SOUTHERN STYLE

Charming Charlie makes its New York debut on Fifth Avenue, featuring color-coded collections and an accessible atmosphere.

By Carly Hagedon, Managing Editor

LAUNCHED A LITTLE MORE THAN A DECADE AGO IN 2004, the Houston-based retailer Charming Charlie has been ramping up its national and global expansion. With more than 350 locations throughout the U.S., Canada and the Middle East, the retailer decided it was high time to make its debut in New York.
The design plays off the retailer's color-blocking merchandising techniques. This display strategy helps cut down on visual noise, despite the large amount of product they carry.

PROJECT SUPPLIERS

THE EDITOR
Charming Charlie, Houston

DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE
CollisionTVL, Dallas

FLOORING

Ceramica Mere Curvosa
S.P.A., Sessa, Italy

MATERIALS/WALLCOVERINGS
Osborne & Little, New York

Philips Jeffries Ltd., Tochigi, N.J.

Designers Guild, London

ELEVATORS
ThyssenKrupp, France

NAVIGATE

GENERAL CONTRACTOR
Michilli Inc., New York

For a full list of suppliers, go to vmsd.com.

with the Wind's glamour," Pulk explains.

The store also features a private meeting area near the fitting rooms, specifically for fashion magazine editors to browse the latest collections in store. The area's large pink doors are typically open (although they can be closed for private meetings) so customers can be a part of the action. "Most of the time, it's open, and customers can see it; they can watch the show," Pulk says.

Overall, the store projects an edgy, New York vibe derived from Charming Charlie's already-zany "Southern charm" and vibrant motifs, Pulk says.

The project wasn't without its challenges, however: Sometimes boasting upwards of 1000 SKUs on a single display, Charming Charlie's amount of product could become overwhelming for shoppers, and visual noise had to be kept to a minimum.

"The spaces have to be incredibly rational, clean, and understandable; you have to choreograph everything very carefully," Pulk says.

To achieve this, the design team implemented tightly organized vignettes around the store, while also embracing the "notion of abundance" with the scope of product. The large amount of color in the space was balanced using neutral displays and backgrounds, while the lighting around the vignettes was designed to be flexible so beams can be adjusted to focus on certain zones, as necessary.

Due to the amount of product the store sells every day, not to mention each hour, a mechanical conveyor belt system was also installed for moving merchandise, whether into the store's basement level for storage or upstairs for display.

In the end, Charming Charlie is meant to be more than just a shop, but rather, a hub for the brand: "Bringing the editorial world into the store, and making the whole business of fashion accessories become part of this one location, is really something that makes it larger than just a brick-and-mortar store," says Pulk. "It makes the store alive."