



DESIGN



DYNAMOS



By Jennifer Acevedo, Editor-in-Chief

IDENTIFYING AND NURTURING TALENT IS A CHALLENGE for virtually every organization, especially in retail. Now in its sixth year, *VMSD's* annual Designer Dozen makes that onus a bit easier by honoring the best and brightest of the industry's up-and-coming stars, ages 35 and younger.

The designers, retailers and visual merchandisers on the following pages are making a name for themselves largely because of their devotion to excellence and dedication to their craft, but also from a desire to continuously evolve their education, and in many cases, that of others.

From a Vancouver, British Columbia-based retailer who realized his dream to create the ultimate pop-up to an interior designer who hand-painted designs for a client's wallpaper when no suitable options could be found, our Designer Dozen honorees are working hard every day to make a positive impact on the experience of shopping in store.

We've watched past winners take their places among the most innovative and successful professionals in our industry, and we have no doubt this group will do the same.

Read on to meet the winners of *VMSD's* 2017 Designer Dozen Awards.



SUSAN STRAUSS

AGE: 30 \ LEAD DESIGNER, OWNER

SUSAN STRAUSS DESIGN \ LAKEWOOD, N.J.

Why her?

The integration of psychology in design drives Susan Strauss' desire to push boundaries in her own work. Among her notable projects, she counts the challenge of once designing a fish market on a shoestring budget as particularly satisfying: The design included more than 10,000 feet of fishing chain hanging from the ceiling that became the location's signature visual element.

What is a key design element in your work?

"The retail spaces I design are pristine and neat, with clean lines ... those are the building blocks of visual design. These aspects are often relegated to be a mere afterthought in the excitement of working with colors, styles and building elements. It is of the utmost importance to bring them back to the forefront of our minds to make sure we get the simple things right before moving forward with the details. Like a lot of things in life, when something is done right, it becomes invisible to us, but when it's done badly, it becomes an annoyance. If the simple part of the design – the basic structure, layout, presentation – is not done properly, it leaves the consumer with a poor impression of the brand and product."

