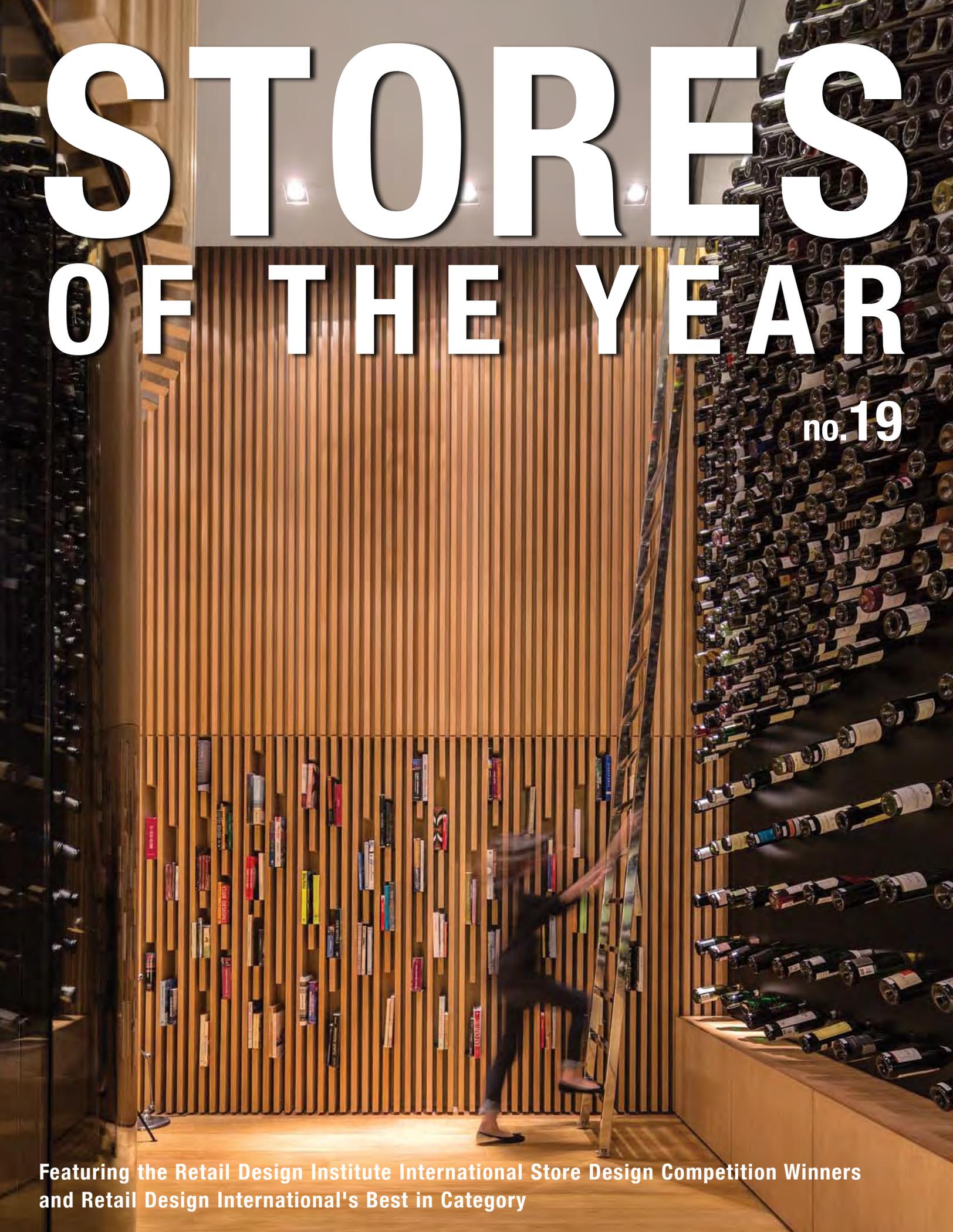


STORES OF THE YEAR



no. 19

Featuring the Retail Design Institute International Store Design Competition Winners
and Retail Design International's Best in Category

