

Attractions

MANAGEMENT

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Volume 28 Issue 1

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The power of stories

We all know that storytelling is key to our industry's success, but it's vital to measure exactly how, and why



When Bob Iger was reinstated as CEO of Disney in November 2022, one of his first moves was to send an email to his

teams promising to "put more decision-making back in the hands of our creatives" and place storytelling back at the heart of the business.

This was seen as an acknowledgement that Disney had begun to put business metrics ahead of the storytelling and creativity that made the company so successful in the first place.

We know good storytelling is key to creating great attractions and experiences, but what does that actually mean? How can we measure the commercial value of the stories we tell in our attractions? Is there an objective way of measuring how they affect audiences and what's the future of storytelling, given how fast it's evolving in this digital age?

For this edition of *Attractions Management*, we asked industry experts to drill down into some of these key areas to explore the power of story, trends in storytelling, the business case for it and the science behind it.

One of our contributors, Paul Zak, is a neuroscientist and neuroeconomist who has spent decades measuring how stories shape us. Over the past 20 years, he has studied more than 50,000 brains, identifying a neurological state he calls immersion – a measure of how much attention we pay to something and how our brain 'values' it.

It's fascinating science that can be used to create and tailor experiences and then measure exactly how effective they are.

When it comes to the commercial value of good storytelling, Zak's research shows that creating stories that visitors connect with can

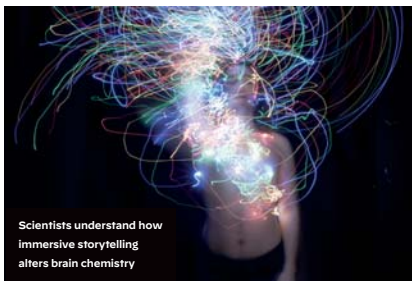


PHOTO: SOAKSN DOGA/SHUTTERSTOCK

Over the past two decades, Zak has studied more than 50,000 brains

change their behaviour by altering their brain chemistry. In his words: "The neurochemicals that form the basis for immersion create a desire to repeat peak immersion experiences."

It's not just the experience of the attraction itself; Zak argues that the narrative should be built into every phase of the journey, from buying the ticket to leaving the attraction and post-experience add-ons.

For this issue, Zak and his team headed to Disneyland to scientifically measure the impact of different rides on visitors' levels of immersion. You can read the surprising and enlightening results in terms of which ride 'won' in our report on page 40.

Magali Robathan, editor
magalirobathan@leisuremedia.com



PHOTO: YE RIN MOX

Academy Museum's Jacqueline Stewart

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PHOTO: DISNEY

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We think we understand the value of storytelling, but do we really? It's important to be clear on what it contributes to our industry, says Magali Robathan

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A floating visitor attraction in Norway mimics fish scales

PHOTO: EURPIA SCIENCE + DISCOVERY

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Tom Lochtefeld is shaking up the waterpark market (again)

PHOTO: WAVEHOUSE HOLDINGS LLC

Gaming IPs are the new growth area says Mintel



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PHOTO: UNIVERSAL PARKS & RESORTS

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With its edgy brand and young visitor base, Merlin's London Dungeon was a natural choice for an innovative marketing campaign aiming to take the stigma out of STI testing

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PHOTO: ROCKET



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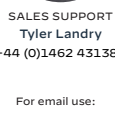
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Attractions **People**

“ This will be an engaging, accessible and permanent testament to the fact that London was home to one of the world’s greatest ever composers ”

Simon Daniels, director, Handel & Hendrix in London



FAST FACTS

- Handel & Hendrix in London is owned by The Handel House Trust
- The project is being funded by charitable grants and private donations
- Interpretation design is by Outside Studios, AV by Elbow Productions, the construction partner is Messenger and the architect is Peregrine Bryant
- The museum will reopen in May 2023
- Tickets will be £10 for adults and £5 for children
- Dwell time will be one to one-and-a-half hours
- Capacity will be 50 people per hour



Simon Daniels
became director of
Handel & Hendrix
in London in 2022



Visitors can view Hendrix's
flat as it would have
looked when he lived there



Jimi Hendrix moved
into number 23 Brook
Street, London in 1968

Handel & Hendrix in London has begun a £3m project to restore Handel's London home and launch new exhibitions about the German-British Baroque composer, as well as the rock legend Jimi Hendrix, who lived in the flat next door.

Handel & Hendrix in London cares for and presents to the public the homes of the two musicians – George Frideric Handel lived at 25 Brook Street from 1723 until his death in 1759, while Jimi Hendrix moved into number 23 in 1968.

Once complete, the project will enable the public to explore all of Handel's house for the first time by restoring the basement and ground floor. Called the Hallelujah Project, the £3m works will recreate Handel's basement kitchen, restore the ground floor parlours in which Handel would receive his guests and restore the front façade of 25 Brook Street so visitors can enter Handel's home through his front door.

When the museum reopens in May this year, new features will include historic rooms presented as they might have been in the 1740s and recently acquired works of art, creating a collection representative of the more than 100 works of art Handel had hanging in Brook Street, as well as new exhibitions about Handel's music and a mixed reality audiovisual display about the writing of *Messiah* in the room in which it was composed. ▶

- ▶ Visitors will be able to hear live music performed in the rooms in which it was written and sometimes performed, and the museum will also host concerts, masterclasses and exclusive private events.

"Handel's home has been recognised as a monument of great importance since the mid 19th-century, however, this did not protect the building from unsympathetic development," said Simon Daniels, director of Handel & Hendrix. "As the composer Algernon Ashton bitterly complained in the press 'the beautiful old house, which was splendidly preserved, has been spoilt beyond recognition.'

"Restoring Handel's house to its original appearance was an idea revived by musicologist Stanley Sadie in 1959. After 63 years, the Hallelujah Project will finally realise this noble ambition and ensure 25 Brook Street is an engaging, accessible and permanent testament to the fact that London was home to one of the world's greatest ever composers."

Jimi Hendrix's flat in 23 Brook Street was restored and opened to the public in 2016, featuring exhibitions about the musician and furnished as it would have been when he lived there. Hendrix entertained and collaborated with other 1960s rock icons at the flat, and described it as "my first real home of my own."

As part of the Hallelujah Project, the Hendrix experience at Handel & Hendrix in London is being expanded, with a new exhibition exploring Hendrix's legendary guitar technique. Visitors will also be able to walk up and down the stairs to his flat for the first time, passing the spot where George Harrison famously had to step over one of Hendrix's other visitors who had passed out en route to the exit.

Here Attractions Management speaks to Daniels about the highs and lows of this unique project.



Visitors will enter the museum via Handel's front door



Live music will be performed in Handel's dining room

PHOTO: MICHAEL BOWLES/HADEL & HENDRIX IN LONDON

Q&A

Simon Daniels

Director of Handel & Hendrix in London

How will this project improve the Handel & Hendrix in London experience for visitors?

When we opened the re-created Hendrix flat in 2016, we found that people craved a similarly rich and immersive experience in Handel's home. Access was very difficult and disorientating for visitors, who arrived at the first floor of Handel's house via a modern entrance. The Hallelujah Project will change all of that.

Visitors will enter via Handel's own front door, the Georgian street front of his house having been immaculately restored. Once inside, they'll be immersed in Handel's home as it might have been in the 1740s: beautifully lit using sconces and candlesticks, art will adorn the walls in shimmering gilt frames and everywhere there will be signs that Handel himself has just stepped out in the middle of a busy day's work.

PHOTO: HANDEL & HENDRIX IN LONDON



PHOTO: HANDEL & HENDRIX IN LONDON

What will make the experience special?

The stories of our two incredible musicians. Visitors will hear about their lives from our volunteers, through interpretation and via a digital visitor guide.

The opportunity for visitors to immerse themselves first in Handel's 18th century and then Hendrix's 1960s will be completely unforgettable. Hearing live performances by outstanding musicians – baroque music in Handel's dining room and rock music in Jimi's bedroom – will be an incredible experience: hearing music where it was written and first performed.

How will the experience bring visitors closer to Hendrix and Handel?

We'll be offering a fresh look at both Handel and Hendrix as musicians. In the drawing room, the room in which Handel composed, we're creating a mixed reality audio-visual installation to explore the writing of *Messiah* in 1741 to give an insight into how he went about writing music. It will be completely immersive and unlike anything visitors will have experienced before.

Elsewhere, a new exhibition will use sound and film to explore Hendrix's pioneering and peerless guitar technique and some of his legendary performances. The room will be dressed like a 1960s 'green room' and there will be an opportunity for people to share their own memories of seeing Jimi Hendrix or tell us about how he has influenced them as musicians, artists and people.

What are the biggest challenges of this project and what are you most looking forward to?

Our construction partner, Messenger, faces the biggest challenges of this project. It's a big scheme on a tiny site, with no room for storage of supplies or equipment. I take my hat off to the site manager and team for how they rise to the occasion every day.

What I am most excited about? After 18 months of construction work, I can't wait to see the house full of staff, volunteers and visitors, while beautiful live music fills the air. ●

A portrait of Jacqueline Stewart, director and president of the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures. She is a Black woman with a short buzz cut, smiling and wearing a black blazer and large earrings. She is speaking into a microphone. The background is a blurred image of a film set with people and equipment.

“
**50 per cent of
visitors self-identify
as being from
under-represented
communities**

Jacqueline Stewart,
director and president,
the Academy Museum
of Motion Pictures



The Regeneration exhibition has been extended until July 2023

The Academy Museum of Motion Pictures in Los Angeles is running a major exhibition exploring the achievements and challenges of Black filmmakers in the US from

the advent of cinema until the early 1970s.

Regeneration: Black Cinema, 1898–1971 has been extended until July 2023, and includes rarely seen excerpts of films, documentaries and newsreels, as well as photographs, costumes, props and posters. It also features contemporary artworks referencing the impact of the legacy of Black filmmaking and AR elements designed for the exhibition.

"This landmark exhibition seeks to restore lost chapters of American film history as it elevates the contributions of Black artists to present a more inclusive story," says Academy Museum director and president Jacqueline Stewart.

"We're incredibly proud to present Regeneration, an exhibition that demonstrates how the Academy Museum shares new scholarships, offers a more expansive vision of American film history, and encourages public dialogue about the past and present of film as an art form and a social force."

Diversity of museum visitors

Recent research carried about by the Academy Museum showed that it attracted more than 700,000 visitors in its first year, with 50 per cent under the age of 40 and 50 per cent self-identifying as being from under-represented ethnic and racial communities. ▶

Stewart became president and director of the Academy Museum in August 2022



The exhibition, called *Regeneration: Black Cinema 1898-1971*, includes rarely seen footage and specially designed AR



- Speaking to *New York Amsterdam News*, Stewart said of the research: "We felt we were doing something right. We're a brand-new museum, so we can see across the field how older museums have really been trying to figure out how they can be more inclusive in ways to reach out to LA's diverse population — they had to go back and re-tool themselves."

"We had the opportunity to open with this mandate, and to think very carefully how our collections, how our exhibitions are reflective of the diversity of the global community. I think that matters to people."

Stewart was appointed director and president of the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures in August 2022, shortly before the first anniversary of the Renzo Piano-designed museum. A leading scholar, curator, and public educator on cinema, she had previously been appointed as chief artistic and programming officer of the museum in 2020.

"Our ambition in opening the Academy Museum was to give Los Angeles and the world an unprecedented institution for understanding and appreciating the history and culture of cinema, in all its artistic glory and all its power to influence and reflect society," said Stewart. ●

PHOTO: YE RIN JOK



Stewart is keen to encourage public dialogue about film

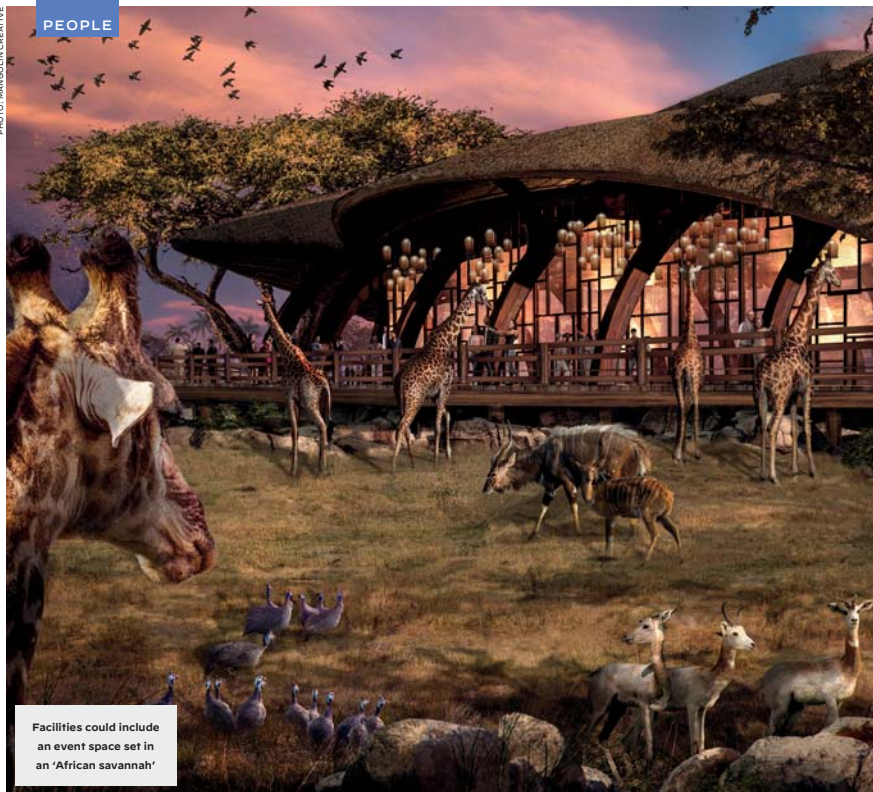


Fredi Washington with
Duke Ellington and his band
in *Black and Tan* (1929)

