

We're Hotopp—a design firm with more than 30 years of experience in branded environments, attractions, live/stage events, and studio television. No matter the job at hand, we focus first and foremost on helping people achieve their creative vision, because we believe anything is possible.



The retail market was already experiencing hardship prior to the new challenges brought on by COVID-19. Hotopp addressed this challenge with a concept for a unique attraction aimed at filling large empty tenant space, generating foot-traffic, and encouraging repeat visitors every year.

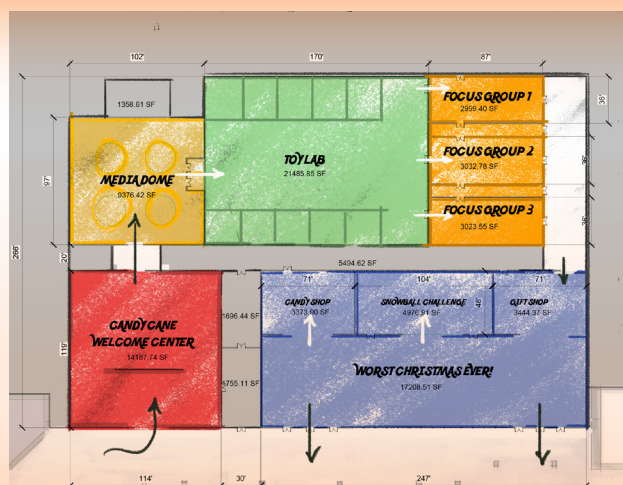
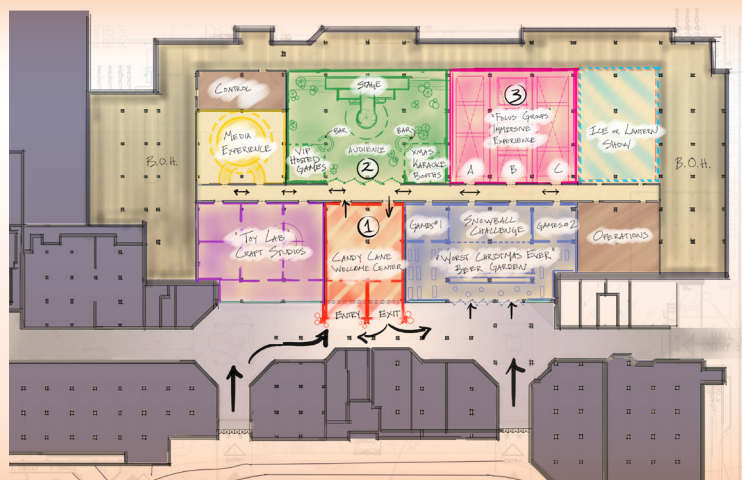
Goals:

1. Develop a rotational strategy for empty retail space; a brand 'envelope' that would return to the same space every Christmas with new content, bringing guests back every year
2. Create a brand new Christmas IP that felt 'natural' inside a mall, tell a fresh new story
3. Find an operating partner with an available space to activate
4. Build it on budget, install it in time for Christmas



Our Backstory: The **CANDY CANE INSTITUTE** was founded in 1972 by a group of curious elves seeking to make improvements to Christmas by leveraging cutting-edge technology to deliver data-driven results. The misguided elves have finally convinced Santa to let them set up a field office in your local shopping mall in order to conduct market research and get to the

The CCI experience was designed to welcome small family groups using timed entrances and engaging interactions at each story beat. We used guidelines developed by the major themeparks to plan for a generous amount of square footage per quest.



A Brand New IP

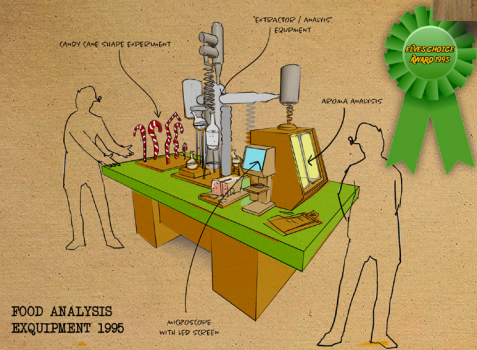
CANDY CANE INSTITUTE

From storytelling to style guide there was plenty of world-building that went into creating the Candy Cane Institute.

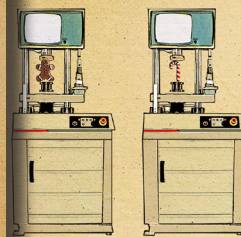
- Character development
- Script
- Graphic Content
- Style Guide
- Website
- Props + Decor
- Design/Build Scenery
- Installation/Art Direction



SCIENCING CHRISTMAS SINCE 1972



MOLECULAR TESTING 1988



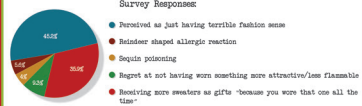
UGLY SWEATER ANALYSIS 2000



EXPERIMENT FLA.IR2A: CHRISTMAS SWEATERS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

For a truly ugly Christmas sweater, go big or go back to the glue gun.