Loblaws

Maple Leaf Gardens, Toronto, ON Canada



According to Mark Landini, “Our brief was to design and help redefine what an urban supermarket store should look like in today’s market. Quite simply, we were to create ‘the world’s best food store’ including active food preparation areas such as a full-scale scratch bakery, 14-chef kitchen, pizzeria, grill, salad and sushi bars, patisserie and confectioner, tea specialist, café, canteen and cooking school, cheese specialist and deli as well as butcher, fishmonger and fresh produce area. We also needed to develop a blueprint that could be implemented in a number of differing sized locations, enhancing and building on Loblaws core brand proposition. Additionally, we were asked to consider how to tell the story of the building’s history in an interesting and engaging way.”

Maple Leaf Garden, a Canadian iconic landmark in Toronto, has been transformed from an ice hockey “temple” to an 85,000 sq. ft. urban grocery store. The transformation was the work of the Australian design firm Landini Associates under the creative leadership of Mark Landini. What was created here is “an innovative and vibrant urban food shopping experience—an exciting experience for shoppers featuring international design trends such as food theater and the social facility of a town square to elevate the shoppers’ experience beyond that of a traditional grocery store.”

Working with a small client team, in the 18 month period—from commission to store opening—various concepts were developed and tested in an empty warehouse. “We were keen to create a model that celebrated both the food and the people who make the food whilst at the same time making a visible but ‘food friendly’ statement that was unmistakably that of Loblaws.

“As for the building’s history, we wanted to do this by integrating the stories of the total space as opposed to segregating them in a corner. We chose many different ways of doing this from marking the ‘center ice’ by aisle 24, exposing the ghosts of walls past, commissioning a sculpture made from old blue stadium chairs, reusing others in the café, reusing stadium lighting in the double-height entrance lobby and reinstating an old mural whilst also celebrat-

ing the various cultural and political events both under the canteen tables and on columns within the body of the supermarket.”

Graphics and signage were vital components of the overall design. “Much of the directional and departmental signage is outsized to fit within the scale of the building. Many of these were inspired by what you see in a city street. Each area uses a different signage type from the battered tin of the bakery, the timber of the sushi, the impressed concrete of the deli, the bent copper plumbing tube and neon light of the grill to the supergraphics of the perimeter painted over the tile, CFC sheet and plywood substrates.”

