

ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: A TRADE SHOW DESIGN FOR NINTENDO OF AMERICA

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Thesis Directed By: Associate Professor Daniel Conway
Department of Theatre

Designing trade show exhibits for large corporations is a viable career path for students of theatrical design. There are distinct similarities and differences between design for theatre and industry, and by creating a theoretical design for the Nintendo Corporation I compare and contrast the differences between the two.

Designing for a tradeshow incorporates some factors that theatrical designers must consider differently than they would for a normal stage production, and once a designer can understand these as well as the fact that he is designing not necessarily art for art's sake, but art for a bottom line they can fully embrace the corporate model. The act of design is inherently artistic, and I have found through my design for Nintendo, that art can still have beauty, integrity and purpose while serving the practical needs of a profit driven company.

A TRADESHOW DESIGN FOR NINTENDO OF AMERICA

By

Laurence J. Zoll

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Advisory Committee:

Associate Professor Daniel Conway, Chair
Professor Daniel MacLean Wagner
Assistant Professor Harold F. Burgess II

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Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Abstract..... | i |
| Title..... | ii |
| Introduction..... | 1 |
| Product and Corporate Analysis..... | 3 |
| Design Concept..... | 12 |
| Design Evaluation..... | 20 |
| Appendix A (Glossary)..... | 25 |
| Appendix B (Logos and Iconography)..... | 27 |
| Appendix C (Research Selections)..... | 35 |
| Appendix D (Drafting)..... | 42 |
| Bibliography..... | 53 |

Introduction

Finding a corporation that has an established, consistent aesthetic is no small task. Even more difficult is finding a company with an established aesthetic that has also successfully differentiated itself from its competition. Fortunately, Nintendo of America fits into this small category; as a company that is grounded in its graphics there is a definite consciousness about all of the material that is produced by the corporation, and this fact makes it a prime candidate for a successful, relevant aesthetic analysis. Through an examination of its products and relevant logos a graphical evolution is revealed, and this evolution provides insight into the graphic legacy the company is creating for itself. An analysis of this legacy will reveal Nintendo's past and present in the gaming industry both in terms of financial stability and in influence within the sphere of video gaming.

The iconography a company creates for itself can, and will influence the ultimate success of that company; subsequently after exploring that influence it is possible for an exhibition designer to understand the ideals that a company has built for itself so they can fully represent the corporation that has hired them with a solid, philosophy driven design. This idea extends throughout the economy and is not just limited to the video gaming industry; any company that can create a successful graphic identity for itself will ultimately be able to communicate its mission in a clear manner. Apple Computer is an unmistakable example of this: Apple's logo has remained unchanged in shape since its inception in 1976¹. The color scheme of the logo has changed over the years; the original rainbow bars have been replaced with a bevy of monochrome colors including the current high gloss metallic silver, but the distinctive apple shape of the logo itself has remained

¹ <http://www.wired.com/gadgets/mac/news/2003/09/60597>

unaltered for the past thirty years. The Apple logo has come to represent a level of consistent quality that customers have come to trust. Apple customers identify and align themselves to this brand, and the logo serves as almost a mark of membership into this unique community of customer and product. In contrast, the Windows-based computer company Gateway has never seen the kind of customer loyalty that Apple has been able to produce; Gateway has never had a solid graphical identity. In its twenty-two year history, Gateway has had at least three distinct logos, maintaining only its bovine black and white color scheme. While Gateway has struggled to define its graphical identity, the lack of a specific logotype or icon has hindered the company in creating a solid customer following. I certainly do not suggest that the entirety of a company's success or failure rests on the shoulders of a solid logo, but a lack of graphical recognition by its own customer base can certainly be a contributing factor. Having a concept with meaning and truth behind it is just as important in the corporate world as in the realm of theatre. Here, art can bridge the gap between drama and business; leaving the confines of the proscenium does not make a design or a piece of art any less viable. As long as there is research and thought behind each decision made there is certainly a validity of design. Nintendo is one company that undoubtedly has enough material to provide a designer with the information to create that informed design, as it is a company that cares about the way it is represented on paper, the screen, and in three dimensional space.

Product and Corporate Analysis

There is a simple, clean aesthetic that Nintendo of America strives to brand in all of its products. While the creation and preservation of brand mentality are extremely important to a company's identity, a brand is vastly more than just a simple icon:

“A brand... is an approximate- yet distinct- understanding of a product, service, or company. To compare a brand with its competitors, we only need to know what makes it different. Brand management is the management of differences, not as they exist in data sheets, but as they exist in the minds of people.”²

Nintendo's innovative iconographies, in addition to its cutting-edge technology and products, have provided a solid foundation for its brand. Characters from games such as the Mario and Zelda series first appeared in the late 1980's and still find a devout following today, and from a brand management perspective, speak to the survivability of their image. Nintendo has differentiated itself from its competition through its revolutionary console concepts, from the Wii's motion capture system to the DS's dual screen mobile gaming. Facing strong competition from other more advanced graphics-intensive gaming platforms such as the Microsoft Xbox and Sony's PlayStation, Nintendo has managed to rise above both to become one of the top gaming retailers in the world. Nintendo has been so successful they even surpassed the value of the entire Sony Corporation on 24 June 2007.³

Nintendo's logo is clear, clean, and unobstructed: the word *Nintendo* in a red, sans serif font is surrounded in a matching red ellipse, equal in width to the stroke weight of the text (for visual reference, see Appendix B, figure 1). While the simplicity of this

² Neumeier, Marty, *The Brand Gap*, pg 3

³ Khargaria, Bithika. *Nintendo Surpasses Rival Sony in Market Value*. The Money Times. June 25, 2007

corporate logo compliments much of Nintendo's design aesthetic, it is not necessarily differentiated enough to be recognizable without the company name. If the text is removed from the red ellipse, the logo falls apart. Created in 1980, the logo has gone from one of innovation to now one of vintage charm. In light of this, Nintendo has sought to ensure their latest products are able to keep up with the fast-paced and attention-vying arena of brand development; they have branded their most recent products with their own identities that can easily stand on their own. The logos for both the Wii and DS are strong representations of what the company has come to stand for in recent years. Each of these logos creates an identity, while undoubtedly Nintendo can stand on its own legs independent of the traditional, classic corporate logo. When removing the text from the corporate logo, one is left with an empty ellipse and no recognizable brand; it is much more difficult to dissect the logos of the Wii and DS into unrecognizable pieces.

The branding behind the logos of the Wii and DS is both creative in their visual aesthetic and brilliant in its subtle incorporation of Nintendo's philosophy of game play. Each product logo represents the fundamental notion of how Nintendo seeks intimate player engagement with their products, as well as how sophisticated their technology has become in recent years. Both of these logos go much deeper than simply illustrating the name of the product in a whimsical fashion, rather, they intend to provide the customer a way into the actual product itself. These logos provide a successful identity for the product that indicates not only an audience, but also use and range. Perhaps most remarkable about the logos for both the DS and Wii is that no matter what portion of the logo is being examined it will always contain the identity of the product. No single part of either logo presents a picture that becomes unrecognizable as either Nintendo or more

importantly as the product itself. To understand this concept, a close examination of each product's individual icons is essential.

The Nintendo DS logo is a clear example of how logo construction can differentiate a product from its competitors both on paper and in the consumer's mind whether all or only part of the logo is seen (see Appendix B figure 3). The DS logo can be separated into three distinct parts, the first part being the company name spelled out in the edgier, more modern DS typeface in black, blending seamlessly into the second part of the logo: this part contains the two vertically stacked rounded rectangles, the topmost rectangle in black and the bottom in gray, where the top rectangle is also the final 'O' in Nintendo. The third part is the name of the system itself: 'DS'. This third part is proportionally larger than the other two, but each serves its own individual purpose.

The inclusion of the company name and its integration into the logo is an obvious marketing decision; the company clearly identifies itself and the product that it has created. I believe, however, the integration of the Nintendo name into the DS logo goes beyond simple marketing strategy. Even though Nintendo had released the Game Cube in 2001, just three years prior to the DS, the philosophical difference between the two platforms marked a revolution for the company. The Game Cube did not provide Nintendo with the console market share they had hoped for during its tenure as their flagship console, failing to compete with the first generation Xbox and PlayStation 2. When it came time for the DS release it was financially vital for Nintendo to reassert its brand strength by reinventing the mobile gaming platform, having basically established the mobile gaming market with its popular Gameboy franchise. Relatively untouched since 1989 (the Gameboy's major evolutions included a smaller and lighter unit and

added higher processing color graphics in more than a decade of product development), Nintendo had a unique opportunity to reestablish its name as a competitive brand in the gaming market. The DS revolutionized gamer-unit interaction in its game play, and Nintendo deftly integrated this innovation into the second part of the DS logo.

The two rectangles of the logo represent the dual screens of the DS. This dual-screen functionality was something no mobile gaming platform had ever offered before, and what is even more ground-breaking is that the second screen is not just additional visual presentation for the gamer, but instead is a touch-screen to provide a means of control for the games. This inspired design brought life to a brand that was seen as a relic in the face of its competitors, in 2006 the DS sold more units than any other console⁴, and is well on its way to becoming the bestselling console (mobile or otherwise) of all time by the end of 2007 with sales exceeding ten billion dollars⁵. This number is even more impressive when one considers the console itself only retails for \$149 USD.

