

PARTY LIKE IT'S 1999



VMSD's 23rd annual International Retail Design Conference (IRDC) took place in Minneapolis Oct. 25-26, 2023, at the Marriott City Center.

BY THE VMSD EDITORIAL STAFF

Welcome to the Twin Cities! This past Oct. 25-26, VMSD's 23rd IRDC descended upon Minneapolis for two days of inspirational sessions, educational keynotes, hands-on workshops, offsite guided tours, and much more, hosted at the Marriott City Center downtown, and co-located with the 2023 Shop! Ideation and Retail Challenge (Oct. 22-24). Guests concluding Ideation mingled with arriving IRDC attendees at the hotel's Arora Restaurant & Bar with a cocktail reception sponsored by Schimenti the evening before (Oct. 24) the first official day of the event.



ABOVE Motivational speaker, author, influencer and YouTuber Lizzie Velasquez kicked off the 2023 conference in Minneapolis.

Start Your Engines

The first full day, Oct. 25, began with a jolt of inspiration from opening keynote speaker Lizzie Velasquez. A hurtful bullying video created about Lizzie thrust her into the international spotlight when she was 17 years old. Since then, the YouTuber, anti-bullying activist and motivational speaker has written two books and spread her passion for kindness, communication and connection globally. Lizzie spoke about resilience and a concept that resonated deeply with our audience – the human desire to be seen and respected, especially within a retail environment.

After Lizzie's moving presentation, attendees broke off into groups to participate in this year's hands-on workshops. "Messy Creativity," facilitated by Judy Bell, Founder and CEO, Energetic Retail – and featuring the Wizards from her latest edition of "Silent Selling" – charged attendees with a creative sprint using a purple marker inspired by the children's book "Harold and the Purple Crayon." Participants worked in small teams while the Wizards scanned the room for their top choices. At the end of the presentation, all potential winners were awarded Honeycrisp apples, a delicacy of Minneapolis. Linda Cahan of Cahan & Co. helmed the concurrent workshop, which challenged the audience to rely on their instinct and learn to listen to their gut.

Engaging breakout sessions – one highlighting Target's small-format concepts and expansion (presented by Ken McQuade, Lead Design Architect, Target, and Robyn Vogel, Director of Store Design, Target), and the other discussing M&M'S flagships with Chip Cook of M&M'S alongside co-presenter Ashley Randolph of Landor & Fitch – took place before the annual Networking Roundtable Discussions at noon.

VMSD's New York Editor Eric Feigenbaum and longtime VMSD Editorial Advisory Board member Tom Beebe took the stage during lunch to give a special presentation focusing on the history and impact of window designer Gene Moore. Following their