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SUPER MARKET

LANDINI ASSOCIATES HAVE BEEN GIVEN FREE REIN TO TURN
A CANADIAN ICON INTO A WORLD-CLASS SUPERSTORE

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ARCHITECT TURNER FLEISCHER
ARCHITECTS
INTERIOR DESIGN LANDINI
ASSOCIATES
LOCATION TORONTO | CANADA
PROJECT LOBLAWS, MAPLE
LEAF GARDENS



The role of designers working in any contemporary city is to wrestle space constraints and local sensitivities into one creative vision. But when Sydney-based design and brand strategy firm Landini Associates won the competition to transform Toronto's pantheon to sports, Maple Leaf Gardens (MLG), into a Loblaws supermarket, they were confronting not one but two national icons in Canada's largest city.

While it would have been easy to appoint one of the many submissions that simply improved upon Canada's pre-existing grocery store models – either strictly functional or the organic lifestyle approach – Loblaws wanted to 'reinvent the generic' and required a completely fresh perspective.

"It was a risk to ask us to come all the way around the world to take part in the competition, but I'm a great believer in what I call 'informed naiveté,'" says lead designer Mark Landini of Landini Associates. "Our global experience is an asset and defines our 'information', but having never been to Canada before was an asset too. This was our 'naiveté'."

After briefing, Landini spent two days walking the city. "It struck me how strong the city was and how it had been built to withstand great climatic changes," he says. "MLG is a representation of this. It's massive and brutally beautiful. So is much of Toronto. Our starting point was to do something very urban and very strong and very real."

Owned by the renowned Weston family, Loblaws is deeply ensconced in the Canadian psyche as the country's largest and most recognisable food retailer. The MLG building also holds a specific place within the heart of Toronto. For 68 years, the MLG was known as the temple of ice hockey and the building was made a National Historic Site of Canada in 2007. "You

would need to be blind to miss the importance hockey and, more importantly, Maple Leaf Gardens has in Canada," says Landini. "Canadians are crazy for it. For Australians to understand MLG's importance they need to multiply a Kiwi's love of rugby by a factor of ten and ten again!"

For decades, MLG was Toronto's primary events and concert venue, hosting performers including Frank Sinatra, Bob Dylan and Duran Duran. It was one of the few places outside of the US where Elvis Presley played. Yet it became antiquated and limited without the luxury facilities of the larger, more modern complexes that responded better to the demands of audiences, teams and performers.

After remaining dormant for a decade, Loblaws Companies Limited acquired MLG, striking horror into Torontonians who believed their beloved Gardens would become another big-box store. They need not have worried. Landini has not only repurposed the building but also reinvented its experience by establishing what Al Burke, Senior Vice President of Construction and Development for Loblaws, calls "a new urban model, a notion of the world's greatest food store" with spaces inside the overall volume, a raised glassed kitchen housing 14 chefs, and signage and materials that vary throughout, balancing intimacy and sophistication against the fun consistent with the bustling urban location and scale of the building.

The project was a new task for Landini Associates. While they had successfully re-positioned the identity and packaging of many global brands, they had not taken on a single space this large. As Landini says, a project of this size in Australia is unlikely unless you were to put a food store in the Sydney Opera house.

"I'm not sure current supermarkets in Australia would write such a brief, because the two key players here only really make incremental changes to their looks," he says. "With Loblaws, we were engaged to do everything from the master-planning right the way down to designing the refrigerated counters, so we had a freer hand to instigate change. They were very clear they wanted something exceptional. Strangely, one is not always asked to do that."

Working interactively with the client team, Landini Associates built the project 80 per cent to scale in a lab outside Toronto, experimenting with full-size mock-ups, prototypes and "real materials such as steel, glass, concrete, wood and brick in a massive yet simple way".



PREVIOUS Blue Star artwork re-uses old stadium seating
LEFT Graphic signage is key
ABOVE The branded entry
RIGHT The raised glass kitchen above the food hall
FAR RIGHT Raw materials, such as concrete, respond to the building's history.

"With Loblaws, we were engaged to do everything... They were very clear they wanted something exceptional"

MARK LANDINI





ABOVE Wide aisles make circulation easy

BELOW Maple Leaf Gardens, where Loblaw's is now located, is an iconic building in Toronto

In redefining the supermarket's brand, Landini found much to treasure in the history of both Loblaw's and the MLG building. "We looked at Loblaw's history and admired the confidence that had been employed before so we used that in our design, using different urban materials and forms," he says about the interior. Various shades of orange and red from Loblaw's' original logo distinguish different spaces throughout.

