

News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

“ReVisioning” Japanese Fashion Retail Through Design

Seattle, WA. – July 12, 2006 – Callison Architecture, a global architectural group, and GIRVIN Inc., a strategic branding and design firm, teamed up to completely transform and rebrand the flagship store of fashion retailer SOGO in bustling downtown Osaka, Japan. And that collaboration is producing stunning results. The SOGO store re-opened late last fall to tremendous acclaim and has maintained record-breaking customer traffic.

The \$228 million, 628,600 sq. ft. flagship – located on the same site – replaced a 1935 SOGO store. The new store’s 16 stories include 430,550 sq. ft. of retail space, four times the scale of its predecessor.

“Our firms have complementary practices and skills,” said GIRVIN principal Tim Girvin. “We have a long history of partnering with Callison, since the days of working on Nordstrom-related assignments, and stretching to their new dimensions in Asian brand expression in architecture and interiors. Recently, we have allied on projects in Seoul and Jakarta.”

At the outset of the SOGO assignment, Tim Girvin pulled together a brief history lesson on the influences of Japanese Art Nouveau. “We used some of that as background material,” said Dawn Clark, AIA, Callison creative director/principal architect. “Then together, we created a language for the store that was carried through every element on every floor. The design grammar was feminine, translucent, layered and patterned.”

Girvin’s team designed all of the interior signing systems – including floor-level guides, department signing and individual brand signs within departments. They also worked closely with Callison on the design and placement of signage for the store’s four main exterior entrances. Here they established what Clark calls the “procession,” or how guests perceive a branded retail experience progressively – from a distance, then closer, and finally entering the space.

“Tim didn’t over-complicate matters and did an excellent job of connecting the signage to the overall store design and the fundamental architecture,” Clark said. “In reality, Girvin’s team went *far* beyond just ‘doing the signs.’ Their work conferred a luxury brand message through integrated storytelling.”

SOGO’s feminine-inspired design defies current retail conventions. Callison conducted a year-long research study to investigate the future of department store retailing, which provided the basis for the store’s design platform. It derives an emotional response from a strategically targeted audience – Baby Boomer Japanese women and their families.

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The designers orchestrated shoppers' movement from the store's four main entrances through an arcade and then upward, through a vertically stacked, 8-level storefront. SOGO's architectural strategies and retail merchandising invite, engage, and entertain, while coaxing customers' desire to return.

The flagship's design, visual merchandising, and traffic-flow techniques resurrected SOGO's brand after tumultuous changes. In 2003, department store fashion leader Seibu merged with SOGO in an effort to save the bankrupt company. A 175-year-old brand, SOGO began as a kimono merchant in 1830 and became a department store in 1877.

Key People

- Tim Girvin, Principal, GIRVIN Inc.
- Dawn Clark, AIA, Creative Director/Principal Architect, Callison Architecture

GIRVIN (www.girvin.com) is a full-service strategic branding and design firm with offices in Seattle and New York and affiliates in Paris and Tokyo. Retail clients include Bloomingdales, Nordstrom, and Macy's. Architectural clients include Schnitzer, Red Robin, Garden Botanika, Ackerley/Clear Channel. Other Girvin/Callison collaborations include Nordstrom, Millenium Retailing, and PT Mitra Seibu.

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