The final part of the DS logo is the name of the model. Keeping in line with the rest of the logo, the 'DS' uses the same typeface and sleek styling of the rest of the logo. It is unmistakably a member of the same iconography Nintendo has created for its product, and easily stands on its own or in the completed three-part state to increase the effectiveness of the brand as a whole. When this logo is viewed all together it creates an aesthetic that Nintendo has come to be known for in recent years. The lines are minimalist and simple, yet communicate a sophisticated intelligence to its products (and in turn, its consumers). The logo of its competitor, the Sony PSP (PlayStation Portable)

⁴ Nintendo DS is Top Selling US Console of 2006.
http://www.gamepro.com/news.cfm?article_id=93731

⁵ DFC: DS Could be Best Selling Video Game Platform Ever.
<http://biz.gamedaily.com/industry/feature/?id=15549>

utilizes the similar edgy sans serif typeface style (see appendix B, figure 4), yet there is an unmistakable rebellion in the clean lines of the DS (Nintendo's games are far more family-friendly and less graphics intensive, on average, than those of the Sony and Microsoft). In fact, Sony has sought to directly compete with Nintendo for its share of the gaming market since the release of the DS.

The DS was first released on 21 November 2004 in North America and 2 December 2004 in Japan; the PSP was released in Japan just ten days after the Japanese launch of the DS. Sony had been promoting the launch of the PSP since 2003, announcing its all-in-one features as a portable gaming console, web browser, and movie viewer. The addition of the web and media viewing features were an attempt to offer gamers more, and yet these features still could not compare to the ingenuity of Nintendo's dual-screen technology. The PSP may have surpassed in functionality of what it had to offer gamers in a single unit, but the dual-screen technology was unmatched and thus created a stronger allure for a different, more interactive gaming experience for consumers. Sony's PSP logo, while sleek and eye-catching, did not reveal anything more unique about its gaming experience. The DS logo may have been a bit bulkier, but its representation of its dual-screen interactivity created a stronger branding message to consumers than the PSP because it visually stated its uniqueness with just its logo. The Nintendo Wii was released in November 2006, and was received with a great deal of enthusiasm and sales that far outpaced their competitors; by June 2007 there were already a total of approximately eight million Wii consoles sold worldwide⁶. When Sony launched its PlayStation 3 just eight days prior to the Nintendo's Wii, its state of the art

⁶ Wii. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nintendo_Wii

graphics processor still failed to compete with the unique game play and gamer interaction of the Wii. There are many factors that can be attributed to the success of the Wii, most notably is affordability combined with its pioneering game play. While the PlayStation 3 may have a far superior graphics processor, Sony's efforts to compete technologically have backfired. By developing such a high-end graphics processor, they have had to offset some of the production cost onto its consumers; the PlayStation 3 retails between approximately \$800 and \$840 USD (at time of writing, dependent on memory size). Nintendo sacrificed flashy graphics for revolutionary control method and interface, and enabled a substantially more affordable console at approximately \$250 USD. Nintendo again capitalized on creating an aesthetic that informed the public about their product well before its release.

The branding that resulted created both logo and avatar. Nintendo needed something as dynamic as its new product, and considering their audience, an avatar was the perfect solution. As “an avatar is an icon that can move, morph, or otherwise operate freely as the brand’s alter ego”⁷, Nintendo was able to use its own iconography to illustrate the product’s potential. It is quite important to understand that the Wii was aimed at attracting traditionally non-gamers as well as seasoned, experienced gamers. It was designed with fun in mind, not the highest possible graphics capabilities. Nintendo wanted to make a console that everyone would want to get together and play, which is part of the reasoning behind the name. *Wii* intentionally sounds like *we*: community and togetherness are the ideals upon which the Wii is based. Nintendo explains further:

" But you're probably asking: What does the name mean? Wii sounds like “we,” which emphasizes this console is for everyone. Wii can easily be remembered by people around

⁷ Neumeier, Marty, *The Brand Gap*, pg 87

the world, no matter what language they speak. No confusion. No need to abbreviate. Just Wii."⁸

With that understood looking at the Wii icon the sense of community and the sheer fun are immediately clear (see Appendix B figure 2). Nintendo's clean lines still hold a prominent place, but there is also a clear joy in the styling of the typeface. Nintendo used this levity to its advantage very early on in its pre-launch advertising campaigns. The logo was instantly used as an avatar. Each *i* in the name became a player. Commercials featured multiple *i*'s playing together and were actively involved in the games they were playing. The *i*'s are also representative of the innovative wireless remotes used to control the console. Even before the system was available to the public, interest and excitement were generated through these active advertisements. The avatar that Nintendo created and its associated aesthetic were inviting and exciting to the public. Nintendo was able to create an avatar representative of its product to help generate the hype it needed to make the Wii the success that it has become.

Aside from affordability, the most significant reason for the success of the Wii is its method of control. Unlike most other video game consoles where the player sits in front of the screen and controls the characters with only his thumbs and fingers, the Wii player is inherently more involved with game play. The accelerometers built into the Wii remote allow the user to physically mimic the actions he is trying to perform on screen. The level of physical interaction varies from game to game, but even the most inactive of Wii games is more physically involved than any Xbox or PlayStation game. While playing a game on the Wii a person may find themselves using their Wii remote in ways

⁸ A New Style of Gaming.
<http://ms.nintendo-europe.com/wii/?site=philosophy.html&l=enGB>

they never had before with standard game controllers: standing up and putting the remote like a golf club or swinging like a bat, shaking the remote up or down to free a frozen Mario, and using the Wii remote as a mouse-pointer; regardless of what specific motion used, the Wii player is infinitely more involved than the player of any other platform based game. This very fact has made the Wii into the sensation it has become. For those who are more interested in new and exciting game play rather than just the standard, almost annual upgraded graphics quality of other consoles, the Wii provides an unparalleled gaming experience. With something as new, exciting, and different as the Wii, it was imperative Nintendo find a way to graphically brand their latest device. The logo and surrounding aesthetic had to be an extension of that same interactive, representative aesthetic that Nintendo had set for itself previously with the DS, but it also had to be adapted to suit its new and exciting product.

Both the Wii and DS have helped to revitalize a gaming company that was once on the brink of being swallowed up by the gaming industry altogether. Of course the products themselves are to receive most of the credit for this, but Nintendo's ability to harness the power of its marketing department and create a revived aesthetic for itself has certainly helped to propel these remarkable products. Nintendo's corporate logo still exists and serves an important purpose as a foundation, but a maturing company has seen the interactive aesthetic it has developed in recent years has been more successful. The clean lines and simplistic stylization that have arisen from both the DS and Wii logos has proven time and time again more effective than they had previously been with a static corporate logo. The instantaneous recognition that occurs when someone sees the Wii logo, or the DS vertical squares instills a trust into the consumer. Nintendo has

differentiated itself from its competition with the originality of its products and of its graphical brand campaigns. When a gamer has had enough of the same first-person shooter they have been playing for the past seven years, they don't seek out the next Xbox or PlayStation- which will only provide them with the same method of playing with just different story lines- they may reach for the product that will give them the new experience they crave. They reach for the white box with the simple lines because these simple lines represent a fresh experience; a fresh style of gaming. Nintendo has mastered the art of reinventing itself and drawing the customer into its new era. When Nintendo is trying to sell a new product yet to be released all it can count on for those initial sales is hype. If they correctly brand a product they can harness all of the energy that even a simple icon creates and use it to their advantage. Icons and aesthetics sell, and it is that very idea that attracted me to Nintendo. I wanted my theorized design to explore how this company's aesthetic could be exploited and turned into a physical design that would attract customers in the same way simple logo could.

Design Concept

Transforming the aesthetics that Nintendo has developed into a physical structure presents a unique set of challenges. Every curve and corner, every surface and color must be carefully considered in regards to what is already in place in the canon of Nintendo iconography. Surely the most successful way to represent such a graphically driven company in three-dimensional space is to transform what consumers most associate with the company into something tangible with which they can see and interact. The heart of this design needs to rely on the familiar, comfortable images that the consumer associates with Nintendo. Using familiar imagery does not necessarily limit the creativity, nor does it limit the way images are presented to create an exciting viable design; it does however require the use of recognizable logotypes in a prominent way. By using familiar iconography in the structures of the design, I can integrate current product images and modern surfaces into a design that is rich with thematic underpinnings. These structures will ring familiar with a nod to this established corporate identity while simultaneously evoking product excitement.

There are immediately positive and negative ramifications of having to work within a well-established aesthetic created before the designer even approached the design subject. On the one hand, the designer already has a combination of colors and lines that have proven successful for whom the designer is working. There are of course decisions to be made about surfaces and composition, but if there is already a proven group of visual standards the client relies on, it will make some of the designer's choices easier to make so he can more closely concentrate on the details. Unfortunately, the very same combination of colors and lines that have proven successful for whom the designer

is working can also limit and potentially inhibit the designer's choices. Thus, the designer must sacrifice some of the freedom he may enjoy while working with a company whose focus is not as graphically intense as one of the leading producers of video game consoles. While adhering to a set of proven standards may be freeing in some ways, it is equally as restrictive in others. If a company says its products are represented by soft curves, then the designer cannot say he wants sharp corners; not only does it go against the company's wishes but it will also confuse brand-loyal consumers, and at tradeshow exhibitions, positive consumer response is the most important outcome for which a company can hope. No matter how incredible the design, if the consumer remembers the *booth* rather than the company, then the design is not a true success. The type of physical structure that is used and the way it is utilized is vital to this thought; a company must be very conscious of exactly how it attracts consumers into its booth. There are several photographs of actual tradeshow booths in Appendix C (Figures 17-20); all are extremely exciting and evocative, but which truly portray their representative companies? The best example of this thought can be found in Figure C.20. The flowing, modern, clean lines of this booth express the philosophy of Moen in a single, bold stroke. Even if a consumer did not know Moen was a leading manufacturer of faucets and plumbing fixtures, this is easy to discern from a distance without laboring over the small details of the booth. The clean lines and the shape of the booth suggest flowing water, and furthermore suggest a modern, forward-thinking aesthetic. Equally as helpful is the fact that the brand name is clearly visible from a great distance, which helps to promote brand recognition from across the exhibit hall floor.