PHOTO ACADEMY MUSEUM FOUNDATION



Vintage movie posters on
show at Regeneration:
Black Cinema 1898-1971



Facilities could include an event space set in an 'African savannah'

You might see vets performing surgery on an animal or talk with one of our zoological care specialists as they prepare your favourite animal's food

Elizabeth Stallard, president, Sacramento Zoological Society
Jason Jacobs, executive director, Sacramento Zoo

New renderings show a modern zoo with more space for the animals

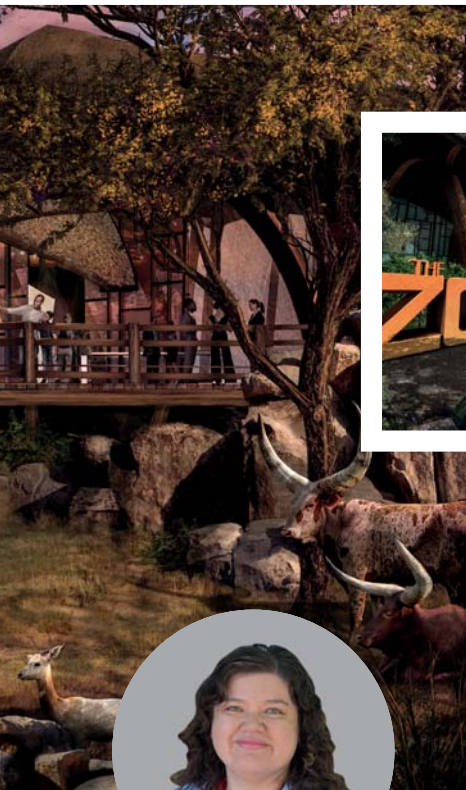


PHOTO: MANGOLIN CREATIVE



PHOTOS: SACRAMENTO ZOO

The Sacramento Zoological Society and the City of Elk Grove have released renderings showing the vision for a new 'state-of-the-art' zoological park that's planned for Elk Grove, California.

The designs – by SHR Studios and Mangolin Creative – show a multi-phased, modern zoo featuring expansive savannahs where African wildlife will roam, and guests will be immersed in the animals' surroundings.

The drawings also illustrate a variety of possible options for zoo visitors to get up close and learn about threatened species such as the white rhinoceros and the Masai giraffe, feed a hippo or flamingo, and stay overnight in a luxury tent-cabin with views of the hippo lake.

Sacramento Zoo opened in 1927. Its current 14.7 acre site is too small for many of its animals, and it has lost many species over the past 30 years due to space constraints. Its current habitats and facilities also need major renovations and there is no visitor parking. In 2018, the Sacramento Zoological Society's board of trustees voted unanimously to open a new zoo site, and in 2021, the Sacramento Zoo Society and City of Elk Grove entered into an agreement to relocate and expand the zoo in Elk Grove.

Next steps in the process include developing a schematic design, a financing plan, and completing an environmental impact review (EIR).

"The new zoo will be a destination amenity for all of Northern California and beyond," says Sacramento Zoological Society board president Elizabeth Stallard.

The renderings show luxury cabin-style tents overlooking Hippo River

“

The new zoo is being designed to host more than a million visitors per year



The new attraction will allow visitors to get up close to the animals

PHOTO: MANGOLIN CREATIVE

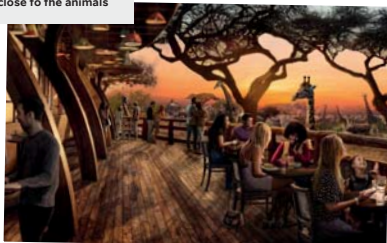


PHOTO: MANGOLIN CREATIVE

“The new zoo is being designed to host more than a million visitors per year. The larger site will provide greater accessibility for visitors with its dedicated parking and future plans for mass transit. Of course, a larger site will also allow the Society to do even more to support its important mission, by providing more educational partnerships, greater support for conservation programmes, and larger and better spaces for the animals.”

“The new zoo will be designed to house populations of rare and endangered species,” said Sacramento Zoo executive director Jason Jacobs.

“Just as importantly, we’d tell the story of these species and encourage our guests to take action. The new site will serve as a head-start programme for propagation of local species, such as the western pond turtle and giant garter snake.”

“The zoo serves as the studbook manager for thick-billed parrot, the only existing species of parrot native to the US that numbers less than 2,000 individuals in the wild. Sacramento Zoo cares for the largest flock of these birds under human care and has hatched nearly 100 from its flock. A series of aviaries for these parrots could tell the story of managing genetic populations of rare animals.”



PHOTO: SACRAMENTO ZOO

While the current zoo is popular, it is too small and needs renovations

On the subject of the new animal habitats and the visitor experience, Jacobs told *Attractions Management*: "Experience is impact. We're just starting the schematic phase of design and throughout the whole process we want the animals to be the stars of the new zoo."

"Close encounters with animals are factored into the guest experience – these may include opportunities to safely interact with species such as giraffe, rhinoceros, and hippos."

"From a science perspective, Sacramento Zoo is proud of its long history of working with the UC Davis School of Veterinary Medicine. In the new zoo you might see these vets performing surgery on an animal or talk with one of the team as they prepare the food for a favourite animal in the nutrition centre."

"We're also looking at the potential of overnight lodging that overlooks habitats for species such as rhinoceros, hippopotamus, and lion."

Restaurants and snack bars will be located within habitats, and experiences could include a restaurant/events venue that overlooks an African savannah for giraffe, zebra, and antelope."

"Another restaurant is nestled into a hillside that's home to a troop of gelada monkeys, a species of primate that's only found within the highlands of Ethiopia.●

Sacramento Zoo and conservation

"The zoo's mission of conservation extends far beyond the borders of California – it dedicates a portion of its admission fees to help save animals in the wild," said Jason Jacobs. "We've worked with the Wild Nature Institute over the past decade to monitor giraffe populations within Tanzania, and the new zoo is being designed to care for both a breeding herd and bachelor (all male) herd of Masai giraffe."

"Another species that would be featured prominently is the okapi – the zoo supports the Okapi Conservation Project which saves this species within the Democratic Republic of Congo. The planned zoo habitat would include interpretive graphics linking the zoo's support to the care of the okapi in the wild while featuring African birds and primates."

"The zoo is also involved with onsite projects to support Western pond turtles – the only aquatic turtle native to California – and the endangered thick-billed parrot."

SAUDI ARABIA

SEVEN to invest US\$13bn in Saudi attractions

Saudi Entertainment Ventures (SEVEN), a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Kingdom's Public Investment Fund (PIF), is to invest SAR50bn (US\$13.3bn) to develop 21 integrated entertainment destinations across 14 cities in Saudi Arabia.

Developed in partnership with a range of international brands, the destinations are set to feature more than 150 "innovative attractions".

SEVEN has so far signed deals with Warner Bros., Discovery, Clip 'n Climb and toy giants Mattel (for its Hot Wheels brand) and Hasbro (for its Transformers and Play-Doh brands).

Construction has now begun on SEVEN's first

entertainment destination, in the Al Hamra district of capital city Riyadh.

Estimated to cost around SAR3bn (US\$800m), the Al Hamra project is set on a land area of more than 90,000sq m and is expected to attract 6 million visitors a year.

The agreement was signed by Abdullah Al-Dawood, chair of SEVEN, and Vidya Sagar, VP of Shapoorji Pallonji.

Abdullah Al-Dawood, chair, SEVEN, said: "We're redefining the future of entertainment in Saudi Arabia through our 21 entertainment destinations across 14 cities, with more than 150 attractions that enhance quality of life."

More: http://lei.sr/5j7g2_T



PHOTO: SEVEN

Construction has now begun on SEVEN's first resort



PHOTO: GIDDY/ALCOM/SEVEN

“

We're redefining the future of entertainment in Saudi Arabia
Abdullah Al-Dawood

GERMANY

Europa Park gets direct rail links to Paris and Bordeaux

“

The move comes two years after Europa Park successfully campaigned to get a train travelling between German city Frankfurt and Milan in Italy to stop at the Ringsheim Europa-Park station

German theme park, Europa Park, is looking to increase the number of French visitors to its resort, after negotiating a cross-border high speed rail connection between Paris and a train station less than a mile from its gates.

Following successful talks, the high-speed Thalys train service from Paris to the southern German city of Freiburg will now make an extra stop at Ringsheim Europa-Park station.

The journey from Paris to Europa Park will take less than 3 hours and there will be nine return journeys scheduled per week.



PHOTO: EUROPA PARK

The direct trains began running in December 2022

As well as the Paris link, the park will be further serviced by the launch of a weekly service from Freiburg to Bordeaux. Run by rail operator SNCF, the direct, one-way tickets from Bordeaux to Freiburg cost €59 (£51, US\$63).

The move comes two years after Europa Park

successfully campaigned to get an inter-city train travelling between German city Frankfurt and Milan in Italy to stop at the Ringsheim Europa-Park station.

Utilising the station is part of the park's efforts to become more sustainable in all its operations.

More: http://lei.sr/n3D8c_T

Ferrari World launches ‘immersive mega coaster’

Ferrari World Abu Dhabi has opened its long-awaited Mission Ferrari ‘mega coaster’.

Describing it as the “world’s most immersive” ride, the high-intensity and multisensory 5D rollercoaster experience includes the world’s first sideways coaster drop.

The Ferrari-themed attraction combines the latest coaster technology with scenic show sets, an inverted loop and a range of special effects.

Designed and built by Dynamic Attractions, the ride features six cars with riders arranged five across in two rows for a total of 10 riders per car. The track for the dark ride was built by Qiguang Group.

Deana Taylor, general manager at Ferrari World Abu Dhabi, said: “We’re very excited to unveil Mission Ferrari to the world.

“Fans are in for a truly memorable experience with a combination of immersive ride media and an exhilarating rollercoaster track that is unlike anything else in the region.

“We can’t wait for our guests to try it and create unforgettable memories at our Ferrari-inspired park.”

Launched 12 years ago, Ferrari World Abu Dhabi on Yas Island is owned by Aldar Properties and houses a variety of family-friendly rides and attractions.

More: http://lei.sr/p4W4Q_T



The Ferrari-themed coaster is highly immersive

PHOTO: FERRARI WORLD

PHOTO: LINKEDIN/DEANA TAYLOR



“

Fans are in for a truly memorable experience
Deana Taylor

Universal’s Super Nintendo World prepares for opening

“

From the moment guests pass through the iconic green pipe, a journey filled with exploration, discovery and play awaits that is entirely unlike anything they’ve experienced before
Universal Studios

The highly-anticipated Super Nintendo World opens to visitors at Universal Studios Hollywood on 17 February 2023.

Utilising Nintendo’s Super Mario IP, the new land’s theming transports guests into the universe of the popular video game.

Among the attractions at Super Nintendo World – located in a newly expanded area of Universal Studios Hollywood – is the Mario Kart: Bowser’s Challenge ride, as well as interactive activities designed to engage the entire family within the Mushroom Kingdom.



New rides include Mario Kart: Bowser’s Challenge

PHOTO: UNIVERSAL STUDIOS HOLLYWOOD

Mario Kart: Bowser’s Challenge fuses AR with projection mapping technology and actual set pieces along a moving ride track.

Elsewhere in Nintendo World, guests will be offered themed dining at the Toadstool Cafe and a retail experience at the 1-UP Factory retail store.

A spokesperson for Universal Studios said: “From the moment guests arrive and pass through the iconic green pipe, a journey filled with exploration, discovery and play awaits.

“It will be one that’s entirely unlike anything they’ve experienced before.”

More: http://lei.sr/d7w6b_T

US

SeaWorld's Arctic Coaster raises climate awareness

SeaWorld will open a new Arctic Rescue coaster at its San Diego theme park in Q2 2023.

Set to become the longest and fastest straddle coaster on the US West Coast, the ride has been designed to bring awareness to threats facing Arctic sea life from climate change and global warming.

Arctic Rescue is incorporated into SeaWorld's Wild Arctic exhibit, which is home to a live ringed seal, walrus, and belugas, some of the species most impacted by Arctic sea loss. The ride is inspired by the efforts of the SeaWorld Rescue Team to save animals in distress and in need of care.

Manufactured by Intamin Worldwide, the ride reaches speeds of up to 40 mph and can carry 16 riders in eight, two-person rows on an 2,800ft-long track with a top height of 30ft.

Jim Lake, SeaWorld San Diego's park president, said: "We're continuously looking for ways to add new experiences to the park for our guests and this new coaster is a great addition to our ride line-up and a perfect complement to the Wild Arctic exhibit."

"The ride is also an educational opportunity for guests to learn more about climate change and how it impacts animals in the Arctic."

More: http://lei.sr/qzh2Q_T



PHOTO: SEAWORLD

The ride highlights the plight of Arctic sea life

PHOTO: LINKEDIN/JIM LAKE



“

The ride is an opportunity to learn about climate change

Jim Lake

US

Universal launches horror and family experiences

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The Las Vegas attraction will feature immersive, horror-centric experiences, based on Universal's library of classic horror films

Universal Parks

Universal Parks & Resorts has revealed plans to launch two entirely new visitor attractions concepts – a family-focused theme park and resort in Texas and a year-round horror experience in Las Vegas.

