have the good fortune to build layouts for open spaces, with 360° of viewing angles, with subways, elevated trains and mountains providing multiple levels. For us, a layout is completely three-dimensional, a sculpture with the opportunity to create dynamic looks while telling stories within the story – up, down and around.

It's a fun job. Maybe you shouldn't mention this to Mr. Calabrese.



An homage to dealer displays – a Lionel and FAO Schwarz tradition



Elf polishes the baggage cart layout display at Macy's

Visit Our Holiday Layouts

If you are in the New York area this holiday season, visit:

- **New York Transit Museum**
at Grand Central Terminal
- **Macy's Santaland**
Manhattan (151 W 34th St)
- **FAO Schwarz**
Manhattan (767 5th Ave)
- **One Gateway Center**
Newark (Raymond Blvd across from Newark Penn Station) A traditional department store holiday look with 60' of sidewalk level windows showing four operating layouts and lots of Lionel trains.

Gotham City not your holiday itinerary? Lionel layouts will be at three World's Greatest Hobby shows early in the new year:

- **Washington, DC**
Jan. 23 & 24
Dulles Expo Center, Chantilly, VA
- **Long Beach, CA**
Feb. 13 & 14
Long Beach Convention Center
- **Denver, CO**
Feb. 20 & 21
National Western Complex