An exhibit for Ferrarelle Sparkling Water is shown in Figure C.19, and this exhibit uses another effective method of brand recognition. The designer of this booth integrated the actual product into the physical structure of the booth. There is no mistaking what the company or its product, or how they prefer others to see them. What I find most intriguing about this exhibit is that the bottles seem to represent the bubbles of carbonation in a wall of sparkling, crystal clear “water”. By integrating the product into a large scale- albeit abstract- version of the product, consumers that are drawn into the exhibit are immediately aware of what they are looking at, and who it represents.

Figures C.17 and C.18, however, do not portray the same concept. On one hand, they are both evocative forms that are brightly lit and well constructed to lure consumers to approach and discover more. On the other hand, both of these elements, which cover relatively large prime “visual real estate,” communicate nothing about the products they represent; this is precisely what I have sought to avoid. These booths- though interesting in and of themselves- fail to deliver a clear brand message to its audience. These exhibits are memorable, but sadly, the products they represent are not.

Aside from artistic limits, a trade show designer must also be very realistic about practical constraints. The designer must be aware of multiple limits, from the amount of time the convention center has allotted for build and strike, how a booth will travel to and from the exhibit hall, the amount of physical space to which they must constrain themselves, to the cost of labor, and countless other details that could prove disastrous if not thoroughly considered in one's design.

It is my personal opinion that aside from these very real practical constraints, there is also a significant amount of added pressure when designing a trade show exhibit

for a specific trade show, such as a video game demo booth at a convention like E3. While there *may* be significantly more money in a corporate trade show compared to the average theatrical production, the result is infinitely more *practically* important than the average theatre production. At some of these larger trade shows, the success or failure of a company's booth could mean hundreds of thousands- if not millions- if not tens of millions of dollars in lost potential profit. Nintendo did not enjoy major company revitalization by simply erecting a 10' x 10' corner booth with the Wii on a desk stand at the 2006 E3 conference; they created an elaborate booth with the Wii in the spotlight position. Nintendo would not have had nearly the sales numbers that it is currently experiencing, where the Wii is currently outselling the Sony PlayStation 3 *six to one* in the market place.⁹ As mentioned in Chapter 1, hype sells products prior to release, and one only needs to look at the recent release of Apple's iPhone to see that there is no mistaking the impact hype can generate. In order to create hype however, one must take advantage of all of the resources at one's disposal as well as staying conscious of the practical limitations of what surrounds them. Business is about profit, and if a designer's booth does not help a corporation generate profit, then they have not been successful in their work.

It is these ideals that influenced my work with Nintendo and pushed it in a very specific direction. The simple, clean lines that Nintendo uses in nearly every facet of their branding, from logo to physical product, provide a substantial base from which to begin working. Nintendo's shapes and forms allow for a palette that will only enable creativity to flourish rather than be limited by convention, and the iconography of Nintendo

⁹ Wii outselling PS3 'six to one', <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/technology/6265368.stm>

translates very easily into three-dimensional forms. It is my belief the best way to promote Nintendo's products is staying as true to their branding as possible; if I can integrate what they have already established as successful corporate identity, then the consumers who know what they stand for should be satiated, and those that do not know the brand should be able to learn more within their time at the booth.

I feel the best way to achieve this integration is by using the ground plan of the booth to my advantage; each of the major structural elements is taken directly from Nintendo's branding. The large central unit is modeled after the corporate logo; out of Nintendo's major icons it provides the largest uninterrupted surface for the display. This one unit will be the centerpiece of the entire display thereby providing several functions. First and foremost, it will be the largest and tallest unit. From a distance it will attract people through colorful active animations, and through the large rotating branded lantern that is attached to the unit by means of a vertical shaft. Towards the bottom, the unit will continue to attract a crowd with ten interactive gaming stations. Each of the stations will have a 42" flat panel television so that there is plenty of room to play and for passers by to stop and watch.

The next unit in the display is meant for displaying Nintendo's current product lineup. The unit will be built to the shape of the 'i' from the Wii logo, and the consoles will be housed and suspended in a clear Plexiglas case that takes up the entire length and width of the unit. This is no small unit by any means- a total of 18' in length- this unit is meant to maximize the amount of people who can get full three hundred and sixty degree views of all the current hardware and upcoming concept work. Along with the interactivity stations, physically seeing the gaming hardware encased in such a way

where it can be seen yet not touched is a perfect way of increasing hype. It literally puts the product on a pedestal instantly giving it the air of something the consumer wants but cannot yet have.

The final unit in the display is based on the vertical rectangles of the DS logo. In the loud, distracting environment of the trade show floor there are times when a manufacturer needs to have a quiet or private meeting with a dealer or representative. These two cubes will serve as a place for just such meetings. Inside they contain a table two chairs, and a couch; that way they can serve not only as an impromptu meeting room, but as a place for the Nintendo employees to escape the mayhem of the trade show floor. It is, of course, still important to continue the incorporation of the Nintendo brand into these cubes. That being said: on the inside walls will be flat-screen monitors displaying game play as well as posters for as yet unreleased games the company is promoting. The combination of the interactivity, the prominence of new and existing hardware, and the repetitive use of the iconography and branding on grand scales and in subtler, smaller ways will provide for an exciting hype-machine that will propel Nintendo toward the continued success it desires.

The difficulty in this concept is not insignificant. First, one of the more difficult things to overcome will be the color scheme of the units themselves. If I am indeed keeping true to the iconography of the company then the pieces themselves should adhere to a monochromatic color palette. This does not mean however, that this palette needs to be dreary. The two smaller units of the booth will each be faced in a sleek brushed steel texture. This texture and color combination will continue to emphasize Nintendo's clean lines and simple, yet modern feel. This brushed steel texture will not be a mere paint

treatment, rather something that will also provide the tactile sensation of smooth cold metal. The center unit will be differentiated by being faced entirely in white, to serve two key purposes: first, it will separate itself as a unit that stands out from the others; second, it will provide a large blank canvas for projections and lighting effects.

This leads into the second challenge in this design: the integration of the monochromatic palette into what needs to be an exciting, engaging experience. I feel the static monochromatic essence of the physical pieces will be what ties the entire piece together when dynamic lighting and projection are added into the design. Dynamic lighting effects will include several elements. First, LEDs will play a large role within the design. Both the main unit and the office cube units will have LEDs integrated into their physical architecture. The office cube units will have blue LED stripe “grout” that separates each of the brushed steel panels, and the main unit will have blue LED stripe lining the inner edges of the cut out portion where the 42” flat screens reside. While each of these units will have statically colored LEDs integrated into their structure, the greater allure from afar will be the Japanese-style spandex covered lanterns suspended in the air above and around the booth. All of the lanterns, including the main branded fixture mounted over the main unit, will have synced color changing LED units to make them glow with color. The size and number of these units with their dynamic nature will certainly have the power to attract crowds from all over the convention hall.

Finally, once the consumer approaches the booth, they will notice the entire upper half of the main unit is used as a projection screen to highlight Nintendo’s products. So even though the units themselves conform to Nintendo’s traditionally monochromatic

palette, the booth as a whole is awash with color from all angles to help entice and attract the thousands of consumers who will attend the conference.

Given all of the design ideas discussed above this booth should prove successful if executed properly. It employs all of the corporate branding and aesthetic one would expect from a major corporation such as Nintendo. The design adheres to a well-established iconography and uses it to its advantage. All of the necessary elements to create hype around the desired elements are in place. The composition of the entire piece is thought out from every angle. While the booth is large in size, it is not complex in design, and should be a booth with an easy assemblage and strike on the convention hall floor and elsewhere. If all of these criteria are met, then this booth should be a success by all accounts.

Design Evaluation

There are challenges inherent in any design, regardless of venue or event. This design became particularly engaging to me personally as I had not designed an event of this type previously, even in a hypothetical situation such as this; I sought experimentation with new forms and materials. Though challenging, this project, if realized by Nintendo, would not be unsuccessful by any means. The concept and research solidly informed a design to satisfy and intrigue any avid Nintendo fan, and worked to uphold Nintendo's corporate philosophy in a way that celebrates brand, product, and overall consumer experience. The greatest personal challenges in this project lie within the differences of designing for theatre and designing for the corporate tradeshow. While my experience in corporate design may be limited to my own research, my recent embarkation into the corporate for-profit environment has also helped me to understand the corporate drive: when quarterly profit numbers come in, the results speak for themselves. I would still argue that these theatres are more dedicated to art than the average corporation because theatrical productions are produced by teams of creative individuals who are dedicated to the arts in a much more collaborative way than a conglomeration of business-minded people fronted by a designer. Corporate design, however, is much more frequently about the bottom line, but that does not mean that corporate design cannot be done artistically, rather, the creative element is crafted in such a way as to maximize profit. Even in a profit-driven theatre model, artfulness is on the minds of many more people involved with the production, whereas in a corporate setting, the designer must champion the artistic integrity of the piece so the booth can serve the purposes of both designer and corporation.