Described as a "one-of-a-kind theme park, unlike any other in the world", the new Texas resort will feature immersive themed lands, family-friendly attractions, interactive shows and character 'meet and greets' utilising Universal's IP.

Designed as intimate and engaging for younger audiences – and sized for a regional audience – the as-



PHOTO: UNIVERSAL PARKS AND RESORTS

The Texas resort will feature immersive themed lands

yet-unnamed park is intended to have a completely different look, feel and scale from Universal's existing parks.

"We elected the city of Frisco, in North Texas, as the area for this new concept, given the city's growing population and ability to attract businesses to the area," Universal said.

Meanwhile, the entertainment giant has also announced plans for a permanent entertainment experience in Las Vegas.

Bringing to life Universal's library of classic horror films, the attraction will feature a variety of unique, immersive, horror-centric experiences.

More: http://lei.sr/S6x3d_T

UK

Eden Project North moves to next stage

Plans to create a new Eden Project North attraction in Morecambe, UK, have been given a major boost after the UK government pledged to support the scheme with £50m worth of funding.

The £50m investment is half of the £100m needed to build the coastal-themed, eco-tourism attraction. The development proposals were approved in 2022 by Lancaster City Council. The funding allows the project to move into its next phase and begin the process of finalising the remaining £50m from private and philanthropic sources identified as part of the bidding process.

Eden Project North is among more than 100

projects across the UK to share a total of £2.1bn from the government's Levelling Up fund.

"Now that the Levelling Up Fund process has concluded, preparation for construction is due to start this year and the aim is for Eden Project Morecambe to be open to visitors by 2026," said Rob Chatwin, Group CEO of the Eden Project.

"This is a historic moment for the town of Morecambe and the surrounding area and for the Eden Project and our partners."

The attraction is expected to attract up to one million visitors each year when it opens.

More: http://lei.sr/u3u2D_T



The attraction is set to open in 2026

PHOTO: EDEN PROJECT



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Preparation for construction is due to start this year

Rob Chatwin

UK

Continuum takes over Loch Ness centre – plans to invest £1.5m

PHOTO: PAUL CAMPBELL
PHOTOGRAPHY/CONTINUUM



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We tell the real stories in real places about real people

Juliana Delaney

Continuum Attractions has acquired The Loch Ness Centre and Exhibition near Inverness, Scotland, UK.

The visitor attractions group has taken a long lease on the iconic tourism site with immediate plans to upgrade the guest offer. The company will invest £1.5m into the refurbishment and reopening of the attraction, which is set to relaunch in Q2 2023.

The redevelopment is designed to reinvigorate the centre and create an attraction which will “engage, entertain and inform” guests.

Once reopened, the refurbished centre will



The attraction is set to relaunch in Q2 2023

PHOTO: CONTINUUM

focus on telling the globally renowned story behind the legend of Loch Ness, exploring the myths – alongside the scientific research – that has turned ‘Nessie’ into one of Scotland’s most famous brand icons.

Juliana Delaney, CEO of Continuum Attractions, said: “Continuum tells the real

stories in real places about real people. The search for Nessie encapsulates all three.

“Having had tremendous success with the award-winning Real Mary King’s Close on the Royal Mile in Edinburgh, I was keen to seek out another great Scottish story to tell.”

More: http://lei.sr/V4F2m_T

UK

Merlin to make London Eye a permanent fixture

Merlin Entertainments has confirmed it is taking steps to secure a permanent future for the iconic London Eye.

Created as part of the millennium celebrations more than 20 years ago, the 135m-tall observation wheel opened to passengers in 2000 and has since become one of the UK's most popular paid-for visitor attractions.

Its planning permission, however, includes a condition which requires the local planning authority to decide whether the attraction can be retained beyond 2028.

Merlin, which operates the attraction, is now seeking to discharge the planning condition to enable the Eye to be kept in place permanently.

According to Mike Vallis, Merlin's divisional director for midway attractions, the company is aiming to remove the clause through a forthcoming application to Lambeth Council, the local planning authority.

"The London Eye is a UK success story with a global reach," Vallis said.

"When it first opened at the turn of the century, no-one could have envisaged it would become synonymous with all that is great about our capital city.

"It is now time for us to secure the London Eye's long-term future through this application to Lambeth Council."

More: http://lei.sr/g3F2s_T



The 135m-tall observation wheel opened in 2000

PHOTO: MERLIN ENTERTAINMENTS



PHOTO: LINKEDIN/MIKE VALLIS

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It's now time for us to secure the London Eye's long-term future

Mike Vallis

GREECE

Could Parthenon Marbles finally return home to Athens?

“

The British Museum has publicly called for a new Parthenon partnership with Greece and we'll talk to anyone, including the Greek government about how to take that forward

British Museum

'Secret' talks between the British Museum and the Greek government could see the return of the Parthenon Marbles, bringing to an end one of the longest-running museum disputes.

The collection of Classical Greek marble sculptures was brought to the UK more than 200 years ago and is currently on display in a purpose-built gallery.

The marbles were transported to the UK between 1801 and 1812 under the orders of Earl Elgin.

Elgin, a former soldier and politician, claimed he had been given permission to

do so by representatives of the Ottoman Empire, ruler of Greece at the time.

Behind-the-scenes talks to return the marbles – held between George Osborne, chair of the British Museum and Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis – have now reached what are described as “advanced level”.

When contacted, the British Museum didn't deny or confirm the talks.

A British Museum spokesperson said: “We have publicly called for a new Parthenon Partnership with Greece and we'll talk to anyone, including the Greek government about it.”

More: http://lei.sr/B7D5h_T



The marbles are displayed in a purpose-built gallery

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/NICOLAS ECONOMOU

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US

Dollywood coaster is park's largest investment ever

Dollywood theme park in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee, will add a new steel roller coaster to its selection of rides in spring 2023.

With a track-length of 3,990ft and top speed of 48 miles per hour, the new Big Bear Mountain will take riders on a 1 minute 40-second journey. At US\$25m, it's the largest single investment ever in an attraction at Dollywood.

Designed by Vekoma, each coaster train seats 20 guests and embarks on a search for the elusive 'Big Bear' in the hills just beyond Dollywood's newest area, Wildwood Grove.

Big Bear Mountain features three separate launches, multiple airtime

hills, high-speed carousel turns and tunnels, including a pass behind a waterfall.

"Big Bear Mountain is just that – big," said Eugene Naughton, president of Dollywood Parks & Resorts.

"This ride is going to be a game changer for us at Dollywood for several reasons, including the fact it's the largest coaster we've ever built and our first ride with on-board audio.

"We're excited about what Big Bear Mountain means for Dollywood – things are going to get big at Dollywood in 2023, and we hope everyone will come share in the fun."

The Dollywood theme park is spread across 160-acres.

More: <http://lei.sr/>



PHOTO: VEKOMA

The US\$25m ride has a track length of 3,990ft



PHOTO: LINKEDIN/EUGENE NAUGHTON

“

This ride is a game-changer for Dollywood
Eugene Naughton

UK

Alton Towers' iconic Nemesis closes for major revamp



PHOTO: LINKEDIN/KATE MCBIRNIE

“

We can't reveal too much at the moment, but Nemesis will have a spectacular return in 2024

Kate McBirnie

The famous Nemesis ride at UK theme park, Alton Towers, has closed for a major revamp.

The steel rollercoaster, designed by Bolliger & Mabillard, first opened in 1994 and has since become one of the park's most popular rides.

Costing £10m to build at the time, the ride was the first inverted rollercoaster in Europe. Standing at 13 metres (42.7 ft) tall, the 716-metre-long (2,349 ft) ride features a top speed of 81 km/h (50 mph).

Following a year-long, "exciting transformation", the ride is set to reopen in



PHOTO: MERLIN ENTERTAINMENTS

Nemesis first opened at the park in 1994

2024, in time to celebrate its 30th anniversary.

Details of the refurbishment are being kept a close-guarded secret by Merlin Entertainments – which owns and operates Alton Towers.

Hundreds of fans visited Alton Towers on Nemesis' last day, hoping to be among the last riders before it closed.

Kate McBirnie, head of guest excellence at Alton Towers Resort, said: "It's understandable so many wanted to take one final ride.

"We can't reveal too much at the moment but more details will be revealed ahead of its spectacular return in 2024."

More: http://lei.sr/q3X9S_T



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UK

Interactive TV gameshow experience for London

A new visitor attraction that promises guests the opportunity to experience the thrill of being a TV show contestant is set to open in London in spring 2023.

Called Gameshow Studios, the concept will see 'contestants' experience a 90-minute visit that will take them through different TV show formats, testing their general knowledge and mental dexterity in a fun way.

Starting out in a 'green room' bar backstage, visitors will be asked to name their teams – with each consisting of between two and six players – before heading out to a private booth armed with buzzers. Competing

against other teams, the 90-minute experience will be led by a TV show host, who will take the teams through the game show.

A leaderboard will show scores in real-time and the winner will be announced at the end of the 90 minutes.

Gameshow Studios will be able to host 250 guests across 40 booths, with pre-booked slots each evening.

"We've got the glossy studio, tense music, bright lights, impractical prizes, charismatic host and even some crafted cocktails," Gameshow Studios said, describing the experience.

"It's where everyone can experience being on TV."

More: http://lei.sr/V2K7A_T



PHOTO: GAMESHOW STUDIOS

The site will be able to host 250 guests across 40 booths

“

We've got the glossy studio, tense music, bright lights, impractical prizes, charismatic host and even some crafted cocktails

Gameshow Studios

UK

Immersive experience for iconic Bath Assembly Rooms

PHOTO: LINKEDIN/ED COOKSON



“

This is a unique opportunity to create a world-class heritage attraction

Ed Cookson

The National Trust has appointed design and build practice Sarner to create a new immersive visitor experience at the iconic Bath Assembly Rooms.

Designed by John Wood the Younger in 1769, the Assembly Rooms are located in the heart of the World Heritage City of Bath, UK.

In their time, the Assembly Rooms were hugely important to the society of Georgian Bath and were known all over England as the place to be seen and entertained.

Among those to have visited the rooms were composers George Frideric



PHOTO: NATIONAL TRUST

The historic building is a popular visitor attraction

Handel (see page 10) and Franz Joseph Haydn, as well as a huge number of authors, from Samuel Johnson and Charles Dickens to Jane Austen – many of whom included the Assembly Rooms in their novels.

Owned by the National Trust and operated by Bath & North East Somerset Council,

the Assembly Rooms have become a popular attraction.

The new experience will highlight the important role the building played in society.

Ed Cookson, projects director, Sarner International, said: "This is a unique opportunity to create a world-class heritage attraction"

More: http://lei.sr/n7p9C_T



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UAE

Dubai's Real Madrid theme park will immerse fans

The first-ever Real Madrid-themed experience is set to open in Dubai this year.

A partnership between the Spanish football club and Dubai Holding Entertainment, the attraction will be located within Dubai Parks and Resorts, the region's largest integrated theme park destination. The park has been designed to engage football and sports fans, families and children of all ages.

Guests will be able to immerse themselves in the culture of the 'world's greatest football team' through audio-visual displays, interactive experiences, playable gaming interactions, and unique attractions inspired by the success of Real Madrid.

Set to open in Q4, the designs for the park are still being finalised, but will include a range of Real Madrid-inspired attractions, such as a museum, rollercoasters and dark rides, football skill games, and unique retail options featuring memorabilia from across Real Madrid's successful history.

According to Fernando Eiroa, chief executive officer at Dubai Holding Entertainment, further details will be announced over the coming months.

"This project is in consonance with our vision to contribute to enhancing Dubai as a leading tourist destination."

More: http://lei.sr/17F6a_T



PHOTO: LINEAR/RED COUSIN

The park will feature a museum, rides and rollercoasters



PHOTO: DUBAI HOLDING

“

This project is in consonance with our vision for Dubai
Fernando Eiroa

GLOBAL

Carowinds celebrates anniversary with new launch

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Aeronautica Landing is a tribute to the Carolinas' spirit of invention, exploration and aviation, where guests can immerse themselves in the history and future of flight

Carowinds theme park in North Carolina, US, launched year-round operations in January.

The park introduced additional weekends for the first quarter of 2023, with regular park operation continuing throughout the rest of the year.

The 400-acre amusement park – which celebrates its 50th anniversary this year – also confirmed that it will launch the new Aeronautica Landing area in 2023.

Inspired by the "spirit of adventure and innovation", Aeronautica Landing will include six rides –



PHOTO: CAROWINDS

Aeronautica Landing will include a number of new rides

including a new dark ride – a games zone and food and beverage offerings.

Carowinds' Courtney C. McGarry Weber said: "Guests will experience the iconic border between North Carolina and South Carolina anew when Carowinds celebrates its 50th anniversary this year.

"At the centre of Carowinds' 50th-anniversary celebrations will be the debut of Aeronautica Landing, a tribute to the Carolinas' spirit of invention, exploration, and aviation, where guests can immerse themselves in the history and future of flight," he added.

More: <http://lei.sr/05k9P>

US

Disney hints at new gate for Orlando park

Entertainment giant Disney has filed a planning application that kickstarts the group's plans to create a future regional campus and headquarters in Florida, US.

Plans filed in January 2023 reveal proposals for a 1.8million sq ft campus at Lake Nona in Orlando, featuring a number of office buildings, two "flex buildings" and large parking areas.