DATA-DRIVEN SOLUTION:

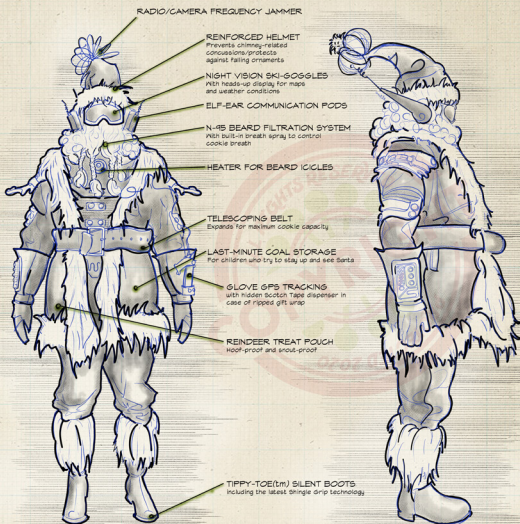
Ugly Sweater Analysis Machine

- ✓ Protects you from mediocre sweaters that are merely not cute or honestly, just unflattering
- ✓ Calibrated to detect certifiably awesome levels of tacky



CCI SUCCESS STORY:

A Better Santa Suit



Santa Suit 3000



EXPERIMENT LI82.42: WORRYING ABOUT MAKING THE GOOD LIST

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Agonizing over a year's worth of behavior has been shown to cause List Anxiety Syndrome (LAS)



DATA-DRIVEN SOLUTION:

Naughty or Nice NON 1225 Machine

- ✓ Instant, painless* scans tell you if you're currently on the Naughty or Nice
- ✓ Tip on how to increase Nice ranking December 24

* Side effects may vary

CERTIFIED NAUGHTY

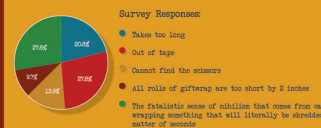
CERTIFIED NICE

DO NOT TOUCH

EXPERIMENT B37.1: WRAPPING GIFTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Opening a big pile of presents is fun. Wrapping a big pile of presents is not.



DATA-DRIVEN SOLUTION:

WRAP O MATIC

- ✓ Covers gifts with attractive paper
- ✓ Saves time
- ✓ Fast

DANGER



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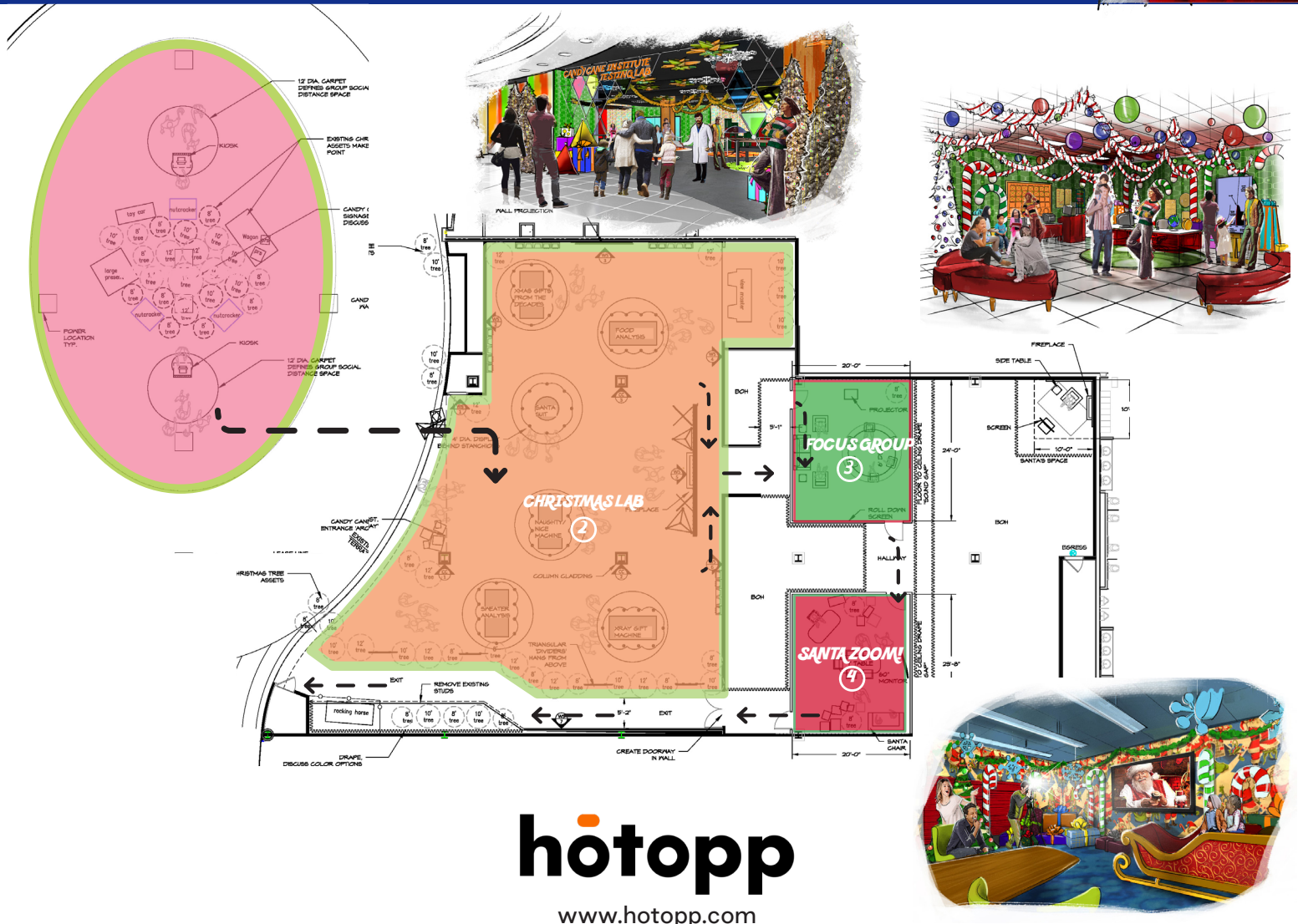
A partnership with Mall Of America