In dissecting the challenges of this project, one of the first things I encountered was an audience's ability to interact with my design. A majority of theatrical design is meant to be viewed from a distance and never touched by anyone but the actors who inhabit that physical space in the world of the play. The realm of tradeshow design is virtually the complete opposite in philosophy and execution: not only must your creation exist to attract potential new consumers from across the exhibit hall floor, but it must also keep them interested and engaged once they get to the booth itself. Every surface must be finished to perfection; any missing moulding or mismatched edges cannot be hidden as easily from public view because the public is there *in* the design. Additionally, any elements that appear weakly constructed, sub par, or cheap reflect disappointingly on the company to the majority of the viewers, rather than reflecting poorly on the designer as they might in a theatrical setting. One major similarity I found between theatrical and corporate design was credibility. If the design is not based in reality- or at the very least has no basis in the world that it inhabits- then no one will believe what you are trying to tell them. In that respect, I feel that I was very successful. Every surface, every piece of furniture I used came from actual products, and even though they are assembled in a highly creative, way the combination of them all together provided more of an anchor in reality. Additionally, using real materials and furniture allowed some larger degree of freedom with the forms and units, though those were also taken from a pre-existing canon of shapes.

Using Nintendo's own branding and iconography as the basis for the entire design provided a strong foundation off of which to build a design. While the full extent of the ground plan may not be understood or realized by all of the tradeshow attendees, I knew

all of the shapes would compliment each other well in a single environment because Nintendo originally created all of them to work together in a group. Even though Nintendo did not create all of its logos at the same time there was definite thought put into maintaining icon and brand consistency. Nintendo would not have created logos that were completely unrelated or there would not be an easy way for consumers to link the products under one umbrella. Knowing the Nintendo icons and how they worked together took away just a small portion of the uncertainty in my job.

Another way I found corporate design similar to theatrical design was in the meaning behind each individual component of the design. The motivation may be different, but the theory is similar. Instead of trying to theatrically portray Tom's memories or Laura's fragility in *The Glass Menagerie*, for example, I strove to portray the vitality of a corporate Nintendo, and the innovation of its products. Just as in theatre, I tried to ensure these ideas were not so overt as to infantilize the attendees' ability to understand the message, but instead infused that message into the materials the units were made of and the colors most prevalent throughout the work. The booth would have certainly taken on a very different character if I had instead used wood planking and stone finishes even if the composition were exactly the same. The youth and liveliness of the booth would have been sorely lacking if I had made such dramatically different decisions like using organic textures, and the message would have been lost.

Some of the limitations that I encountered during this process were very practical in nature, the largest of which being I will never know how well this design would have worked in the real world. Drafting and three dimensional computer models are fantastic visual aids and exercises in design, but they can never replace walking through and

having the ability to touch a real, fully constructed design. I fully believe the composition and design of this booth would work very well if built as drawn, and that it would attract the attention that Nintendo strives for on the tradeshow floor, but there is no way of ever knowing that for sure.

Another one of the major challenges of this project- and one that I believe impacts the design much more directly- is the three-hundred sixty degree nature of the exhibit. Designing a theatrical production in the round presents its own visibility and composition issues, but in a different way. Generally, it is necessary for the entire audience to be able to see all of the action all of the time, so a completely transparent set, either literally or through sight lines is necessary in a theatrical production. The tradeshow booth, on the other hand, while not limited to this transparency must be composed in such a way that it stays interesting and exciting no matter what angle it is viewed and regardless of which components an attendee is seeing. There is clearly an ideal vantage point for the booth, but it was very important to make each element individually viable so that it is unmistakably “designed” from any angle. Had I been able to position the booth in such a way that it did not have to be viewed from every side I think that the design would have been slightly different. I would have liked to incorporate more areas for playing the games and experiencing the products first hand, namely; I would have liked to use this as a basis for creating a large cyc wall filled with projections both of live game play and filmed promotional video. I think a collaged video wall could have generated an additional layer of excitement that would have benefited the booth even further. Unfortunately, the creation of this wall in any iteration- I attempted many different

combinations- cut off too much of the display from one angle or another, and I found that to be a far more consequential decision than not having the video wall.

Ultimately, I found this to be a very fulfilling project. I was able to explore a format that was relatively unfamiliar to me, and apply the skills and talents that I have learned for theatrical design and take them to a substantially different venue. The conceptual ideas between designing for theatre and designing for corporations are very similar, but the desired results are quite different, and the way a designer thinks about the results greatly impacts the path the design will take to reach its final, realized destination. I feel if there was one great advantage I had in this project it is that there was no corporate power to whom I had to answer because the design itself was never actually built. I was able to make all of the artistic and aesthetic decisions when it came to the content in the booth. Had this been a real, for-profit design, there may have been changes I would have been forced to make with others both, corporately and artistically involved in the design process. As there was not someone of that magnitude involved in the project, I was able to fully explore my personal boundaries of design and make the choices I felt would suit the project best, and I believe due to this unparalleled freedom I was able to create a design that truly represents my personality both as designer and artist. I feel that as the culminating project of my graduate career, I was able to successfully make the difficult- but necessary- transformation from a student of design to a designer who will forever strive to learn.

Appendix A:

Glossary of Terms

- Accelerometer:** a device specifically created for measuring acceleration. The accelerometer contained in the Nintendo Wii remote recognizes acceleration along three axes of movement.
- Console:** dedicated device for playing video games, a console is generally connected to a television.¹⁰
- DS:** short for *dual-screen*; a handheld portable gaming device created by Nintendo and released in 2004. The DS is the first and only gaming device to feature a touch-sensitive dual screen user interface.
- Dual-screen technology:** the use of two screens as a means of inputting and receiving information.
- E3 Conference:** short for *Electronic Entertainment Expo*; an annual trade show for the computer and video game industries and one of the largest of its kind. Commonly referred to as E3, its official title is the E3 Media and Business Summit and is presented by the Entertainment Software Association.
- Game Cube:** Nintendo's fourth video game console released in 2001.
- Gameboy:** the first handheld portable gaming device created by Nintendo and released in 1989. The Gameboy utilized traditional button-style and directional arrow control.
- iPhone:** the first mobile phone to feature multi-touch display, allowing the user to use more than one finger to execute commands; released by Apple in 2007.
- LED:** Acronym for *light emitting diode*.
- Mobile gaming:** games played on any handheld or wireless device, including PDAs, mobile phones, handheld computers, etc.
- Platform:** a hardware and/or software architecture that serves as a foundation or base. The term originally dealt with hardware, and still refers to a CPU model or computer family.¹¹
- PlayStation:** a line of video game consoles produced by Sony, Inc. The first-generation was simply known as PlayStation (1995), the second-generation PlayStation (2000), and the third and most recent generation, the PlayStation 3 or PS3 (2006).
- PSP:** short for *PlayStation Portable*; the only handheld gaming device produced by Sony, Inc., first released in 2005.
- Wii:** the fifth video game console created by Nintendo, released in 2006. The Wii was the first game console to utilize a wireless motion-capture user interface.
- Xbox:** a line of video game consoles produced by Microsoft. The first-generation console released in 2002 was called the Xbox; the second-generation console known as the Xbox 360 was released in 2005.

¹⁰ *Half Real*. See Bibliography.

¹¹ *TechWeb*. See Bibliography.

Appendix B:

Logos



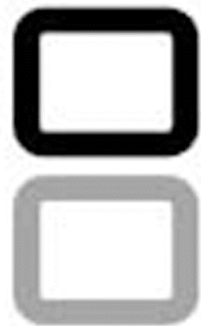
Figure 1: Nintendo Corporate Logo



Figure 2: Nintendo Wii Logo

NINTENDO  DS™

NINTENDO 



DS

Figure 3: Nintendo DS logo and components



Figure 4: Sony PSP Logo

Appendix C:

Research

Corporate Research



Figure 1: Corporate Logo

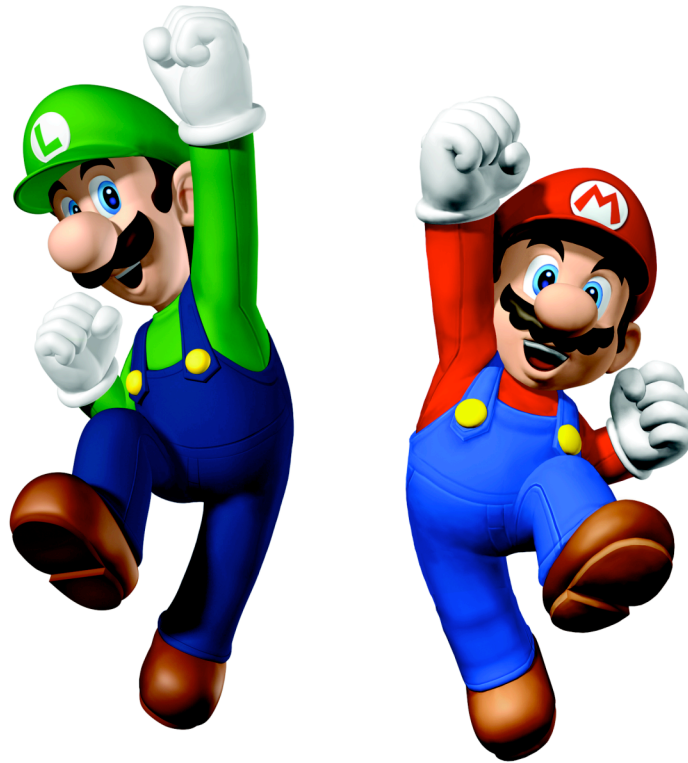


Figure 2: Mario and Luigi



Figure 3: Embellishment on corporate Logo

Game Aesthetic Research

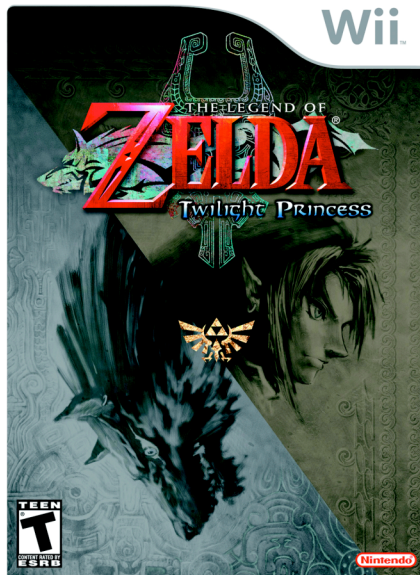


Figure 4



Figure 5

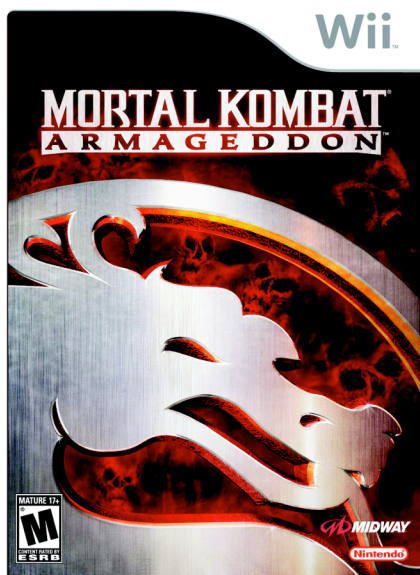


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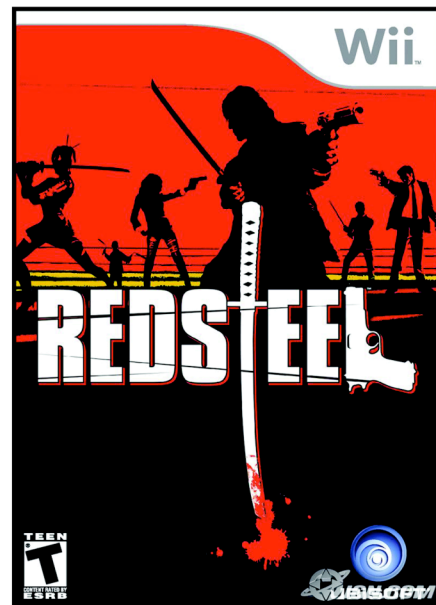


Figure 7

Wii Console Research



Figure 8

Wii™

Figure 9



Figure 10

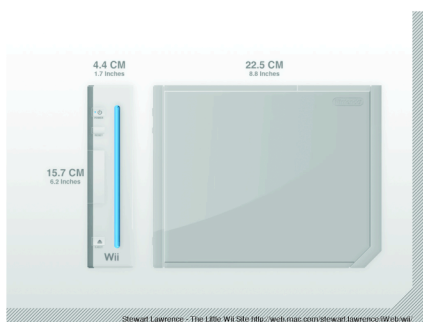


Figure 11



Figure 12

Nintendo DS Console Research:

NINTENDO DS™

Figure 12



Figure 13



Figure 14



Figure 15



Figure 16

Selection of Aesthetic Research

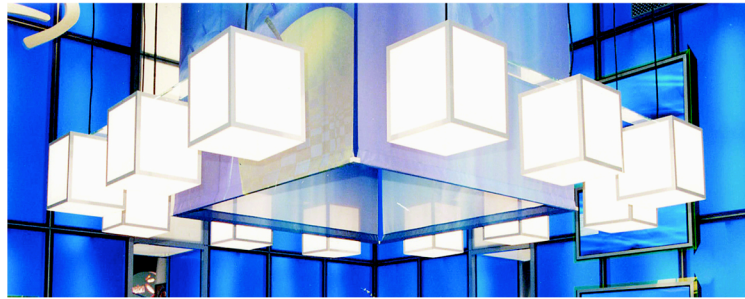


Figure 17



Figure 18



Figure 19



Figure 20



Figure 21

Additional Aesthetic Research



Figure 22



Figure 23



Figure 24



Figure 25

Appendix D:

Drafting

Figure 1

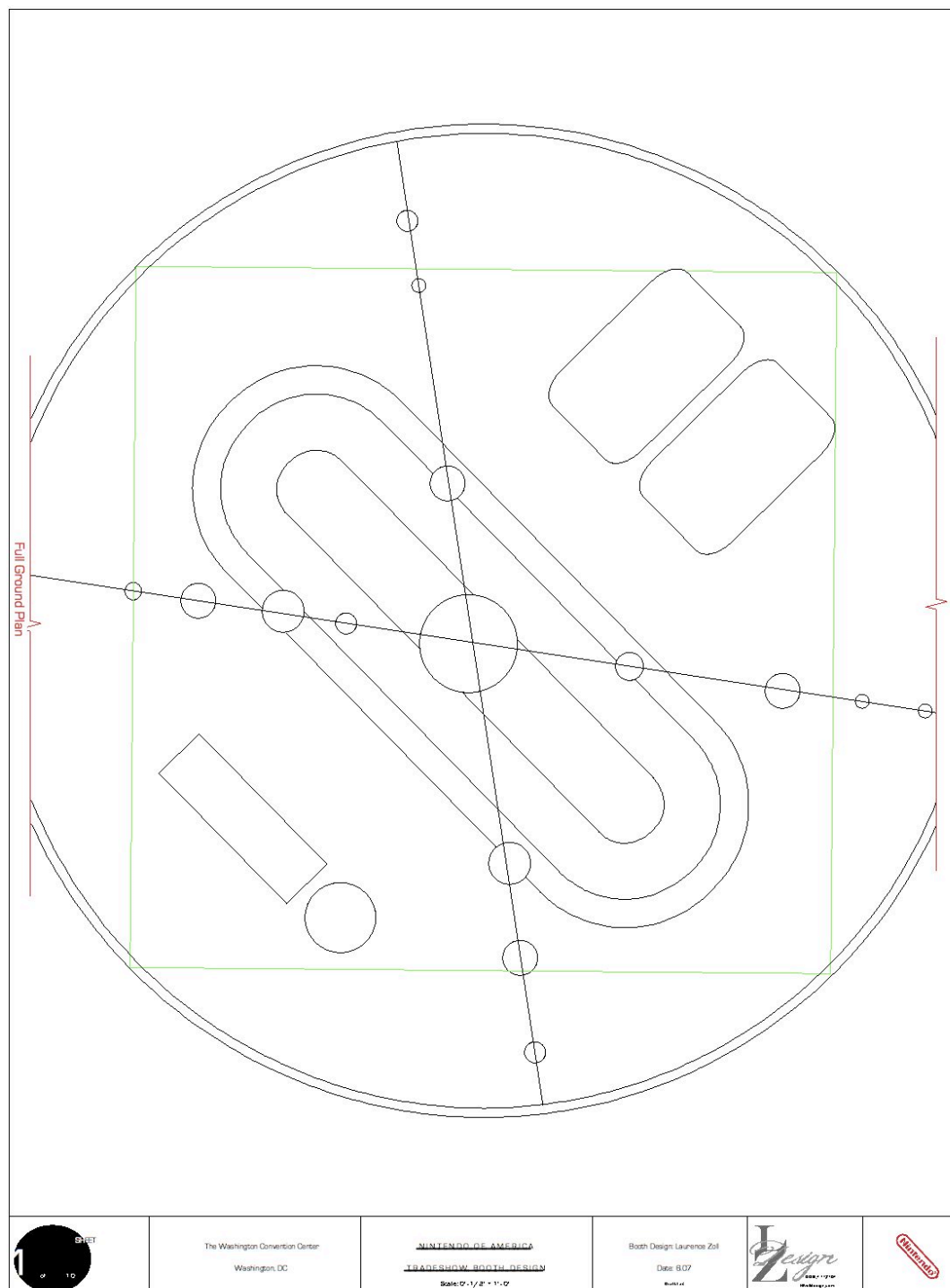


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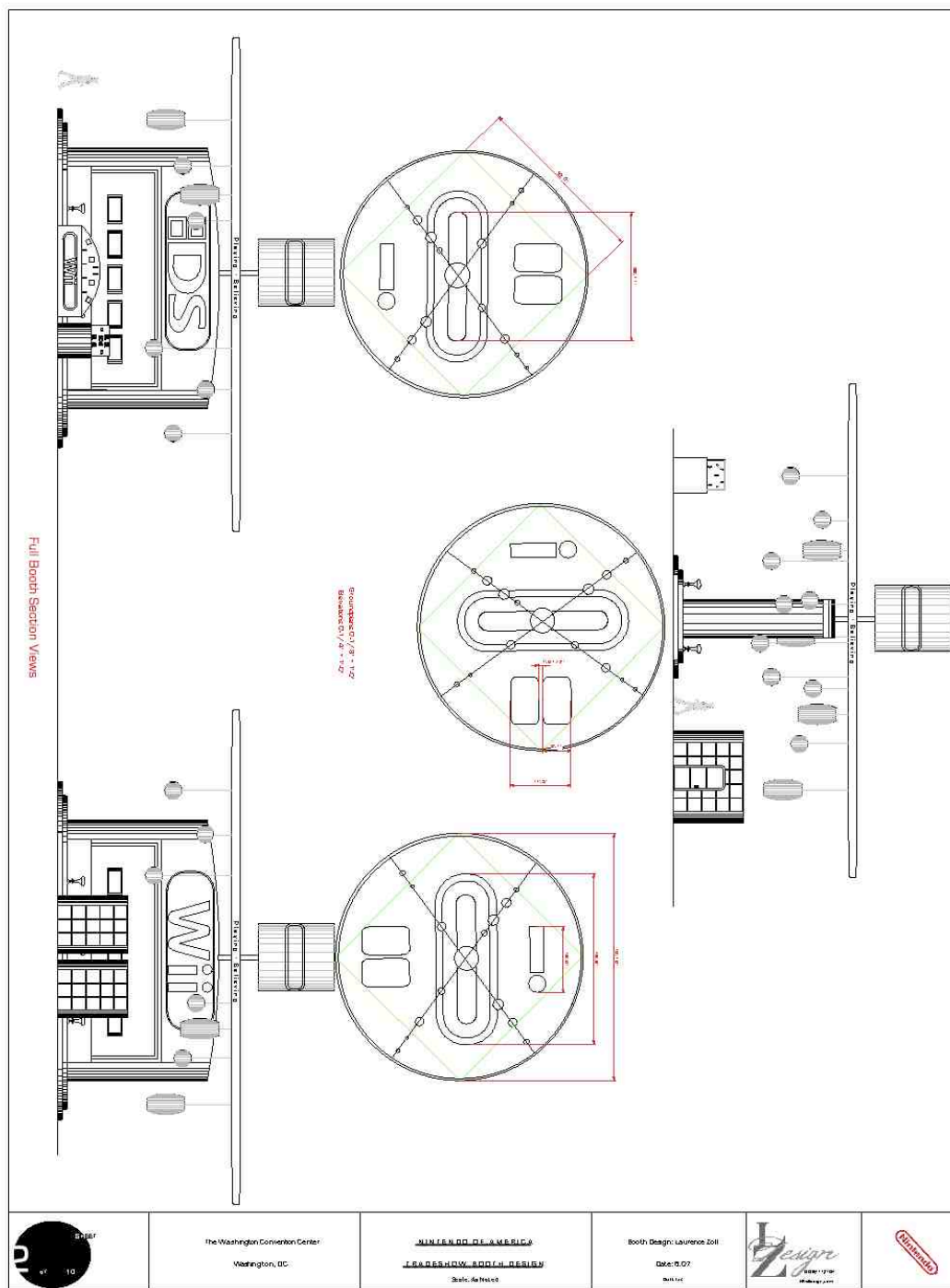