The buildings will be built around a central park, with walkways linking each of the buildings to the rest of the Lake Nona campus.

The plans suggest that construction will be completed in stages and could also include an additional gate for Disney's

Orlando theme park, Walt Disney World. Once completed, the Lake Nona campus is set to become the new headquarters for Disney's Parks, Experiences and Products division.

The move could see more than 2,000 jobs move from the current Disney HQ in California.

The filing of the plans was confirmed by Tavistock Development Company, which is working with Disney on the plans.

"Last week, we filed a preliminary application to begin the process of approvals for construction of Disney's future regional campus in Lake Nona," the company said.

More: http://lei.sr/v3r6r_T



PHOTO: DISNEY

The move could see more than 2,000 jobs move to Florida

“

Once completed, the Lake Nona campus is set to become the new HQ for Disney's Parks, Experiences and Products division

GLOBAL

Scott O'Neil sets out ambitions for Merlin

Scott O'Neil has set out his ambitions for UK-based global attractions company Merlin Entertainment, after taking over as CEO at the end of 2022.

O'Neil, who replaces Nick Varney, is responsible for the global growth of Merlin, as well as the operation of the company's 147 attractions in 24 countries.

"Nick [Varney] has built an incredible business and achieved unprecedented growth in this industry and yet there are still tremendous upside opportunities ahead to continue the momentum," said O'Neil.

"We're actively building and searching for new attractions and sites.

"We're fortunate in that we're not constrained to a single studio or content



PHOTO: MERLIN ENTERTAINMENTS

O'Neil is a Harvard MBA with a career in sport

“

Merlin will aggressively look to expand our offerings and experiences

pipeline and are seeking additional brand partners. Merlin will also aggressively look to expand our offerings in our current attractions."

Since O'Neil's appointment, Merlin has announced a global partnership with car brand Ferrari to develop immersive themed brand experiences at two LEGOLAND® theme parks.

It is also set to open a new Jumanji-themed land at Chessington World of Adventures, UK, this spring.

More: http://lei.sr/e5F3z_T



Varney has retired after 23 years

PHOTO: MERLIN ENTERTAINMENTS

PHOTO: R. LOCHTEFELD



PHOTO: JAY LORENZANO



Tom Lochtefeld

The father of modern surf parks revolutionised the market with the FlowRider and Wave House. Now he's chasing a lifelong dream, as Magali Robathan discovers



When mad keen surfer, Tom Lochtefeld, sold his FlowRider technology to Whitewater West in 2014, he could have kicked back

and spent the rest of his days at the beach.

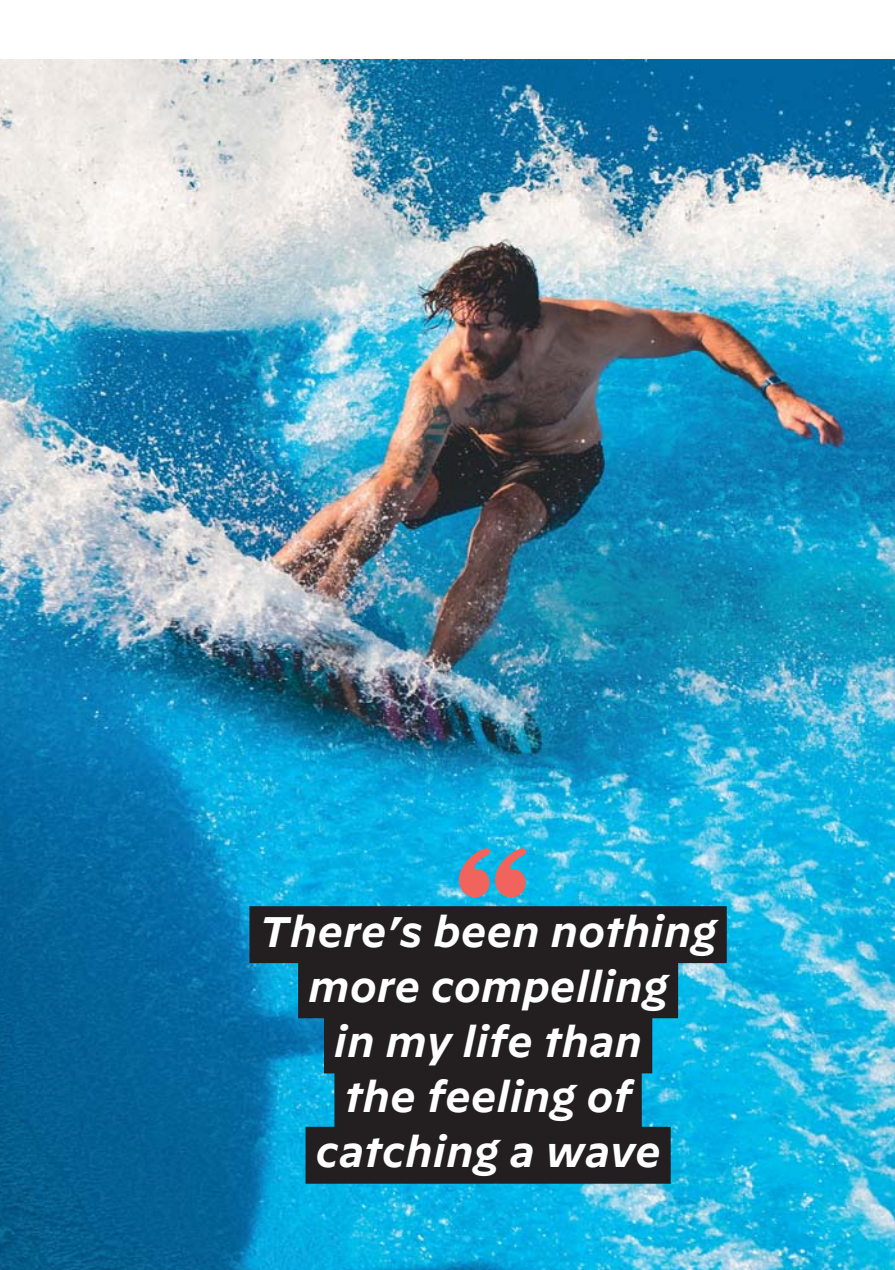
Instead, Lochtefeld – the inventor of the Sheeflow technology that had revolutionised surfing attractions and the brains behind FlowRider and the Wave House surf venue brand – went back to square one, driven by a passion to create a new evolution in artificial surfing waves.

"Ever since I got into waterparks in the 80s I've had a mission," he tells me, talking from his home in California. "I sold FlowRider

because I wanted to focus on pure surf. I had a vision for a product line that would be commercially viable and create the most epic surfing waves in the world. I wanted to go for gold, so that's what I decided to do," he says.

The day after selling FlowRider, Lochtefeld announced the launch of Surf Loch, a new company dedicated to creating something he's been focused on since the early days – a true deep-water wave.

At the time, a lack of certain pieces of technology meant the concept wasn't immediately viable, but after years of trial and error, Lochtefeld and his team have finally created the Surf Loch Surf Pool, and he's confident it will revolutionise the industry.



“

***There's been nothing
more compelling
in my life than
the feeling of
catching a wave***



PHOTO: ERIK VAN ETTINGER

RIF010 is one of 10 wave projects in development by Surf Loch

The new wave technology – developed together with Siemens – uses pressurised air within custom-designed concrete chambers to create surfable waves. “Quantum level improvement in computer processing with a corresponding reduction in cost has enabled us to generate pretty much any wave that occurs in the ocean using pneumatics,” says Lochtefeld.

UNDER CONSTRUCTION

Now Surf Loch has 10 wave pools in development, with construction underway for a major park in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, due to open in spring 2024 – and a ‘new style wave park’ featuring Surf Loch technology due to open in Palm Springs, California this year.

The Rotterdam attraction, called RIF010, will be an urban wave pool featuring Surf Loch waves in a disused 12th century canal in the centre of the city. Capable of generating a wave every seven seconds, it will be suitable for surfers of all abilities, as well as kayakers and bodyboarders.

The origins of the Palm Springs project go back to 2018 when Lochtefeld entered Escrow to purchase the defunct Wet ‘n’ Wild waterpark in Palm Springs. Arranging to sell to outside investor, Pono Partners, Lochtefeld reserved the right to build a 16-caisson surf pool (three times larger than the original wavepool) featuring overhead barrels to appeal to the best surfers in Southern California. Newly named, the Palm Springs Surf Club, this revamped facility is set to open in summer 2023.

PHOTO: TANNER WILSON



Lochtefeld has made it his mission to bring surfing to as many people as possible



The RiFo10 urban surf development is being built in a disused canal in central Rotterdam

PHOTO: RIF010

BITTEN BY THE BUG

Growing up in La Jolla, California, Lochtefeld caught the surfing bug early. "It's kind of a big deal to me," he says, in what feels like something of an understatement.

"That experience of the wave – in my life there's been nothing more compelling than taking that initial drop, then feeling your ability to control, carve and manoeuvre your board on a moving dynamic wave face," he says. "Once you get bitten by that bug, it's a real driver."

A talented athlete, Lochtefeld was offered a football scholarship at Stanford University, but decided to go where the waves were, studying first at the University of California, Berkeley and then the University of San Diego Law School.

In the 1970s, Lochtefeld worked in real estate in San Diego, but he always knew he wanted to make a career out of his passion for surfing.

"The most practical way to get into that market was through waterparks," he says. "I joined forces with [developer] Bryant Morris, and we created the Raging Waters waterpark in LA.

"I was so excited when we opened the wave pool there – I brought my surfboard, all fired up, but when I tried to surf it, I couldn't believe it – it was a piece of garbage. You couldn't catch the wave at all. I just said, 'are you kidding me? This is such a waste'.

"The technology wasn't there to enable a surfing attraction at that time, so I said to myself, 'OK, now I've got a mission to create the perfect wave'."

“ Surf Loch has 10 wave pools underway – one in a canal in Amsterdam

BACK TO THE DRAWING BOARD

Lochtefeld's vision was to bring the joy and passion of surfing to as many people as possible, no matter where they were. He sold his share in Raging Waters in 1987 and spent the next few years studying waves, experimenting with wave machines and developing patents.

While it soon became apparent that the technology wasn't yet available to create an economically viable deep water surf pool, Lochtefeld realised that a surfer only actually needs the surface of the wave to ride on.

He teamed up with the hydraulics lab at Scripps Institution of Oceanography in San Diego to create the FlowRider, a 'sheet wave' surf simulator that pumps thousands of

gallons of water a minute across a small area to create a stationary wave with a curling lip.

The first FlowRider was launched at the Schlitterbahn waterpark in New Braunfels, Texas, in 1991, followed by the launch of the FlowBarrel sheet wave at Summerland Resort in Norway two years later.

A huge tour with Swatch and Siemens FlowTours introduced the sport of flowboarding to a global audience, with pro board athletes including Kelly Slater, Tony Hawk and Terje Hakonsen helping to raise its profile.

"It was a blast," says Lochtefeld. "We went to nine different venues around the world – it was just this massive party. They spent \$2m on each event – we had mega rock and roll concerts, millions of people would come by. All the surfers were blown away."

The tour proved what Lochtefeld knew – that the value of the wave was more than just the throughput of people riding it. "I knew that there was a visual spectator component that needed to be counted and also there was additional revenue – F&B, retail, events – that could go with it," he says.

Lochtefeld developed the Wave House entertainment venues as a showcase for his surf technologies. A mix of California surf-inspired sport, music, entertainment, food, drink and

“

Adding residential to the surf pool market is the direction it will go

MAKING WAVES – THE TECHNOLOGY

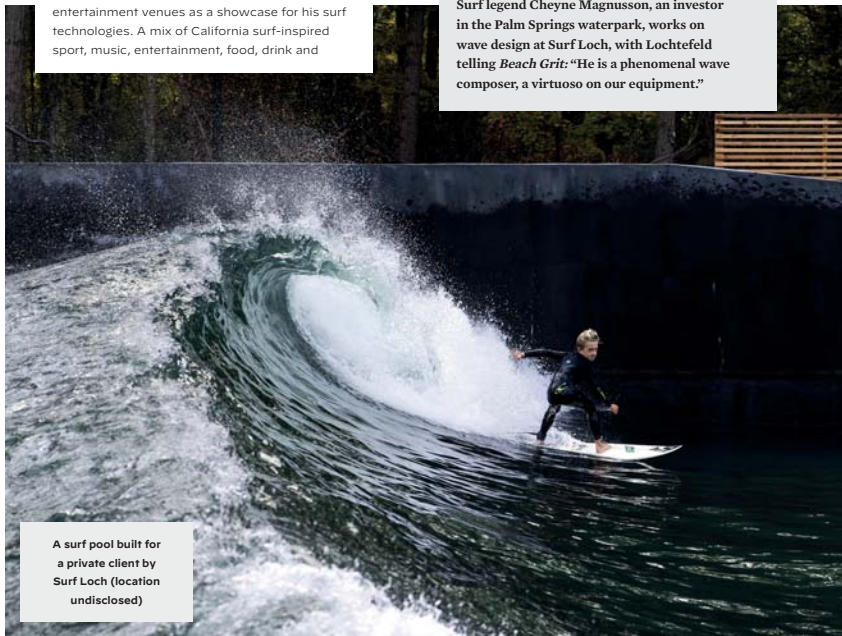
Surf Loch creates waves using pressurised air within concrete chambers called caissons.