Hotopp had the good fortune to become connected with the Mall Of America in September. It was late in the season to begin a project for Christmas 2020, so both parties mobilized quickly to customize the Candy Cane Institute for their available 7,000 square foot space.

The folks at Mall of America loved the idea of the Christmas testing-lab, so we expanded the concept to cover the first half of the room allowing for several small groups at a time. The second half of the space would allow one group at a time.

The Christmas laboratory is where the elves set up experiments such as **The Ugly Sweater Analysis** machine and the **Naughty or Nice Machine 1225**. The “delicacy” of these experiments became the scapegoat for the no-touch environment and gave even more reason for the elves to be dressed in PPE.

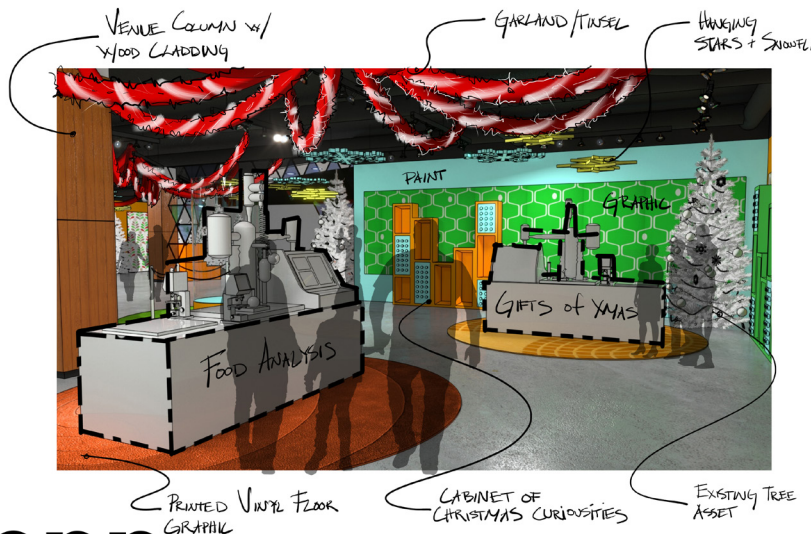
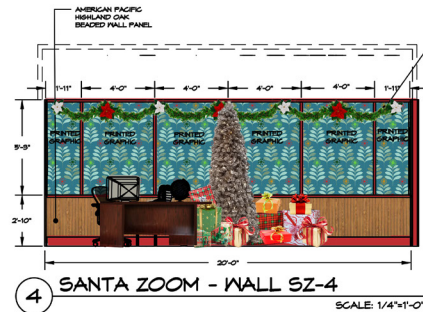
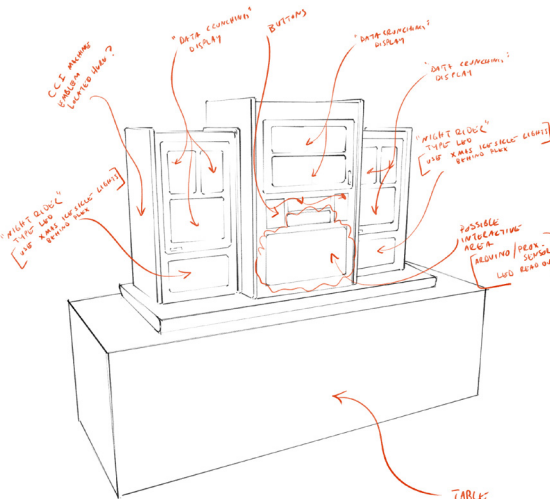
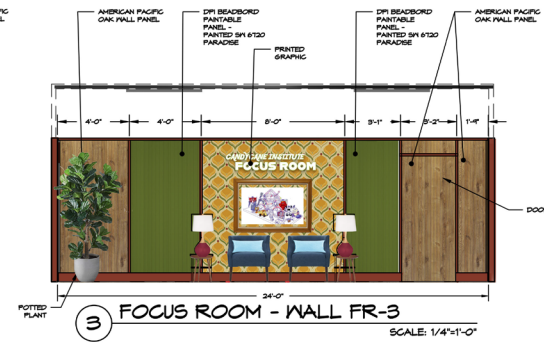
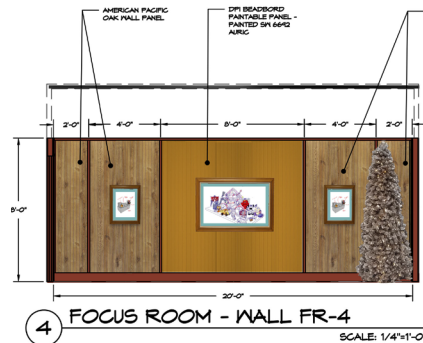
The second story beat featured a focus group room where guests are interviewed by an elf who inevitably failed at using technology to decipher what the guest wanted for Christmas – this resulted in the group being sent straight to the ‘big guy’ himself. The third beat is a Santa Zoom experience inside the head elf’s office where the guests are dialed-in to the North Pole.