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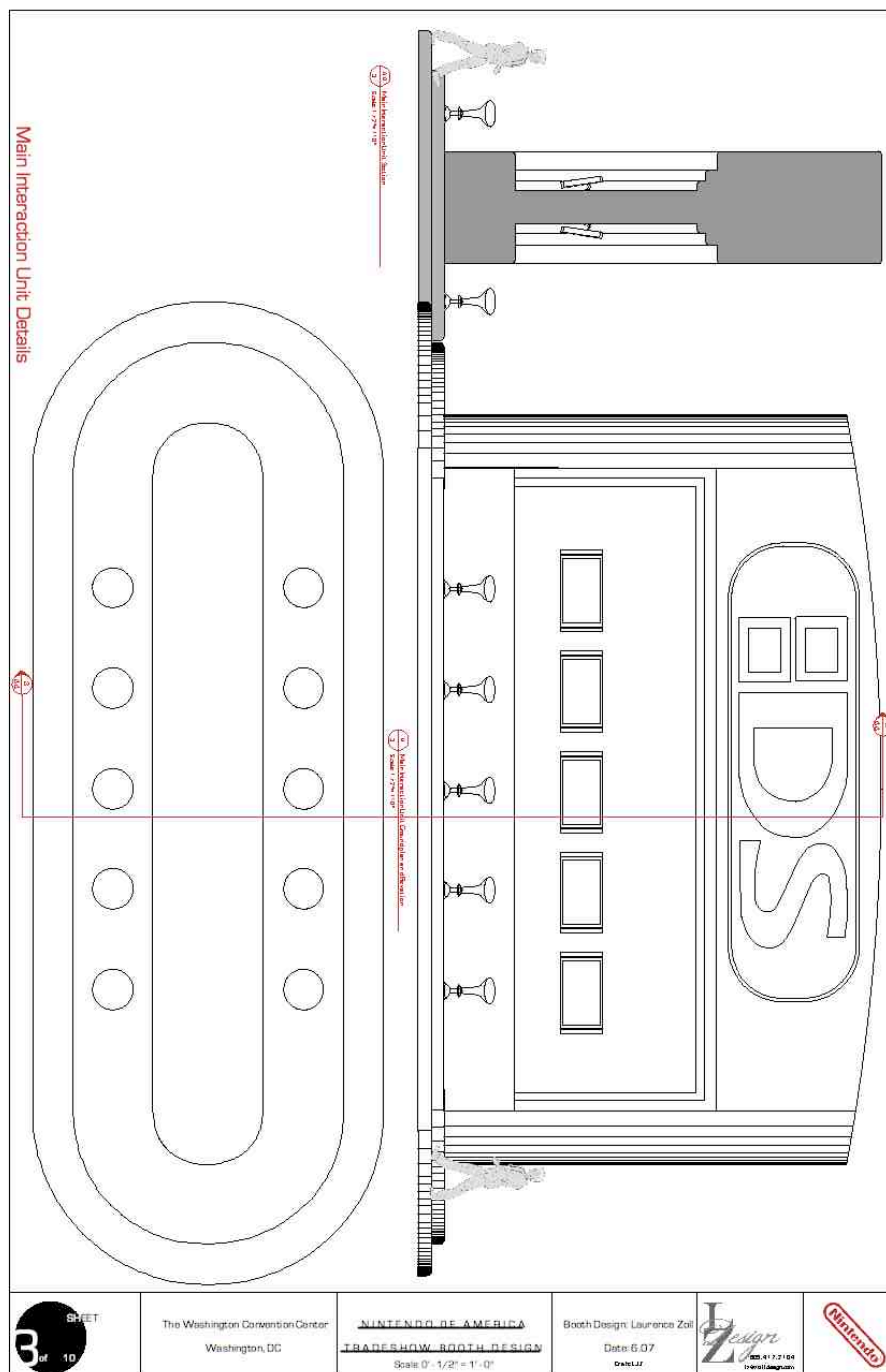


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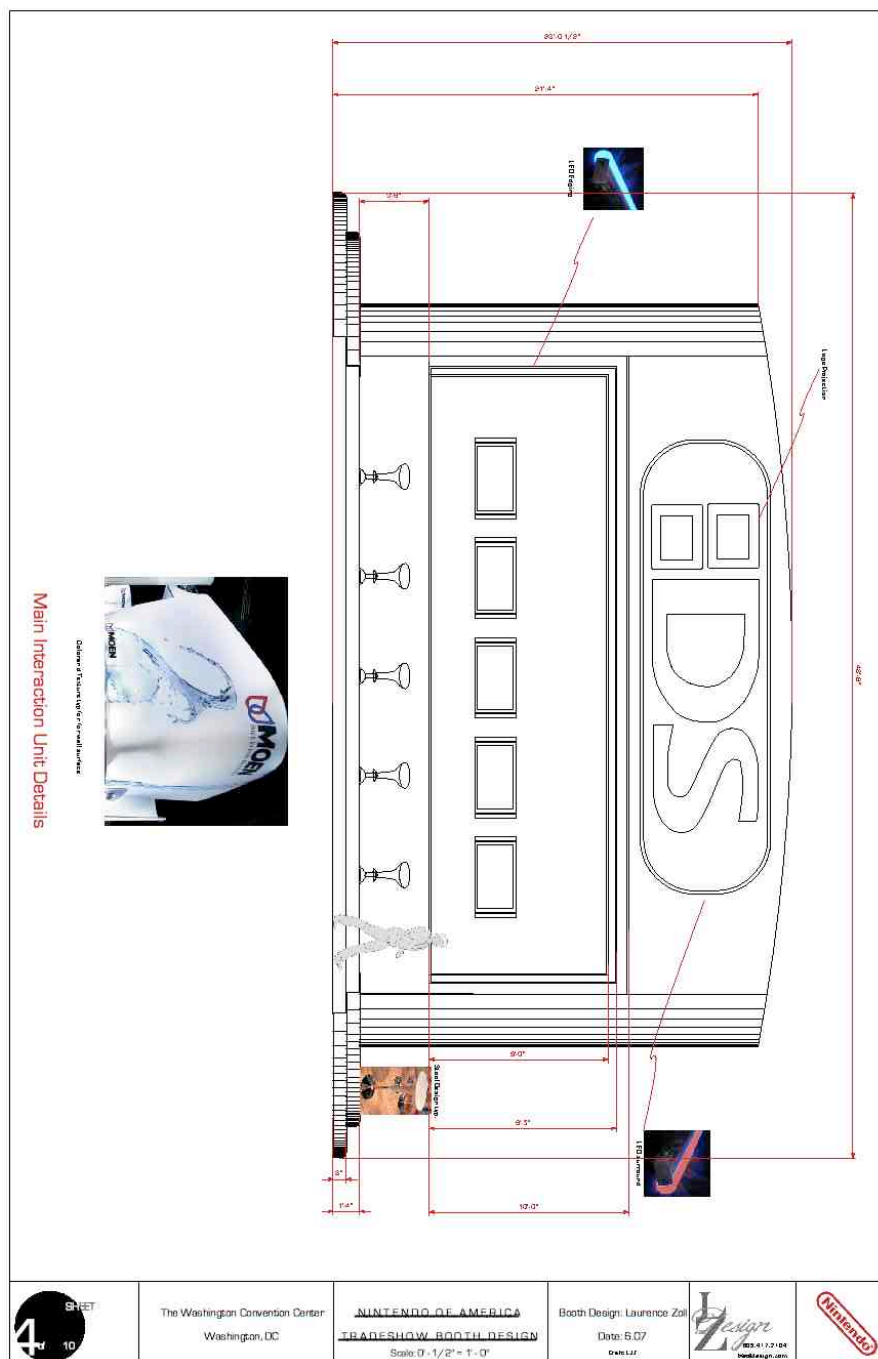
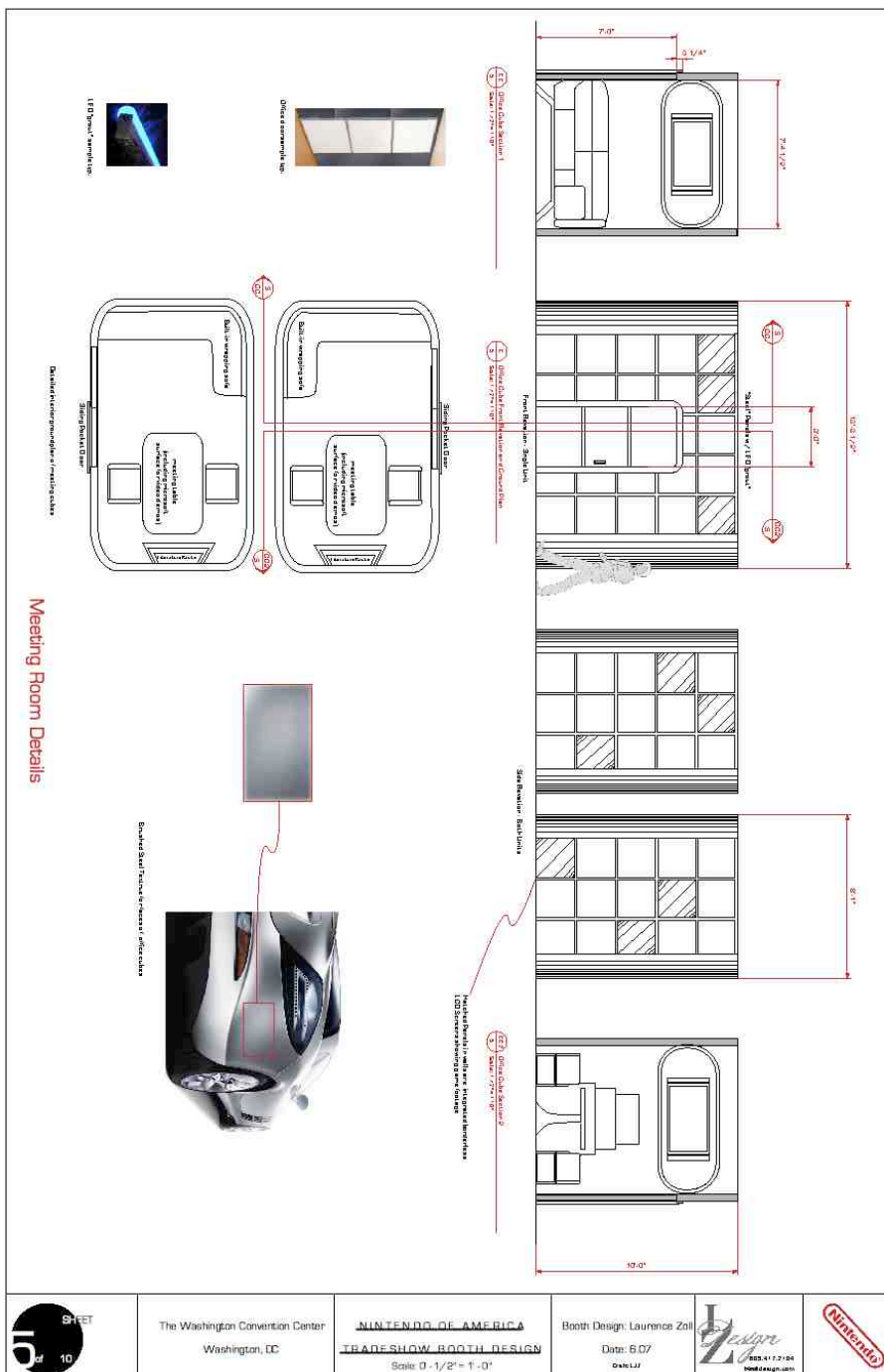