The timing, sequence, and force with which each caisson releases wave energy determines the size, shape, and behaviour of the wave. This level of control allows the creation of an infinite variety of wave types within the same pool using software, rather than by doing so mechanically, as used to happen with older wave pools.

Surf legend Cheyenne Magnusson, an investor in the Palm Springs waterpark, works on wave design at Surf Loch, with Lochtefeld telling *Beach Grit*: "He is a phenomenal wave composer, a virtuoso on our equipment."

PHOTO: JIMMY WILSON

A surf pool built for a private client by Surf Loch (location undisclosed)





The Wave House brand combines surfing, music, entertainment, F&B and retail



retail, with the FlowRider and FlowBarrel as the centrepiece attractions, the first Wave House launched in 2001 in Durban, and the concept quickly gained popularity around the world.

"Wave House was such a show," says Lochtefeld. "We made a lot of money – Wave House San Diego was turning over US\$7m in F&B alone in a four month period. It was great business experience and we had so much fun doing it."

FACING THE COMPETITION

It's fair to say that Lochtefeld has lost none of his drive, and while he enjoys reminiscing about the past, his focus is firmly on what's ahead. When he started out, there was no surf pool market – now the global market is substantial and growing all the time.

He doesn't seem phased by the presence of other suppliers, saying, "Competition is the most positive thing you could have. It drives

innovation and if there's other tech out there that's better than ours, then those companies absolutely deserve to succeed, but I also have 100 per cent confidence in our products."

ADDING RESIDENTIAL

As for the future of the sector as a whole, Lochtefeld likens it to the evolution of the golf and ski resort markets. "It's going to be very similar," he says. "A surf pool is much physically smaller and the capital cost is equal to or less than a golf or ski resort, yet you can get the same lifestyle benefit that ties into ancillary revenue streams – F&B and retail – and the residential component, which is going to be a big element going forward."

"Adding residential changes the whole dynamic. The surf pool isn't the be all and end all – it becomes an amenity to anchor a much bigger development. That's the direction this market will go in," he concludes ●

BRC Imagination uses story as a starting point for attractions design



STORYTIME

As Disney's Bob Iger promises to put story back at the heart of the Walt Disney Company, we speak to experts in the field about what story means to them, and how to use it to engage visitors

PHOTO: BRC IMAGINATION ARTS



everyone says story is king but few have any clue what a story actually is or whether they really have one – although they always imagine they do.

Talking about story vs technology, you may find it helpful to reframe the discussion this way: to create a hit attraction requires a balance of heart, image and technology (HIT). But there's a hierarchy.

Heart essentially means story, or emotional impact. Since 'story' is so misunderstood and has so many unhelpful associations that don't

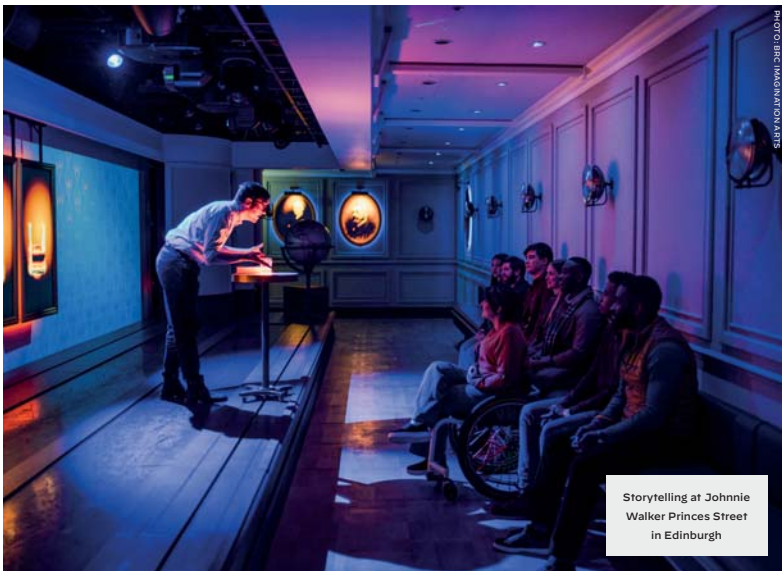
apply to attractions, it helps to say 'heart' instead, because, in the end, your visitor experience may not deliver a traditional story structure with a beginning, middle and end, but it must strongly engage your visitor's imagination, interest and emotions.

Key recurring qualities in achieving 'heart' often include:

- * Emotional engagement – it makes you feel something.
- * Instant curiosity. It hooks you in the first few moments. You must keep watching to see what happens next because you care.
- * It's personal. Consciously or



Bob Rogers
founder & chairman,
BRC Imagination Arts



Storytelling at Johnnie Walker Princes Street in Edinburgh

unconsciously, members of your audience can project some element from their life or their dreams onto the story you're telling.

- It's about them, not you. Don't try to show them how clever you are – instead, explore something about them, their world or their imagination.

Of the three elements in HIT, heart comes first because it's the most important. The other two elements must serve heart.

THE IMPORTANCE OF IMAGE

Image can be spectacle or beauty or anything visually dazzling. But whichever it is, it must delight the eye and serve heart, never distract from it.

Technology means technical novelty, which magnifies the impact of heart but, once again, this works best in the service of story, never as a distraction from it.

In an overall attraction strategy, the superpower of image and technology is their ability to attract (sell tickets) and mesmerise an audience. The weakness of image and technology

is that each new effect dazzles for a moment, but they lack staying power, so once the effect fades, you'd better have captured them with heart.

The alternative is to continue topping yourself up with one new effects, one after another, but that's not always economically sustainable.

To capture and sustain visitors' attention, the most powerful special effect is not a pyrotechnic or a hologram. It's not projection or smoke or lasers or 3D or augmented reality. By far, the most versatile, powerful and sustainable generator of special effects is the imagination of your audience. If you can fire their imagination, if you can invoke its power (usually with a great story, well told) they'll see

and feel more than any visual effects wizard can put into an attraction.

That doesn't mean you don't need great images and great technology. It's just that heart comes first, not last.

ADVICE FROM WALT DISNEY

That said, it's wise to remember the legend about Disney-artist Herb Ryman who was one day struggling to understand some direction that Walt Disney was trying to articulate. As Disney started to leave, an exasperated Ryman said, "Wait. I'm still not clear. What do you want me to do?" Supposedly Disney turned back and said, "Just do something people will like." Then he closed the door and left. In the end, that's the best advice ever.

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By far, the most versatile,
powerful and sustainable
generator of special effects is
the imagination of your audience



Here's the business case: the neurochemicals that form the basis for immersion create a desire to repeat peak immersion experiences

Paul Zak

Founder and chief immersion officer, Immersion Neuroscience



PHOTO: PAUL ZAK

Southern Californians have an ongoing debate: which ride at Disneyland is best? Most of us who live near the park have been going there since we were kids and as adults enjoy the 'Happiest Place on Earth' with our kids. Could we use science to figure out which attraction is really the best?

One of the foundational innovations made by Walt Disney and his Imagineers was to wrap each attraction around a story. Disney Imagineers call this type of entertainment a narrative experience.

Space Mountain, a rollercoaster you ride in the dark, is wrapped around a narrative of space travel in which guests enter a space station, are instructed on their mission, and see special effects as they whizz around the track. Importantly, it's not just the rides themselves that are a narrative experience; the queue to enter the attraction has story elements that build anticipation for the adventure.

My team and I went to Disneyland to see if narrative-based attractions are just a nice idea or really 'wow' the brain.

Two decades of scientific research led to my discovery of a neurologic state I've named 'immersion' that captures how much the brain values experiences. This neural social valuation measure has been used to improve marketing, make corporate training less boring and more memorable, optimise movie trailers, and customise luxury shopping in real-time. Immersion can now be measured by applying algorithms to data pulled from wearables. So suitably equipped, my team and I headed to Disneyland.

THE RESULTS

The data showed that the Disney Imagineers know their stuff. Every ride we went on generated Immersion above the 98th percentile compared to several thousand live experiences that we've measured. Counter to my expectation, Space Mountain – not Pirates of the Caribbean – was the most immersive attraction. The second highest immersion ride was Splash Mountain, a log flume ride that, at the time, was based on characters and songs from the 1946 Disney film *Song of the South*.

Where was my anticipated favourite, Pirates of the Caribbean on the list? For our group it was dead last, producing immersion that was 19 per cent lower than Space Mountain. Pirates' immersion was hurt by its having only a few peak immersion moments. The bottom line is that intuition blows when data flows.



PHOTO: JOSHUA SUDOCK/DISNEYLAND RESORT

Zak measured how
different Disneyland
rides affect the brain

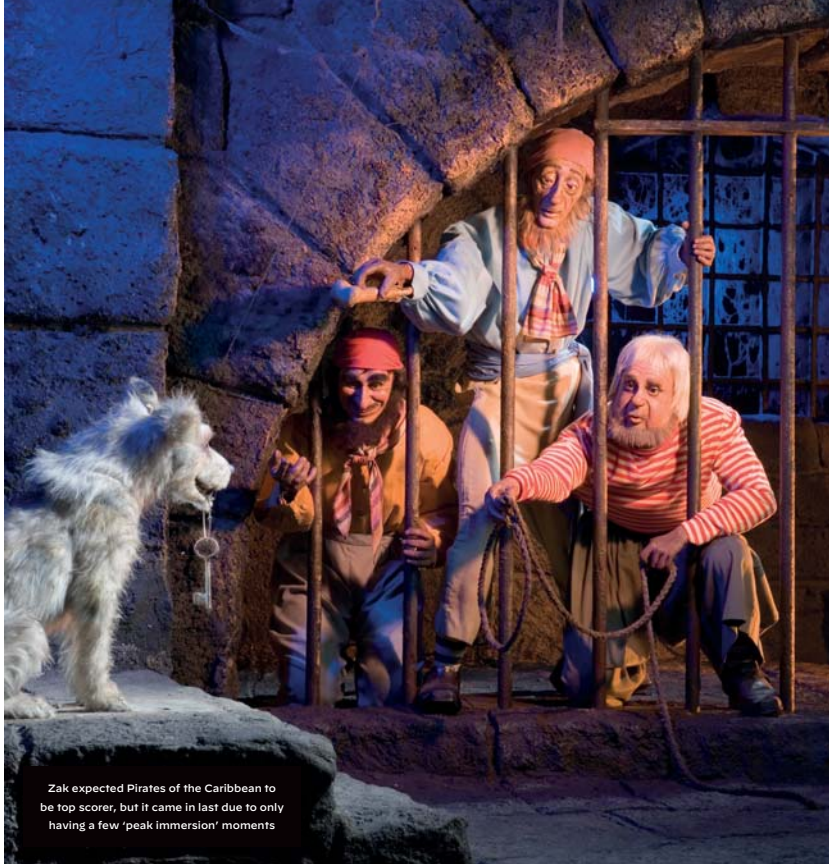


PHOTO: DISNEYLAND

Zak expected *Pirates of the Caribbean* to be top scorer, but it came in last due to only having a few 'peak immersion' moments

The data also showed that queuing up for rides generated Immersion in the 90th percentile. This confirms Walt Disney's narrative-driven design. Indeed, waiting to get on an older rollercoaster, Thunder Mountain Railroad, was more immersive than the ride itself!

In the 21st century when many of us can enjoy unlimited entertainment online, why are people leaving the house at all? The answer is that the experience economy is most valuable when one has an actual

experience. Data from 50,000 brain observations shows that experiences with a narrative arc – in which emotional tension is built through conflict or crisis – is the most effective way to sustain high immersion.

Narrative should be infused into every phase of the customer experience, from online interactions, to purchasing a ticket and from entering an attraction, to exiting. It's also essential in post-experience add-ons, such as shopping and sales of annual passes. Essentially,

'more story' in all parts of the visitor journey equals more immersion.

The neurochemicals that form the basis for immersion create a desire to repeat peak immersion experiences. This means these experiences are not only highly enjoyable, they also drive customer lifetime value, wow customers and make the businesses that deliver them more profitable. ●

Excerpt from Immersion: The Science of the Extraordinary and the Source of Happiness, by Paul Zak (Lioncrest, 2022)

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We desire to have control over our actions and observe the consequences of our actions in a safe environment

Margaret Kerrison

*Author of Immersive Storytelling for
Real and Imagined Worlds*

The best stories change you. Think about the last great book you read or the last great film you watched. It stays with you. It lingers. It makes you think and ponder. That's what a good story should do. It should make you reflect on the human condition and feel less alone. A great story changes the world, one person at a time.

How do you create change in your audience? There are four ways you can increase your audience's likelihood of feeling moved and being transformed.

- 1) Truth — Tell an emotional story that embraces universal truths.
- 2) Personal — Make it resonate.
- 3) Status quo — Meet your audience where they are.
- 4) Community — Create a world where they can connect with others.

EMOTIONAL ANCHORS

Why is it important to have emotional anchors? Creating emotional anchors will increase the likelihood that each member of your audience will have the same emotional takeaway relating to the theme and the wish fulfillment of your experience.

The emotional anchors are the major plot points to your story. They're the 'can't miss' moments that define your story. They're the walk on Main Street, USA to Sleeping Beauty's Castle and the fireworks at the end of the day in Disneyland. They're the emotional anchors that bookend and highlight your journey from beginning to end.