Design Development

Once we had a green light on the guest experience it was off to the races for design development. We executed a design package in two weeks and started building scenery in our Seattle Fabrication shop.

Our collaboration with Mall of America proved to be a perfect partnership. MOA had available assets in their inventory and we worked together to integrate furniture and decor into our design, this saved time and money.



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Design / Build

To tell this story and create the environment in such a short amount of time, we had to be in lockstep with MOA and their internal team to divide and conquer. The objective for this design/build exercise was to be as flexible as possible and invest time and money in the areas that focused most on the guest experience.

We had local contractors create our envelope; building out walls and ceilings, painting, and adding paneling where necessary. We worked with the MOA graphics vendor to print wall and floor graphics to fill out the space with a 70's vibe.

Simultaneously, back in Seattle we were developing the Testing Lab Experience to expand the CCI story. Each lab table focused on a different data set. Working with a combination of raw materials and found+purshased objects; we CNC cut, laser cut, sculpted, welded, prototyped, wired, modeled and assembled the Christmas Lab into existence! INCLUDING the Santa Suit 3000!



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Pivot to Virtual

The Candy Cane Institute at Mall of America was originally designed as a low capacity COVID friendly walk-through experience ending with a ZOOM call with Santa. Only **five days before CCI opened to the public**, the Governor of Minnesota placed new restrictions that shut down entertainment venues across the entire state.

Thankfully, MOA was committed to bringing Holiday Joy to children in 2020 – resulting in a pivot that turned CCI into a virtual tour. The biggest challenge was setting up a tech infrastructure that could support multiple teams of Elves. Each Elf team needed to be on camera, while at the same time be able to respond to what children would be doing and saying.

Our instruction to the Elves was to use the environment to evoke a response from children that provided CCI with data to make Christmas even better next year! This allows the Elves to create a uniquely tailored experience for all children.



Mall of America's Candy Cane Institute offers interactive virtual Santa experience



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Mall of America launches virtual holiday experience with Santa and his elves from The Candy Cane Institute: a one-of-a-kind holiday research lab at the North Pole

HOLIDAYS

Mall of America launches virtual interactive experience with The Candy Cane Institute

It's MOA's latest online Christmas experience this season, including previously announced virtual visits with Santa.



VIDEO WELLNESS STYLE FAMILY FOOD CULTURE LIVING

'GMA' Deals & Steals on gifts to complete your list



Mall of America opens up virtual visits with Santa at the Candy Cane Institute

The kiddos may not be able to visit Santa in person this year, but they can head to the North Pole virtually with a behind-the-scenes guided tour from Santa's elves!



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