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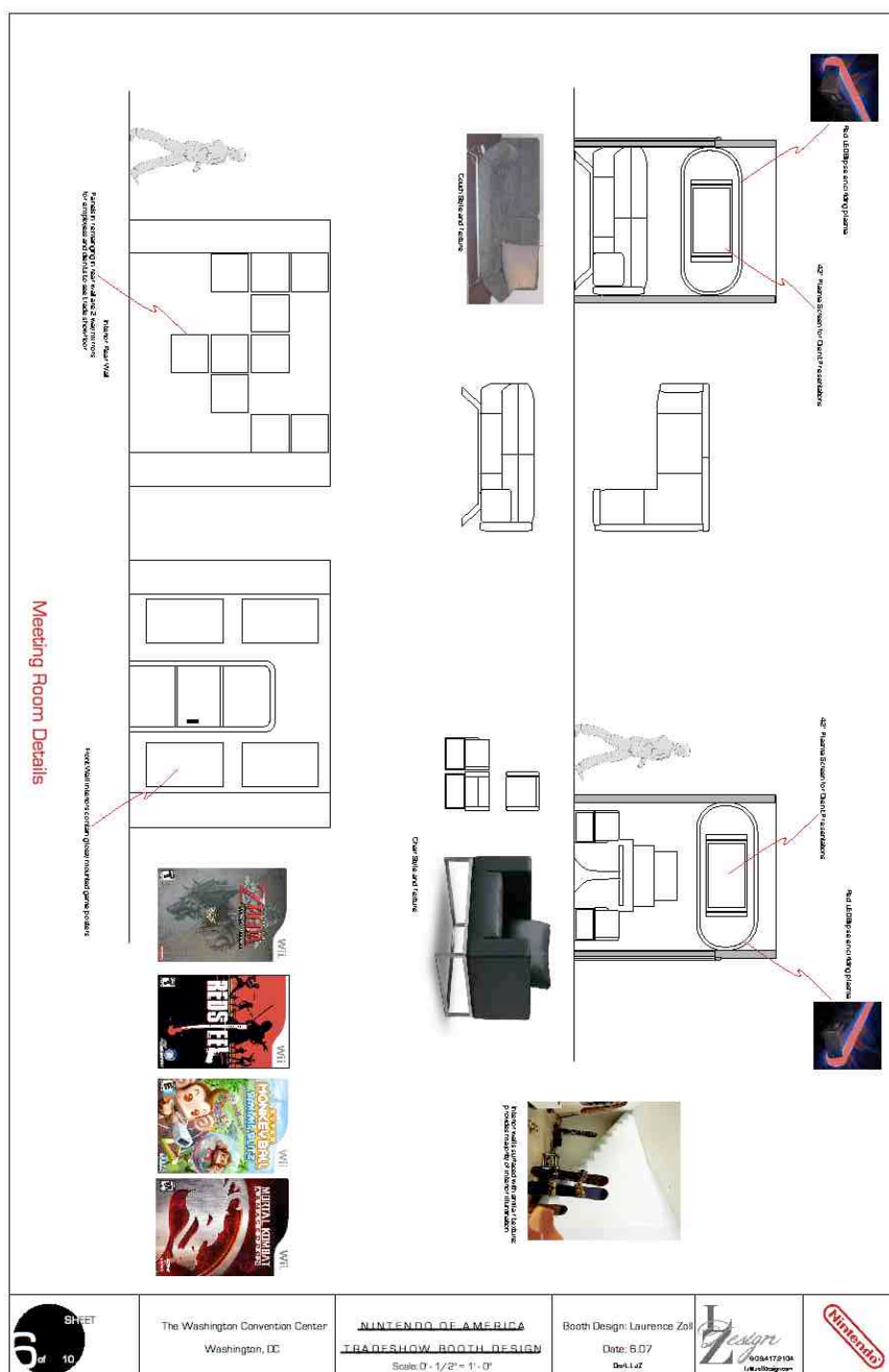


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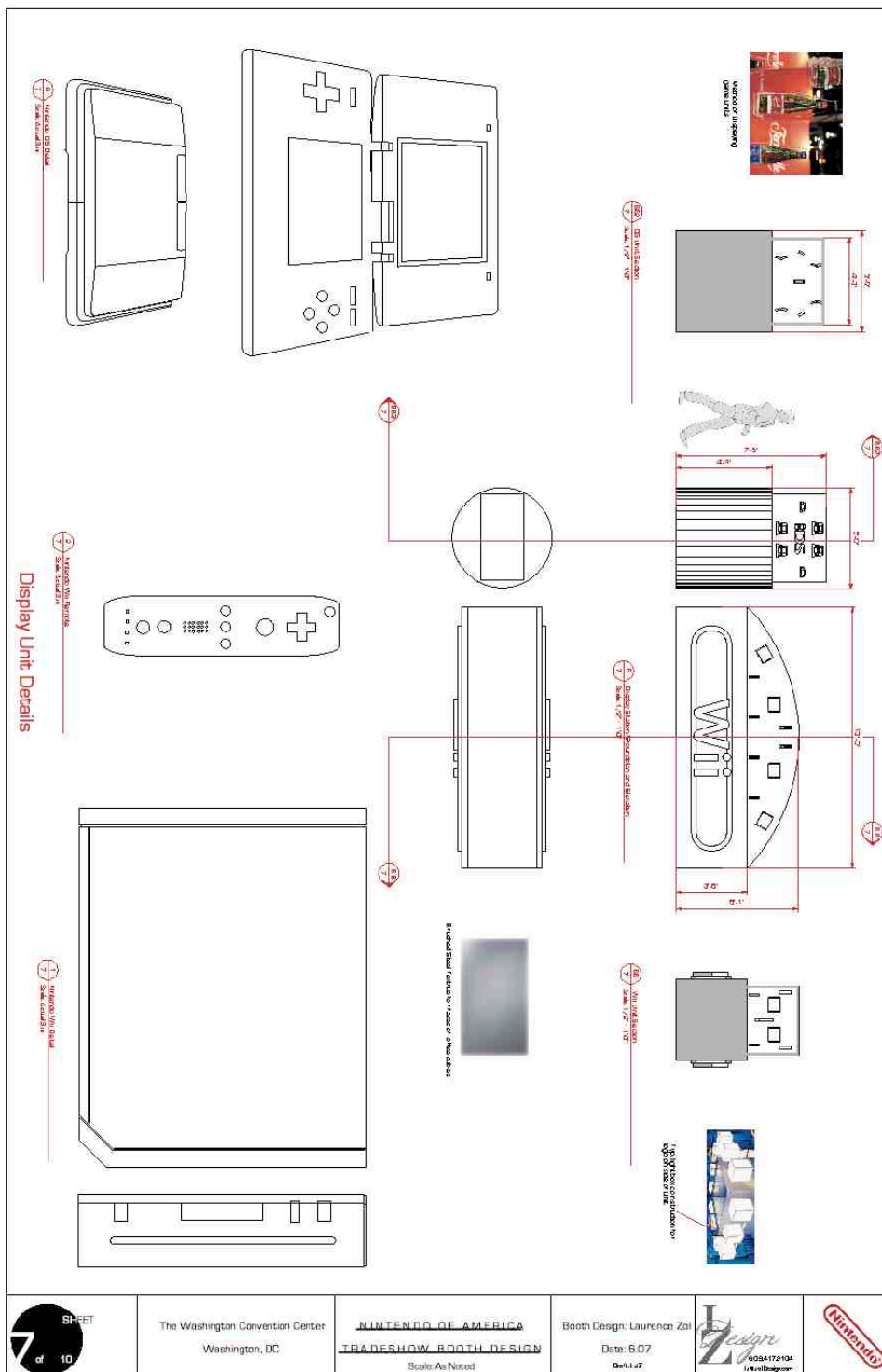