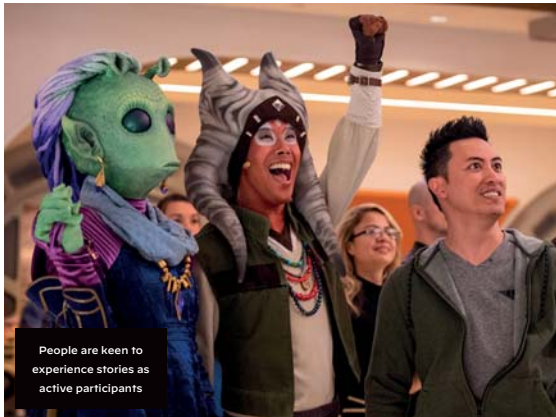


PHOTO: FOSTER KERRISON



PHOTO: PRESTON MACK/DISNEY

PHOTO: KENT PHILLIPS/DISNEY



People are keen to experience stories as active participants



Kerrison has worked as a story lead and consultant for multiple Disney immersive experiences

These emotional anchors keep the story moving forward in an emotionally engaging way. They keep the audience's interest in exploring further. Like a movie or TV script, they propel the story forward, but unlike a movie or TV script, the protagonist is your audience. Your audience will choose what they want to experience next, so building these emotional anchors are vital to your experience.

NEW WAYS TO ENGAGE WITH STORIES

We're already witnessing humanity's desire to expand upon the limitless potential of storytelling. As audiences become more sophisticated and inundated with choices, they're seeking new ways to partake, escape, and immerse themselves in unique experiences.

We're no longer only entertained by reading books, watching plays, films and TV shows and attending museums and other events. We're seeking to blur the lines between different media to experience a world or a story as an active participant and perhaps to influence it.

Like playing a video game, we desire to have control over our actions and observe the consequences of them in a safe environment. Even if our desired level of engagement is to explore or observe, we want to be in the 'place where it happens' and immerse ourselves fully in our fantasies with fewer barriers. We can be whoever we want to be in a different world. It's the ultimate fantasy.

Source: *Immersive Storytelling for Real and Imagined Worlds*, Margaret Kerrison

PHOTO: TV/FORNO/DISNEYLAND AND RESORT



Visitors want to enter a fantasy world



We're in the middle of an evolution where 'audience-driven story experiences' are taking over from 'story-driven audience experiences'

Klaus Sommer Paulsen
CEO and founder, AdventureLAB

Recent statements from returning Disney CEO Bob Iger have opened the doors wide to deeper considerations and conversations about definitions and applications of storytelling and how they may empower organisations. Especially in the themed and brand entertainment and experience industries, where storytelling and experience design converge to create memorable visits for millions of people every year.

PHOTO: ECATERINA CAPATINA



There's no such thing as a singular brand narrative from the brand's perspective. The brand storyverse is a convergence of many narratives of various origins, often amplified by social media.

The magic may begin with the story, but how much is a brand actually in control of whether the magic is perceived as strong or weak? A more nuanced understanding of the roles of the audience is needed in this regard.

We're in the middle of an evolution where 'audience-driven story experiences' are taking over from 'story-driven audience experiences'. Creators of themed and brand story experiences need to acknowledge audience influence and agency from the point of early creative strategy and concept development.

In terms of guarding and safe-keeping, these considerations aren't so much about how much control you want to relinquish, as how much freedom you need to give to the audience for them to build personal narratives from being characters, rather than observers, within a theme framework.

This new approach can apply to all visitor experiences, not just large-scale attractions, because it can be scaled. For example, you can empower your team and cast members – the most value-for-money asset any experience provider has – to add something new and unique to the story experience, while staying on-theme and on-brand.

Their meetings with guests will be more personal and authentic if based on their character, rather

First and foremost, it means acknowledging that storytelling is evolving and branching out; not becoming something else, but becoming more than it used to be. There are well-established methods, dynamics and devices to help create tales of wonder and emotion. Still, the ways they are brought to life and by whom differ increasingly due to context and control of the story experience.

FUTURE OF STORYTELLING

The immediate future of storytelling will go beyond simply telling the story. When merging storytelling and experience design, the outcome is not static structures but living narratives where the audience, the experience and the story all influence each other. Storytelling becomes story retelling; the testimonial tales told by audiences of their experience.

PHOTO: JESPERHUS



Jesperhus
Resort's Flower
Girls improvise
interactions in
character

AdventureLAB worked
on the Museum of
Eastern Jutland



PHOTO: ATTRACTION



PHOTO: KASPER VIEBERG

Flower Girls meet
guests at Denmark's
Jesperhus Resort

than on carefully scripted lines
and catchphrases, for example.

AUTHENTIC INTERACTIONS

Jesperhus Resort in Denmark works
with its Flower Girls, a team of
hostesses interacting with guests
throughout the park. Each Flower
Girl has her own fully developed
character and style and not a single
line of script is provided to the cast
members. Instead, they have character
descriptions to improvise from,
and as many of them are students
at the nearby theatre school, they
are fully capable of doing so.

The impact of designing frameworks
for audiences, cast and team members
to interact with the story experience
in numerous ways creates a multitude
of authentic, personal stories both
to experience and to re-tell. When
properly guided and included in the
narrative, many team members will
be able to make themes and values
come alive. Add new technology to the
mix, and we have a story experience
revolution on the horizon. ●



PHOTO: JESPERHUS

Flower girls come
alive at Jesperhus

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**It was an emotional day,
but I knew why we were doing it**

BRIAN ZIMMERMAN

Zimmerman has been
director of conservation and
science at BZS since 2020



**BZS aims to encourage
a new generation of
conservationists**

One of the world's oldest zoos has closed its door for the final time after 186 years. What happens next?

Magali Robathan speaks to Bristol Zoological Society's director of conservation and science

There were emotional scenes as Bristol Zoo Gardens closed its doors for the final time in September 2022. Opened in 1836, it was the world's fifth oldest zoo, and it has been a special place for generations of families.

In the lead up to the closure, a series of events took place to celebrate the zoo's history and allow visitors to share their recollections. On the final day, crowds gathered outside to applaud tearful staff members as they left for the final time, and a plaque was hung on the gates reading, 'Thank you for the memories.'

"It was an emotional day," admits Brian Zimmerman, director of Conservation and Science at Bristol Zoological Society. "But I knew why we were doing it. From my point of view, it was the best way for us to increase

our commitment to the conservation of some of the most threatened species.

"It was such a small site and we really wanted to make improvements to the welfare of our animals – we needed more space to do that. We were fortunate to have another zoo – the Wild Place Project – just up the road."

The decision was made to close Bristol Zoo Gardens (BZG) in late 2020, with the Bristol Zoological Society (BZS) – the conservation charity that runs BZG and the Wild Place Project – announcing plans to sell the 12 acre site in order to raise money to develop a new zoo on the 136 acre Wild Place Project site just outside Bristol.

"It's part of an evolution in terms of improving animal welfare and doing more conservation work," says Zimmerman, "so it was sad, but also exciting to have an opportunity to commit more resources to wildlife conservation."



The final day of opening at Bristol Zoo Gardens was 3 September 2022





Bristol Zoo Gardens' troop of western lowland gorillas will move to the new site

PHOTO: BARBARA EVIPIDOU - FIRST AVENUE PHOTOGRAPHY

- ▶ "A big part of the reason we closed was to safeguard our future," he says. "We had an old site which was incredibly expensive to operate.

"In addition to developing the new zoo, we also want to further our conservation aims, increasing the amount we give to our projects in the field up to and over £1m a year ultimately. The move allows the zoo to focus on its conservation work and gives visitors the chance to see animals in conditions closer to what they'd experience in the wild."

A NEW FOCUS

Of the 300 plus species that lived at Bristol Zoo Gardens, around 80 are moving across to the new site, with the remainder being rehomed – the focus of the new zoo will be on conservation, and all the animals housed there will be either threatened or linked to BZS's conservation projects in the UK and around the world.

"It's all down to resources," says Zimmerman. "We need our teams to focus on caring for threatened species and to be actively working to combat the biodiversity crisis we're facing. One of the things I had to say to my teams is

that we're going to be the first meerkat-less zoo in the UK. That's because meerkats, as cute as they might be, are not threatened – there's no conservation need for us to have them.

"Some of the commercial teams were initially disappointed – because meerkats are popular with visitors – but they take resource to look after. I'd much rather that the teams look after species that are threatened, so we can have a bigger impact."

So what's the overarching vision for the new zoo, I ask Zimmerman.

"Authenticity is at the heart of it," he says. "The new site is bigger, with ancient woodland on it and a whole mosaic of different ecosystems and habitats. With most urban zoos – and Bristol Zoo Gardens was a classic example – they have to build artificial environments for the animals to live in. We want to bring them into a much more naturalistic setting. Bear Wood [at Wild Place Project] is a good example of how we mean to carry on. You walk through there and you've got bears, wolves, Wolverines and lynx all in a natural woodland setting. It really gives you the feeling that the animals are

► in the wild and the behaviour of the animals also reflects the more natural surroundings."

Bristol Zoo's troop of western lowland gorillas will move across to the new zoo, where they'll live in a new enclosure set in approximately two acres of woodland alongside endangered cherry-crowned mangabey monkeys.

"Most gorilla enclosures have artificial climbing structures and fake rocks," says Zimmerman. "The new enclosure will be built in the forest – I can't wait to see a gorilla climbing a giant tree, to see how they would behave in the wild.

"We want to prioritise the space for the animals, and give the humans the feeling of looking into the natural environment."

The new zoo will also feature critically endangered black rhinos, which will live in an exhibit with scrubby vegetation and mixed trees, designed to resemble their natural habitat, as well as endangered African grey parrots and critically endangered slender-snouted crocodiles. A new underwater viewing area will allow visitors to get up close to threatened species of West African fish.

The zoo will also feature a new conservation campus including a breeding centre, which will house some of the world's most threatened species of reptiles, amphibians, invertebrates and fish, including rare tortoises and turtles, frogs, freshwater fish from Madagascar and land snails from Polynesia and Madeira. Aviaries will contain breeding populations of threatened birds including taitic hornbills, bleeding heart doves and Socorro doves – which are extinct in the wild.

A new entrance area is planned with a red panda exhibit, and the zoo will feature a conservation learning centre and a conservation medicine centre, as part of the campus.

REHOMING THE ANIMALS

Although animals move from zoo to zoo routinely as part of breeding programmes, finding new homes for several thousand animals at once has been a serious logistical challenge.

"As soon as we closed the doors to BZG, we had to mobilise and get the animals that were not moving to the new site to their new homes," says Zimmerman.

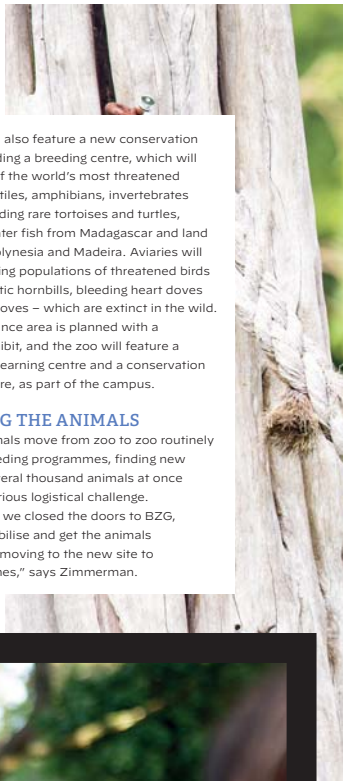


PHOTO: BRISTOL ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY

The new zoo will open at BZS's Wild Place Project site just outside Bristol



The new zoo will
showcase its animals in
more naturalistic settings

**We want to prioritise the
space for the animals,
and we want visitors to
have the feeling they're
looking into the animals'
natural environment**

PHOTO: BRISTOL ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY

The project to rehome the 220 species that are not relocating to the new zoo started much earlier than that though – since the closure was announced, zoo officials have been using their contacts to try and find the right places for the right animals.

Some are easier to find homes for than others, of course. The three South American fur seals proved particularly tricky. “Pinnipeds are expensive to look after and not a lot of places have them. Finding a home for them was always going to be a challenge,” says Zimmerman.

“It’s been a bit of a shuffle – one zoo agreed to take them, but it had Californian sea lions that needed to move first. It’s a bit like a chess game – we helped them find homes for the sea lions to make room for the fur seals.” ▶

THE DESIGN TEAM FOR THE NEW ZOO

- A team of architects, designers, engineers and environmental experts are working with Bristol Zoological Society to make the new Bristol Zoo a reality.
- Grant Associates have been appointed as lead designers and landscape architects, along with award-winning architects and urban design practice Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios (FCBSstudios).
- Momentum structural and civil engineers have also been appointed, along with E3 Consulting Engineers and Avison Young town planning advisors.
- Specialists have also been appointed to provide additional expertise, including arboriculturists Wotton Tree Consultancy; ecology consultant Clarkson and Woods, and transport and sustainability infrastructure consultant Hydrock.



Since its opening in 1836, Bristol Zoo Gardens has been a well loved attraction



PHOTOS: BRISTOL ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY

► And of course the process of actually moving the animals can be complicated – on the day I meet Zimmerman, BZG's big fish, including three paddlefish, are being moved to their new homes at Bioparc Zoo de Doué la Fontaine in France and Oceanogràfic in Valencia, Spain.

"They're big and some of them are very sensitive," says Zimmerman. "They're moving by road and ferry, they have to be kept warm, the water needs to be kept oxygenated and filtered en route. We have a very experienced company from Portugal called Flying Sharks helping us with the logistics and the actual move, but it's an unbelievable amount of work."