"My favourite choice was to use the colour on the floor and the different types of lighting," says Landini. "I think these two things are what sets it apart from other supermarkets and strangely do not distract from the food. We always design to make the product 'king', but we also like to create a place that you will recognise as the brand's own."

The building's past is a constant reminder. Items of memorabilia have been worked into the interior and the original east-facing wall remains largely untouched apart from a giant blue maple-leaf sculpture made from the old stadium chairs. "I knew the Weston family love and support the arts so I wanted to respect the building's heritage by commissioning some," says Landini. "Hence the maple-leaf gesture. Those that know the new Melbourne Cricket Ground and the way it has enshrined the old chairs will get it."

Jon Scott Blanthorn is Indesign's Toronto correspondent.

MAPLE LEAF GARDENS



INTERIOR DESIGN, GRAPHIC DESIGN & WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

Landini Associates

CREATIVE DIRECTOR Mark Landini

STRATEGIC PLANNER Kari Nelson

PROJECT TEAM (INTERIORS)

Ian McDougall, Wayne Cheng,

Yukiko Kawabata, Wenny Arief

GRAPHICS Steven Luongo, Mariela Tiqui

ARCHITECT (INTERIORS)

Turner Fleischer Architects

PRINCIPAL ARCHITECT (INTERIORS)

Russell Fleischer

ARCHITECT (BASE BUILDING)

John Chow

TENANT FIT-OUT Caley Howes,

Mat Stretton

FINISHES CONTRACTOR

Elizabeth Ormonde

BUILDER & SHOPFITTER

Buttcon Limited

REFRIGERATION Hill Phoenix

CUSTOM REFRIGERATION BARKER

ELECTRICAL & LIGHTING

Hammerschlag + Joffe Inc

STRUCTURAL ENGINEERING exp

MECHANICAL ENGINEERING LKM

Division of SNC-Lavalin Inc

FIRE ENGINEERING L P Engineering

CHEESE COOLER, FLORAL COOLER,

JUICE SALAD BAR TRI-V Custom

Manufacturing

FIXTURES Icon Constructors

STAINLESS PREP COUNTERS

Diamond Group

MILLWORK Mar-Tec Woodworking

SCULPTURE Streamliner Fabrication

MURALS Wall to Wall Murals Limited

(Paul Conway)

SIGNAGE Somerville (Ron March)

TIME TO COMPLETE 18 months

TOTAL FLOOR AREA 7,896m²

LANDINI ASSOCIATES

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TURNER FLEISCHER ARCHITECTS

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FURNITURE

Generally throughout Loblaw's Retail Areas, laminate filler shelves from Wilsonart, and timber and veneer tables and shelves from Rainbow Wood Veneer. At Bakery, Cheese and HMR counters, marble counter-tops from Marble Trend. In Patisserie, granite counter also from Marble Trend. In Deli, custom tables designed by Landini Associates, and multi-coloured chairs from Tolix. In Sushi Section, 'Navy' chairs by Emeco. In Café, chairs from Tolix. Other chairs in Café are reclaimed stadium seating from original Maple Leaf Gardens ice-hockey stadium.

LIGHTING In Loblaw's entrance, large industrial pendant lights have been reclaimed and restored from original Maple Leaf Gardens ice-hockey stadium, fitted by Nelson & Garrett. In Perishable Hall, Deli and Bakery, four-light gimble-head pendant fixture using ceramic metal halide lamps and electronic ballasts. In Deli Area and Checkout Area, Halo track-mounted 'Minilume' lamps from Cooper Lighting. On perimeter walls and murals throughout, departmental signage illuminated with Philips lighting. Generally throughout Grocery Aisles, General Electrical high-lumen lamps.

FINISHES

In Loblaw's Food and Grocery Hall, red flooring from Industrial Floor Systems and Kodan Flooring. In Loblaw's Deli Section and kerb, precast concrete from Omega Moulding. In Meat, Dairy, PCF and bulkheads sections, cement board from Finex. In HABA and bulkheads, plywood for column cladding, ceiling rafting and shelves from Finex. Generally throughout Loblaw's, paint from Sherwin Williams. Wall tiles throughout from Olympia Tile + Stone, Cercan Tiles and Stone Tile.

FIXED & FITTED

Generally throughout Loblaw's Food and Grocery Hall, display-case refrigeration from Hill Phoenix, and custom refrigeration from Barker Specialty Products. In Loblaw's Cheese Section in Food Hall, glass and metal structure for cheese wall is from TRI-V Custom Manufacturing.

ARTWORK In Loblaw's entrance, Blue Star sculpture is made from re-used stadium seating from original Maple Leaf Gardens ice-hockey stadium, by Steve Richards. Generally throughout Maple Leaf Gardens, murals are by Paul Conway at Wall to Wall Murals Limited.

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