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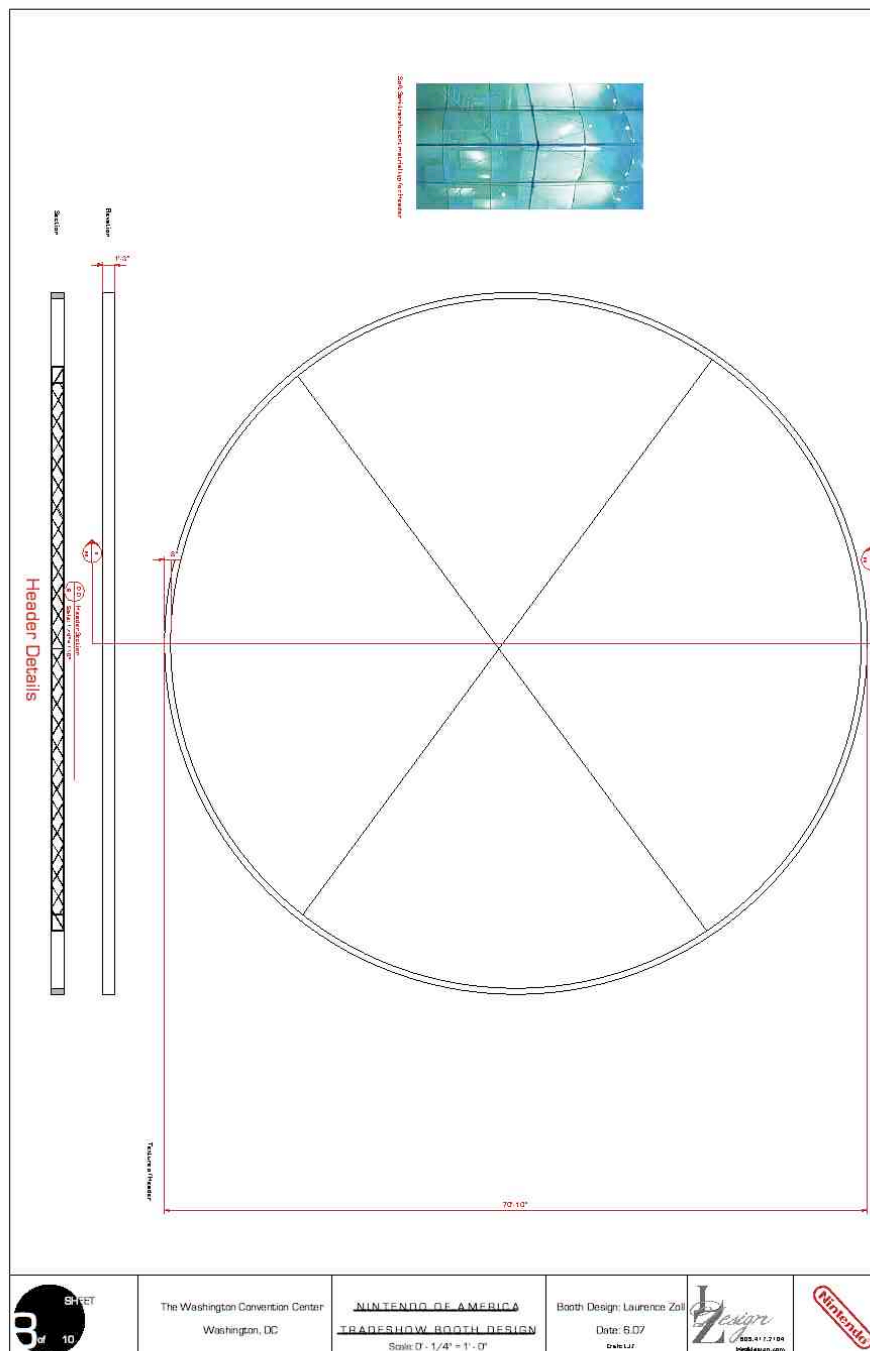
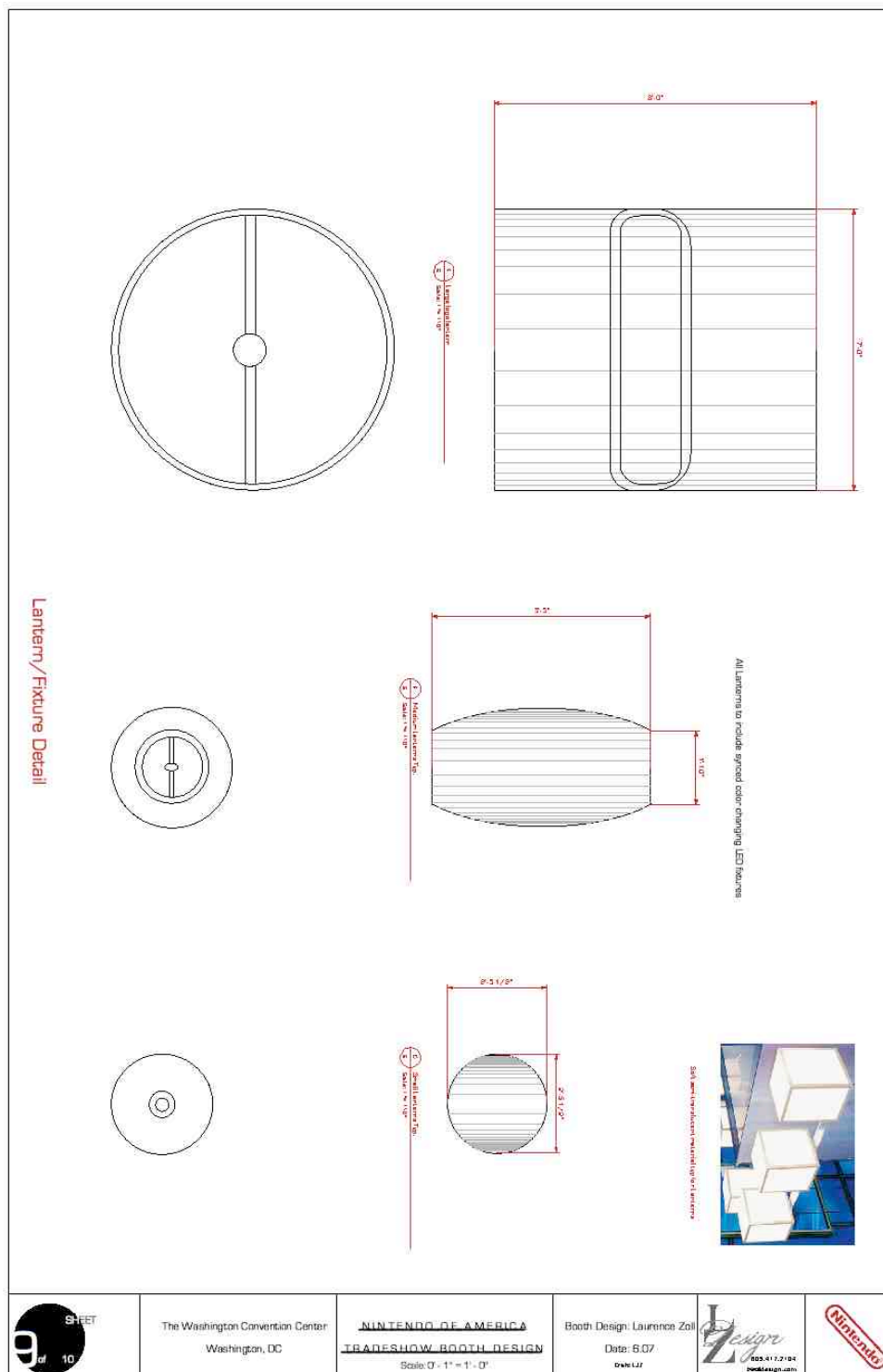


Figure 9:



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