

Architectural lighting design firm T Kondos Associates teamed up with lighting manufacturer Modular International Inc. to create custom surface Multiples® for Nintendo World. Photos by Mark LaRosa, New York.



BY MATTHEW HALL MANAGING EDITOR

The 2005 ISP/VM+SD International Store Design Competition

Nintendo World in New York wins store of the year

NINTENDO'S FIRST RETAIL STORE, ON ROCKEFELLER Plaza in New York, has been named the 2005 Store of the Year in the 35th annual Institute of Store Planners/VM+SD International Store Design Competition. The 13,000-square-foot Nintendo World, designed by TPG Architecture (New York) and Nintendo of America Inc. (Redmond, Wash.), is a gamer's paradise, offering visitors the opportunity to give their thumbs a workout at more than 50 Game Boy, GameCube and Nintendo DS stations.

The two-level store is "a superb branding exercise," noted one judge, reviewing more than 175 entries in Atlanta last November. "It effuses the same design philosophy and attention to detail as Nintendo's sought-after products." Another praised the space's "overall cohesiveness of design and product presentation."

Last year's winner, Giorgio Borruso Design (Marina del Rey, Calif.), for the Fornarina specialty apparel store in Las Vegas, remained on a hot streak in the 2005 competition. Borruso's Fila flagship design on Madison Avenue in New York won its category and was a strong contender for Store of the Year honors. He also

received first place awards for the Fornarina store on Via dei Condotti, Rome, and the Snaidero showroom in Los Angeles, along with an honorable mention for the Fornarina on Via Cole in Rome.

In all, 177 projects were

entered in this year's competition, which was hosted by the Atlanta chapter of ISP. In addition to 38 First Place and Award of Merit commendations, judges singled out the following projects for Special Awards: the Merkur Supermarket in Vienna for architecture; the Infiniti Retail Environment car dealership in Seoul for exterior; the Platinum Signature Bank in Bangkok for finishes; the Galleria Gourmet Emporium in Seoul for fixtures; the Express store in Las Vegas for graphics; the "upside-down" Viktor & Rolf store in Milan for innovative concept; the Bedo boutique in Toronto for lighting; the SB Design Square store in Bangkok for store planning; and Victoria's Secret in Las Vegas for visual merchandising.

This year's judges were: John Heatherman, president, Retail Design Collaborative (Cincinnati); Steven Kitezh, director, colors and materials, WalkerGroup/CNI (New York); Mark LaPointe, director, architecture, Larstrand Corp. (New York); David Milne, director, store design & construction, Limited Brands apparel division (Columbus, Ohio); Paul Pizzini, vp and design director, Miller Zell (Atlanta); Chuck Raymond, president, Raymond Design (Atlanta); Russell Sway, R. Sway Associates (Atlanta) and president of ISP International; and Jay Waronker, interim department chair, architecture department, Southern Polytechnic State University (Marietta, Ga.).

What follows is a profile of the Store of the Year, along with photo coverage of the 19 other First Place winners. For complete write-ups on the competition's First Place, Award of Merit and Special Award winners, go to www.visualstore.com.

[The contest's policy is that judges whose firms worked on projects entered in the competition are not present during discussions and voting on those submissions.]

On the Cover: Nintendo World won Store of the Year in the ISP/VM+SD International Store Design Competition. The centerpiece of the space, on New York's Rockefeller Plaza, is a two-story, three-sided video tower that's visible on the left side.



Store of the Year

FIRST PLACE Specialty Store, sales area over 10,000 sq. ft.
Nintendo World, New York
 TPG Architecture, New York

The Pokemon Center, an interactive retail destination featuring Pokemon video games made exclusively for Nintendo, opened in 2001 on New York's Rockefeller Plaza. In the fall of 2004, the two affiliated companies decided to reboot that space and place it under the Nintendo banner – while still retaining a sizable Pokemon presence within it.

“The decision to change the store stemmed from Pokemon and Nintendo's efforts to continually evolve and nurture interest in video games and gaming platforms/systems, including Pokemon games and trading cards,” says Suzanne Scallon, director, trade shows, for Nintendo of America, the Japanese company's U.S. subsidiary.

As Scallon's title reflects, Nintendo is more familiar with creating trade show spaces to sell its wares to the third-party retailers that have traditionally sold its games.

To design the permanent bricks-and-mortar selling space it envisioned, Nintendo again teamed with TPG Architecture (New York), which had helped create the Pokemon store.

“We started the project in October 2004, and Nintendo wanted the store open by the following May,” notes Alec Zaballero, principal and one of TPG's retail design directors. “That meant we had to compress a project that would typically take at least a year into seven months – and do so at a site with some of the strictest landmark-related building restrictions in the city.”

Those restrictions include a prohibition against erecting any exterior signage. Hence, designers used the building's existing glass walls to give passersby clear views of the many oversized screens inside displaying Nintendo games. Framing the exterior are LED covers in the company's trademark blue.



“That all works together to make the store act as its own billboard,” says Zaballero.

Inside, the store's centerpiece is a three-sided, two-story video tower consisting of nine rear-projection video screens that show the company's latest games in action. The center of the first floor houses the Nintendo DS area, which features a powdercoated steel table at its center that's surrounded by eight pod chairs for gamers to sit in while trying out the dual-screen stations.

To get to the store's second floor, customers ascend a glass-encased stairwell that's backed by a “reverse waterfall” of blue LEDs that washes up the wall to a Nintendo logo.

The second level houses two main merchandising areas – one for game accessories and the other for Nintendo apparel and gift items – along with six freestanding, dual-sided Game-Cube kiosks and a surround-sound lounge featuring three egg-shaped “rumble” chairs wired into the audio for the game being played on an overhead screen.

“The store is performing better than expected,” says Scallon, “and has become a must-visit site for any Nintendo fans who come to New York.”

PROJECT SUPPLIERS

CLIENT
 Nintendo of America Inc., Redmond, Wash.

DESIGN/ARCHITECTURE
 TPG Architecture, New York

LIGHTING DESIGNER
 T Kondos Associates, New York
 Alexander S. Sebesalmi, Sr. Assoc.

GENERAL CONTRACTOR
 Lehr Construction Corp., New York

AUDIO/VISUAL
 McCann Systems, Edison, N.J.

FIXTURES/MILLWORK
 Amuneal Mfg. Corp., Philadelphia

FLOORING
 Architectural Systems, New York
 Stone Source, New York

LIGHTING
 Modular International Inc., Pittsburgh
 Color Kinetics, Boston