It's not just the large animals that can be tricky to transport. When the zookeepers went to move the red-legged millipedes to their new home at Marwell Zoo in the UK, they found that they had bred so well that instead of the 2,500 they were expecting, there were actually 9,327, necessitating huge containers and a much larger transport vehicle than had been planned for.

FINANCIAL CHALLENGES

Bristol Zoological Gardens has struggled financially for some time, with declining visitor numbers, a very old site that was expensive to operate, while Brexit contributed to increases in operating costs. The pandemic proved to be the final nail in the coffin, and in 2020, the society announced plans to sell the site with planning permission to develop

THE NEW BRISTOL ZOO PLANNED EXHIBITS

New experiences expected to feature at the new site include:

Central African forests

A Central African Forests area is planned for the gorilla troop from Bristol Zoo Gardens to live with a new group of endangered cherry-crowned mangabey monkeys. It will also include endangered African grey parrots, critically endangered slender-snouted crocodiles and extremely threatened species of West African fish which visitors will be able to see in a new underwater viewing area.

This exhibit will showcase Bristol Zoological Society's existing conservation projects in Equatorial Guinea, Central Africa. It will be an immersive exhibit where visitors can learn about Bristol Zoological Society's conservation work across central Africa and the species that are found there.

Conservation breeding centre

A newly-created conservation breeding centre will house some of the world's most threatened species of reptiles, amphibians, invertebrates, and fish, as well as aviaries with highly threatened bird species including tataric hornbills, bleeding heart doves,

Sumatran laughing thrushes and Socorro doves – which are extinct in the wild. Almost all the species there are categorised as critically endangered or extinct in the wild.

The Conservation Breeding Centre is part of the Conservation Campus and will include rare tortoises and turtles, blue spotted tree monitors, Henkel's leaf-tailed geckos, Madeiran land snails, Desertas wolf spiders, rainbow goodeid fish, and much more.

The species in the conservation breeding centre will each have an associated project plan identifying the conservation role that Bristol Zoological Society is playing in securing its future.



The new zoo will raise the profile of endangered species

sustainable housing on part of the site. The remaining grounds will be open to the public free of charge for the first time in history.

"We wanted to get planning permission ourselves – that was important for our legacy. This will help us meet the criteria of sustainability we want and ensure the site continues to provide a home for native wildlife," says Zimmerman.

Two planning applications have been submitted – the first for a residential-led scheme to redevelop the BZG site, with 'eco-friendly, low-carbon homes' built largely in areas where structures already exist.

The second application is for a residential development of the brownfield 'West Car Park' site owned by BZS.

"At the moment, one of our biggest challenges is getting the properties sold to free up the capital to allow us to progress with the plans," Zimmerman says.

"Everyone is chomping at the bit to get going – until we've got the planning applications submitted, approved, no challenges to them and we've actually got the funding, we can't progress with our ambition of contributing more to conservation."

LOOKING AHEAD

While he acknowledges there are some serious challenges ahead, Zimmerman says he's excited about the opportunities presented by this new chapter in Bristol Zoological Society's history.

"One of the biggest opportunities of the move is the chance to realise our ambition of doing more conservation for species," he says. "What makes us unique is that we have ambitions in our species plan that 80 per cent of them are part of our targeted conservation efforts – that's more than any other zoo."

"Some people don't agree with zoos, but if you look at the IUCN Red List, there are up to 40 species – probably more – extinct in the wild. If it wasn't for zoos and aquariums, they'd be gone."

"We need to understand, recognise and capitalise on the value of zoos and aquariums for saving species like that from extinction. A big proportion of the animals we'll have at our conservation breeding centre are extinct in the wild or critically endangered, and species that wouldn't have a hope of surviving were it not for us."

"For me, that's the most important thing." ●

NO MATTER THE VENUE AQUATIC PLAY DELIVERS

Aquatic play helps keep kids happy, resulting in higher spend from families. WhiteWater's Cassidy Newman shares some of the attractions using aquatic play to bring in more visitors and increase spend



Kids are always looking for opportunities to play. That's why restaurants have crayons at the ready — they know the secret to higher spend is to keep children occupied so the entire family can stay longer to enjoy more food and drinks.

Aquatic play helps different venues keep kids happy. The ultimate playground for both children and adults, these multi-level play structures offer a myriad of paths for guests to explore and whimsical elements to discover. They could go down a waterslide, spray each other from interactive features, or giddily wait for the tipping bucket to spill over on their heads.

Because aquatic play keeps children engaged and families on-site longer, it may come as little surprise that it's found in many different venue types.

DIVERSIFYING MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENTS

Long known for its casinos, Macau is now aiming to become a family entertainment hub for China's Greater Bay Area. Centered in the heart of it all is Studio City, a mixed-use development that includes a hotel, a theatre, a shopping mall, restaurants and amusements, as well as the region's first waterpark.

Open to both hotel and non-hotel guests, Studio City Water Park features an AquaPlay 1750, which serves an important role in the entire development. Whether families split up to try different slides or parents leave older kids

some free time while they shop or try their luck in the casino, AquaPlay 1750 creates a central meeting point due to its eye-catching build. Strategically located next to lounge chairs, the AquaPlay unit provides families a place to come back together after a day of exploring the park.

BUILDING AN ICON AT THE ZOO

Even in the educational setting of zoos and aquariums, aquatic play can be found to offer interactive fun and attract guests. Audubon Zoo in New Orleans, for example, uses an AquaPlay 550 as a cost-effective way to add value to its venue in the summer. With an instantaneous capacity of over 180 guests, this multi-level play structure is an integral part of its Cool Zoo waterpark.

The most striking element of the park is the giant white alligator climbing the play structure. Towering over three metres (11 feet) above the ground, it's inspired by the zoo's famous resident and takes its place outside the Louisiana Swamp exhibit. The white alligator sculpture was hand carved by WhiteWater's professional artists to create an image synonymous with the zoo. This image is also used to help drive demand by building excitement before guests even step foot inside.

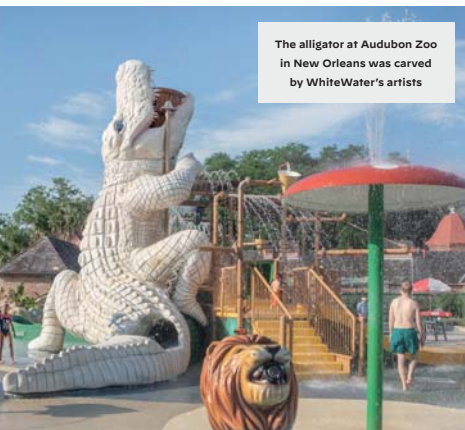
BOOST HOTELS & RESORTS REVPAR

The hotel sector has similarly been taking advantage of aquatic play to help boost occupancy and RevPAR.





The Nickelodeon-themed Aqua Nick waterpark in Cancun, Mexico



The alligator at Audubon Zoo in New Orleans was carved by WhiteWater's artists

To capitalise on their investment, it's important that properties look at the ride mix and form a plan that caters for different demographics. That's why Nickelodeon Hotels and Resorts Riviera Maya built not one, but two aquatic play structures at their Aqua Nick waterpark in Mexico.

Using brands from Nickelodeon, the waterpark built a Paw Patrol-themed AquaPlay 200 and a SpongeBob SquarePants-themed RainFortress 5 to ensure the entire family had something they could enjoy. Perfect for the youngest members of the family, the smaller AquaPlay 200 has a pool size of 181sq m (1,950sq ft) so little ones can develop confidence on smaller slides before working their way up to larger attractions.

On the other hand, RainFortress 5 has nearly double the pool size and over four times the number of features as AquaPlay 200, so older kids also have their choice between exciting slides and cause-and-effect interactives, and they get splashed by larger volumes of water.

BRING PLAY TO YOUR VENUE

Whether you have a hundred square meters or a hundred square acres, aquatic play is a great addition to attract guests and extend their length of stay.

With the largest range of multi-level play structures in the industry, the WhiteWater team can tailor a solution for you that makes sense for your site and budget.

To get started, go to:

www.whitewaterwest.com/chooseplay ●

EUREKA!

At new children's museum Eureka! Science + Discovery, visitors can climb inside a cat, become a bathroom DJ and get up close with the journey from chew to poo. Working closely with kids and industry was key to injecting a real sense of fun, says Yvonne Golds



opened just before Christmas, *Alice in Wonderland*-esque children's museum Eureka! Science + Discovery in Wallasey, Merseyside,

UK, aims to bring STEAM subjects to life in a fun, immersive and engaging way.

Sister attraction to the much loved Eureka!

The National Children's Museum in Halifax, which opened in 1992, the new Eureka! Science + Discovery is aimed at six- to 14-year-olds. The attraction's internal designs were created by K2 Architects, with Real Studios responsible for exhibition design.

The designers didn't want to try and guess what young people might want from the museum; instead they asked them directly, engaging in a series of workshops between local schoolchildren and industry partners to find out their big questions about STEAM. Partners include Unilever, Sci-tech Daresbury, Arup, Alder Hey Children's Hospital and Liverpool John Moores University.

Eureka! Science + Discovery's founding partner is renewable energy company Ørsted.

Real Studios' Yvonne Golds talks *Attractions Management* through the highs and lows of this unique project. ▶



We tried to put ourselves in the young people's shoes, never patronising them and avoiding obvious childish tropes, such as primary colours and anthropomorphised animals



Young people were invited to workshops with industry partners, including Arup (above)



PHOTO: MATT THOMAS



The brief was to create a play-based experiential design that delivers STEAM subjects through three narrative environment – Homes, Bodies and Nature

► **How would you sum up Eureka! Science + Discovery? What makes it special?**

We feel we've hit the sweet spot where play and learning intersect. Eureka! Science + Discovery is about engaging children in an exploration of STEAM subjects (science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics) in a way that's rigorous, authentic and relevant, while also being visually, mentally and physically immersive.

How did you approach this project?

We were brought in four years ago to undertake the interpretive masterplanning and then the design. In the early stages, the process was very much about engaging in workshops and co-creation exercises between the client and various stakeholder groups, including local primary and secondary schools, Liverpool youth group the Hive, and local industry partners.

Our brief was to create a play-based experiential design that delivered on STEAM subjects through three narrative environments –



Yvonne Golds

homes, bodies and nature. The experience needed to work undirected without recourse to objects and traditional graphics; it needed to be intuitive, fun and should have no loose parts. It's an older sibling to the hugely successful Halifax Eureka! where self-guided play-based exploration is at the heart of the centre.

The industry partners – Orsted, ARUP, Sci-Tech Daresbury, Alder Hey, Liverpool John Moores University and Unilever – played an important role in the co-creation process and helped to create and participate in workshops with children and young people; this fed directly into some key exhibits.

Talk us through the attraction

Eureka! Science + Discovery is filled with colourful, hyperreal and overscaled exhibits themed around the three key narratives. To establish each theme, key exhibits act as locators – for the ground floor area exploring the body there's a huge, full-body MRI scan revealed on overhead lightboxes.



2. BODIES



The Body reveals
more about the
life within

PHOTO: MATT THOMAS

Nature reveals
the wonders of
the world outside



3. NATURE



PHOTO: MATT THOMAS

Eureka!'s DNA is very different from most of the other clients we've worked with



- There's a strong sense of fun, too. In the Body zone, the Chew to Poo exhibit is a supersized display of sculpted digestive organs revealing the complete digestive journey, allowing visitors to feed a giant mouth and see how food is broken down and processed before it emerges at the other end.

Home is a series of recognisable room sets designed to encourage exploration and play, and features a giant pet cat named Luna, whose body you can physically enter in order to see the world as a cat and test your reflexes against those of a typical feline.

Other highlights in the Home area are an energy game where visitors adjust a series of supersized mechanical devices that 'use energy' in the living room to see the impact on overall usage, all viewed on a supersized phone screen, as well as DJ 'decks' in the bathroom where you can create music using bathrooms sounds.

The Nature zone features a woodland walk, bounded by a sculptural, undulating 'hedge'.

PHOTO: MATT THOMAS



The exhibits have been designed with a strong sense of fun



PHOTO: MATT THOMAS

Eureka! aims to help visitors learn through playful interactions



PHOTO: MATT THOMAS



Exhibits in the Home (above) and Body (below) sections

PHOTO: MATT THOMAS



Set into the hedge are numerous interactives exploring aspects of nature and those that live there. This section also includes a giant nest structure, housing an immersive film space, and a climbing tree inviting visitors to clamber up several different levels.

What were the biggest challenges?

Challenges come in all shapes and sizes; our task is to turn them into opportunities. The co-creation process meant that, for the first year or so of us working on the project, we effectively had a moving brief.

As more data came in we had to review and adjust how we were approaching each topic, but ultimately this was a very rewarding process and has allowed us to design something with real integrity that's hopefully in tune with the young people visiting.

Delivering an attraction with no loose parts was another challenge – especially for an interactive science and discovery centre; it meant we had to be more creative.

And of course, working through the pandemic brought a whole slew of challenges that we had to navigate as a team.

One of the aims is to get more girls into STEAM subjects – how did you address this?

This was a key consideration when putting together co-creation groups. The client team recruited groups of female students as well as other mixed gender groups to gather any specific perspectives that they had.

We also asked STEAM partners to ensure there were female role models participating in the co-creation workshops, including scientists and engineers. And when it came to producing exhibition AV assets, graphics and illustrations, these were delivered to reflect both women and men, as well as gender neutral people.

What did you learn from working with the various partners?

Eureka! Science + Discovery's co-creation model explores the intersection between the lives and interests of the co-creators: the young people from the community; STEAM partners from local growth industries and the education sector – and the Eureka! team.

