

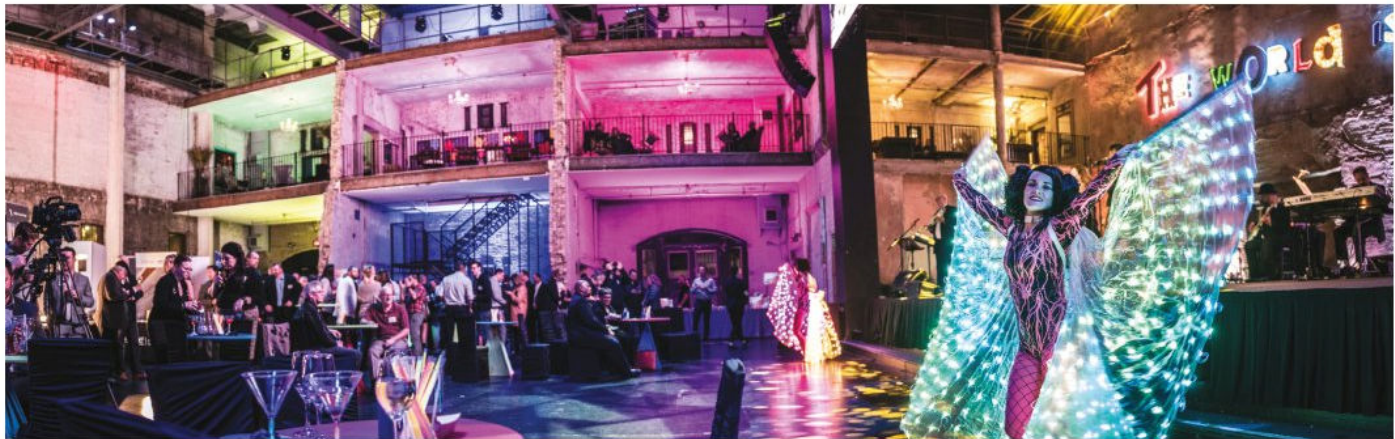


A custom ice sculpture and lit martini glasses played into the event's theme.

LET THERE BE LIGHT

Mason Creative sheds light on a combination anniversary celebration and trade show event. **BY MAURA KELLER**

THERE IS A REASON WHY SO MANY TRADE SHOWS are cookie-cutter productions: It's all about getting people to remember products, services and brands. But Char Mason and her team at Mason Creative saw a unique opportunity to combine a trade show and a 30th anniversary event into one very memorable, business-focused event, earning Mason and her team accolades aplenty including a Star Award from the International Live Event Association, Minneapolis- St. Paul Chapter for Best Corporate Event.



PHOTOS: BRUCE SILCOX

“We know what motivates event attendees and produce events that surprise and inspire,” says Mason, who launched her event planning business in 2000. Since then, she and her team have produced just about every type of event—nonprofit galas, festivals, meetings, grand openings, conferences and corporate anniversaries. But over time, Mason Creative has become more well known for corporate celebrations and nonprofit events.

For the JTH Lighting Alliance 30th anniversary celebration and product showcase, Mason Creative was hired to plan an event that positioned their client’s business as a leader in the LED lighting and controls marketplace.

“We were challenged to create a completely unique event that was a combination trade show and celebration, to attract 400-plus customers,” Mason says. “We needed to satisfy exhibitors looking for sales, attendees looking for lighting trends and products, and a client who wanted all those things as well as a fantastic celebration.”

Mason Creative coined the name and tagline for the event, JTH 30th Anniversary: Celebrating 30 Light Years. “The tagline was the perfect play on words that implied an anniversary and the words light years—affirming JTH as a future-focused lighting company,” Mason says.

Selecting ARIA in the North Loop of Minneapolis was the ideal location; as a former warehouse and theater, ARIA has an industrial and historic vibe that would allow the client’s own lighting to be as dramatic as possible.

At its core, the event was really all about light. Light and color were infused into everything. The invitation included a bright colorful graphic that was carried through the event and was applied to the front entry, bar fronts, lamp shades, and food service lighted blocks. A stunning lighted ice luge incorporated the event graphic and client logo, and lighted custom imprinted martini glasses were available to attendees. In addition, bubble tea was served in light bulbs.

“We designed dramatic room and building lighting, both inside and out, some of which was provided by the client and augmented by a technical production company,” Mason says.



Winged lighted dancers performed when the band started and encouraged people to dance. They also posed for photos and mingled with guests, while servers wore custom LED animated T-shirts with the JTH logo. In addition, the event’s entertainers wore LED bow ties and glowing bracelets.

The whole event was a showcase of JTH’s lighting lines and talents, with lighting on the walls, chandeliers and throughout the space. And a large 7.4-foot-by-13-foot LED screen was installed over the stage and flown from the venue ceiling grid. It also showcased a technology JTH was involved in—displaying the company’s lighting and controls in various newly constructed building installations. In addition, Nobel prize winner in physics, Shuji Nakamura, was a guest speaker and highlighted his role in developing LED lighting technology.

Embracing Challenges

Challenges for events of this magnitude tend to fall into two categories: limited time and/or limited resources. But for this event, it was mostly a time crunch. As Mason explains, her team had just one day to transform the ARIA event space into a totally custom trade show and light-infused celebration.

“We had 46 exhibitor booths to set up, custom graphics on the front doors to install, a complicated lighting installation showcasing the client’s own manufacturers, a large LED screen to hang, custom bars to assemble, a

giant ice luge to install and food and beverage stations to complete,” Mason says. “This was a tightly choreographed installation, and every vendor involved worked efficiently and in unison.” The team made it to the finish line with a bit of time to spare for the JTH staff to get a group photo before the doors were opened.

“We were able to achieve all the event goals,” Mason says. “Over 500 guests attended ... The client reported that several industry publications featured news on the event, the manufacturers are asking for this event to happen every year and their social media lit up.”

According to Jon Kirkhoff, owner of JTH Lighting Alliance, multiple manufacturers said that this event was the best commercial lighting show they’d ever been to. “We received consistently positive feedback from customers and others who attended,” Kirkhoff says. “They created an evening of technology, information, and fun that celebrated our industry. We never had to worry about any details.”

“For me, the biggest high is when a client tells me their goals and a budget and trusts us to accomplish it,” Mason says. “My favorite words are ‘You are the experts—make it amazing.’ And it is even better when they tell me afterwards that we surpassed all their expectations.”

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