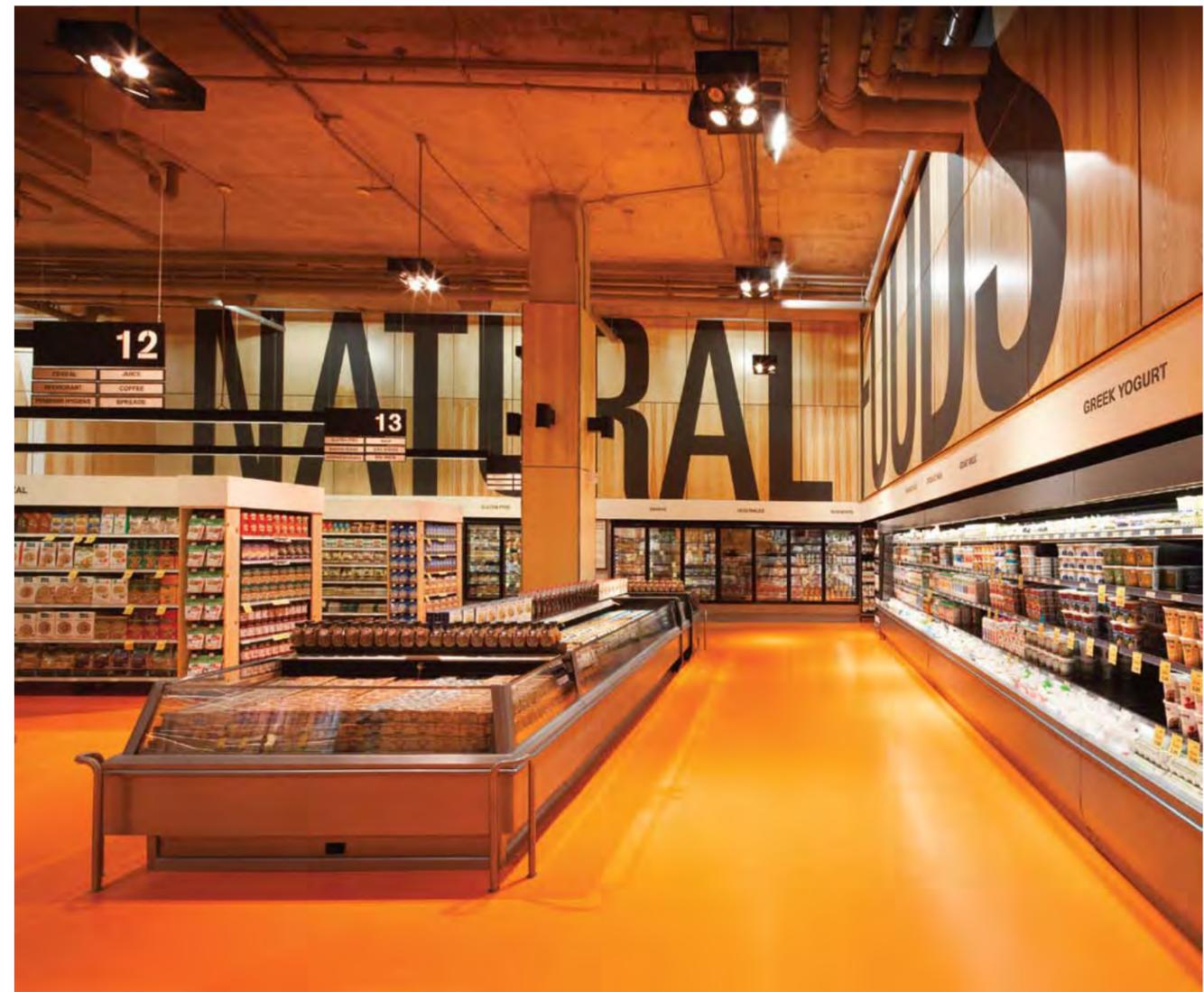
In summing up what Landini Associates was able to accomplish, Landini said, “I think with Loblaws we have collectively created more than a great food store. We have attempted to make a place that people can use every day in a number of different ways. We re-imagined a market square idea in a densely populated urban context. We also tried to put the ‘super’ back into supermarket, creating an exciting and interesting place dedicated to the celebration of food. Most supermarkets are designed as ‘selling machines’ with little thought as to how they can contribute to the soul of the community which they serve. This is something that Loblaws and we were very focused on.”





For the visual merchandising and product display, the design team made use of cross merchandising to inspire end usage and suggest menus. "All displays are product led and product intensive and we have avoided display for display sake. We wanted to create excitement at every turn and to that end all the product points are product- and people-focused, from the world's tallest cheese wall and tasting station, the tea wall with over 200 teas, the butcher framed by aged meat cases and the fishmonger with fresh fish tanks."

What makes this layout unique? Landini responded with, "We created a modern version of the market town square. A social hub for the community providing a place to meet, eat and fall in love. A place to sample, watch and be inspired by the food and the food preparation, where people could slow down, browse and learn as well as switching off and socializing. We discarded the plastics, laminates and artificial materials of most supermarkets as well as the generic exposed aggregate concrete floors that litter the continent and chose materials that would age with dignity. We used concrete, stone, ceramic tiles, and multiple timbers as well as a lighting scheme unlike any other found today in these types of environments. The specially designed multiple light sources and fittings were developed for Loblaws to highlight the product and the signage and not to create a bland overall effect. Rather—we wanted the 'light and shade' that one finds in nature —thus providing and encouraging a slower pace than normal."



Landini Associates Sydney, Australia

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