The programme began with a series of meetings in which young people explored



- their big questions about STEAM, and local STEAM partners explored four questions relating to their business: Who works here? What are the big local projects you're working on? What are the significant global projects you're working on? What are the big challenges or important questions you want to answer through your work?

Following the development meetings, STEAM partners were paired with groups of children and young people and worked together on a series of enquiry-based learning projects, supported and co-ordinated by Eureka! The exhibition content, design and visitor experience at the new attraction all have their origins in the ideas collectively generated and developed through this iterative process of co-creation over several years.

The process was an invaluable experience and very real in terms of these young people having a say in what content we included in the spaces.

There are no introductory panels and very few objects in cases.

Why was that important?

Eureka!'s DNA is very different from most of the other clients we've worked with. It doesn't hold a collection, but rather explore topics through experiential spaces and the it does this is by enabling the children to engage in playful interactions.



Experiences at the museum range from being inside your own body to chasing through the forest with your dog

This project gave us an opportunity to put aside any form of didactic approach and think outside the box when it came to drawing people in, getting them engaged and allowing them to determine their own outcomes.

A good example of this is the design of three pinball machines showing ways the body defends itself against infection. Each demonstrates a different defence mechanism, including tears and sneezing, nose hairs, scabs and white blood cells.

How is technology used?

We wanted to use technology in a way that doesn't just entertain but really adds insight and engagement in real-world topics. The industry partners were a real asset and brought valuable knowledge.



PHOTO: MATTHIAS

The attraction has been designed to bring STEAM subjects to life

Young people were consulted from an early stage of the process



In the Home area there's a staircase with a workstation tucked underneath it. Here visitors can play a video game that encourages them to design a staircase. We developed this with Arup so the actual engineering aspects are authentic.

To make it fun, we also brought in software designers to make the whole story of staircase construction more interesting, developing different narratives and avatars – for example, in one scenario you need to build a staircase to cross a field of lava and make it back to your space rocket.

How do you design an immersive experience?

Essentially we're transporting you to another place. At Eureka! Science + Discovery we drop people into an immersive experience right from the get-go with worlds ranging from being inside your own body to chasing through the forest with your dog.

It's about believability and skilful use of everything in our toolkit, seamlessly knitting together the 3D aspects with graphics and software. It's also about how you move from one area to the next and in this project, we played with a choreography

of scales and activities to emphasise the sense of zooming in and out of subjects.

In the home zone bathroom, after you've composed a track from bathroom sounds as a bathroom DJ, you can hop into a lab-style inventors' area inside a giant bathroom cabinet and create your own toothpaste. Next is an over-scaled, 3D mouth and a 'smile wall', with video showing how to clean your teeth.

We also wanted to offer photo opportunities. The hope is that social-media-savvy young people will have a blast interacting with each area and their friends.

We tried to put ourselves in young people's shoes, never patronising them and avoiding obvious childish tropes such as primary colours and anthropomorphised animals. And of course, remembering to have a sense of humour.

What else are you working on?

Opening in 2023 are new displays at The Portland Collection and the Sands of Speed museum, both in the UK and F1 The Exhibition, a touring exhibition opening in Madrid in March. ●

Yvonne Golds is creative director at Real Studios

NEW MUSEUMS

There are some seriously exciting museums taking shape across the globe. Magali Robathan takes a look at the seven of the best

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Warsaw, Poland

The new headquarters of the Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw (MSN Warsaw) is currently under construction at the foot of the Palace of Culture and Science in Warsaw, and is set to open in 2024.

Designed by the New York City-based architecture studio Thomas Phifer and Partners, the new building covers an area of almost 20,000sq m, with more than 4,500sq m of exhibition space. The building will also feature educational rooms, a conservation workshop, art warehouses and a cinema with a screening room for 150 people, as well as an open auditorium, a reading room, a bistro and a bookshop.

The new premises are part of a two-building complex: the museum and TR Theatre, which will complete the space of Warsaw's future Central Square (now called Plac Defilad).

The new building will also house a recording studio – a reconstruction of the historic Polish Radio Experimental Studio (SEPR) designed in the 1960s by architect Oskar Hansen – available to artists working on musical projects.



Thomas Phifer

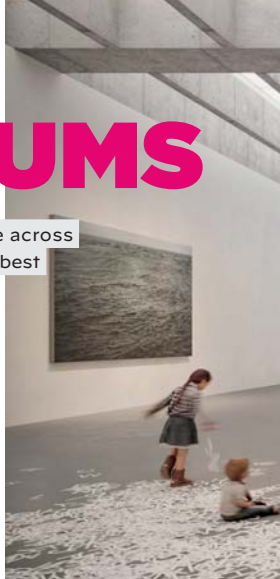




PHOTO: BEAUTY AND THE BIT



Light and shade will create mood



The Museum of Modern Art will have 4,500sq m of exhibition space



The new building is being funded by the City of Warsaw

GRAND EGYPTIAN MUSEUM

Cairo, Egypt

This one was on our list last year, but it looks as though 2023 will be the year this long-awaited project finally opens its doors.

When the Grand Egyptian Museum fully opens, it will be the largest archaeological museum complex in the world, housing more than 100,000 artefacts, including King Tutankhamun's entire treasure collection comprising 5,000 items, as well as items dating from pre-historic times through to the Greek and Roman periods of Egyptian history.

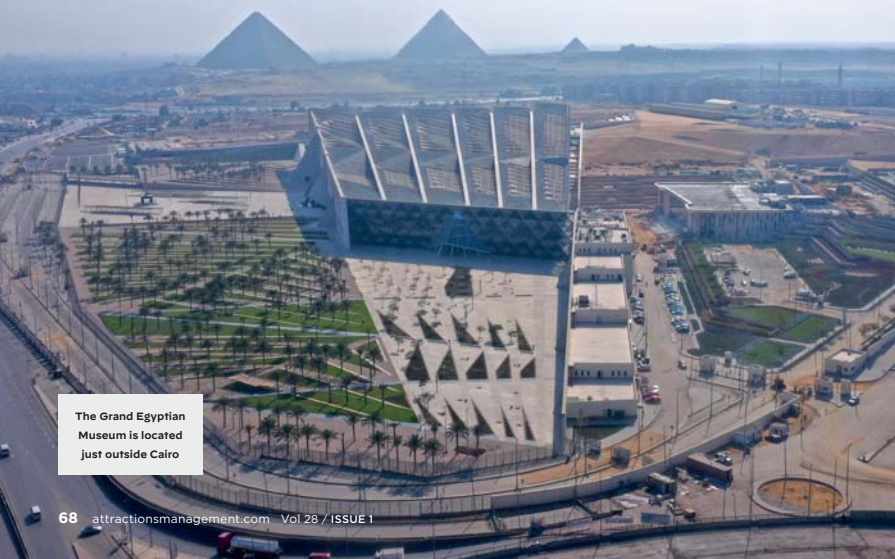
The Egyptian government first announced the launch of a project to establish the GEM back in 1992, but it took until 2002 for the architectural competition to be announced, with Irish architects Heneghan Peng chosen that year. The huge sprawling building rises from the desert like a giant ship, with the exterior covered in pyramid motifs.

With 484,000sq ft of floor space, 12 exhibition halls, 100,000 artefacts, with a reported total cost of \$1bn, this will be a monumental museum – hopefully worth the wait.



The museum will house King Tut's treasure collection

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/MOUNTAINBORG



The Grand Egyptian Museum is located just outside Cairo

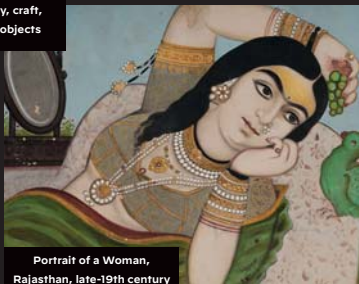
Tarik Currimbhoy, *The Cobra*
1/1, 2022, Stainless steel



The museum will exhibit its collection of Indian art, textiles, photography, craft, and design objects



Jyoti Bhatt, *Children with mehndi on their hands (Rajasthan)*



Portrait of a Woman, Rajasthan, late-19th century

MUSEUM OF ART & PHOTOGRAPHY Bangalore, India

Developed to act as a beacon for South Asian arts and culture worldwide, the Museum of Art & Photography (MAP) in Bangalore is the first new public museum to open in India in a decade.

MAP's growing collection of more than 60,000 works ranges widely across all periods and includes paintings, sculptures and graphics, exhibited alongside textiles, tribal art and memorabilia of India's Bollywood industry. According to the museum founders, it 'deliberately blurs the boundaries between what is regarded as high art and the everyday creativity of the region's communities.' The photography collection is one of the most extensive in India with a particular focus on the period from the mid-nineteenth century.

The 44,000sq ft building housing the museum is located in the heart of Bangalore's museum quarter and was designed by Bangalore-based architects, Mathew & Ghosh. It includes four large galleries, a café and a restaurant, an auditorium, library, and a conservation laboratory.

The inaugural exhibition will provide a glimpse of the story the collections show. Titled *Visible/Invisible*, it includes a retrospective of photographs by printmaker and painter Jyoti Bhatti and the first solo show by visual artist LN Tallur, while the museum's sculpture garden will host an installation by Stephen Cox alongside commissions by Arik Levy, Ayesha Singh and Tarik Currimbhoy.

Kamini Sawhney, Director of MAP, said: "We want MAP Museum of Art & Photography to be accessible to everyone, and to speak especially to a young generation whose visual experiences are so greatly influenced by the digital world. More than half of our population are under 25 years old; no country has more young people. We're fortunate to have been able to start from scratch thinking in an integrated way about how to approach audiences we couldn't have dreamt of reaching through the building alone."



Kamini Sawhney

MUSEUMS

The Kenneth C. Griffin
Exploration Atrium, a soaring,
four-story civic space



**RICHARD GILDER CENTER FOR
SCIENCE, EDUCATION,
AND INNOVATION**
New York, US

Designed by Studio Gang, the dramatic new Richard Gilder Center for Science, Education and Innovation is set to open in the winter of 2023.

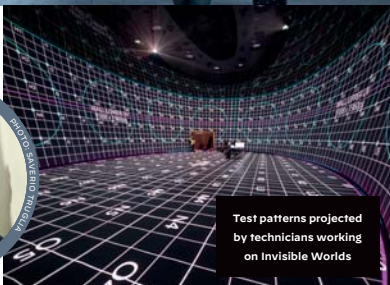
The 230,000sq ft addition to the American Museum of Natural History – which connects physically to the main museum building – will include three floors of exhibits inviting 'exploration of the fascinating, far-reaching relationships among species that comprise life on Earth.'

Highlights include a 3,000sq ft butterfly vivarium showcasing 80 species of live butterflies, a 5,000sq ft insectarium and a vertical collections facility featuring floor-to-ceiling exhibits representing every area of the museum's collections in vertebrate and invertebrate biology, paleontology, geology, anthropology, and archaeology.

It also features *Invisible Worlds*, a 360-degree immersive science-and-art experience, new classrooms and a four-storey civic space that also acts as a new gateway into the museum.



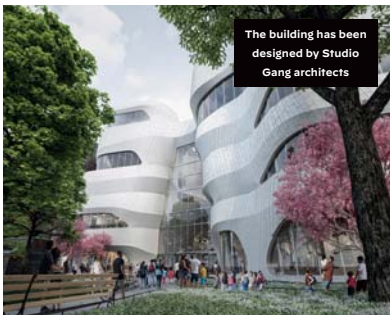
Jeanne Gang



Test patterns projected
by technicians working
on *Invisible Worlds*

PHOTO: THATCHER SCIENCE/© AMNH

PHOTO: NEDSCAPE, INC. / © AMNH



The building has been
designed by Studio
Gang architects

FACTORY INTERNATIONAL MANCHESTER, UK

Named after Manchester's famous record label Factory Records, major new arts and cultural centre Factory International is set to open in June 2023.

The centre will be housed in a 13,350sq m building designed by architects OMA, which will include a 21m-high warehouse with capacity for up to 5,000 people. The building has been designed to be highly flexible so it can accommodate varied set-ups, from small theatre shows and exhibitions, to huge multimedia performances and warehouse-scale gigs. It will host a year-round programme of dance, theatre, music, visual arts, performance, installation and digital commissions.

Its public spaces will host activities such as family-friendly workshops, pop-up food stalls, music, workshops and markets – many of them free for everyone.

The opening production *Free Your Mind* – a large-scale immersive performance based on *The Matrix* films – is being directed by Danny Boyle and will feature choreography by Kenrick 'H2O' Sandy and stage sets by designer Es Devlin. Factory International will act as the centrepiece of the 2023 Manchester International Festival in July, with a major exhibition of Yayoi Kusama's inflatable sculptures, *You, Me and the Balloons*, in its main warehouse space.

PHOTO: YAYOI KUSAMA, COURTESY OF OYA FINE ARTS, VICTORIA MIRO AND DAVID ZWERNER



Yayoi Kusama and Dots Obsession, 1996-2011 Installation
view: The Watari Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo.



PHOTO: JEREMY COVSTEN @NORTHEDESIGN

The opening production is based on *The Matrix* films

The 13,350sq m building can be refigured to accommodate a variety of set ups



PHOTO: OMA

INTERNATIONAL AFRICAN AMERICAN MUSEUM

Charleston, US

Following two decades of planning, the hotly anticipated International African American Museum in Charleston, US, is set to open this summer. Originally due to open in January 2023, the launch has been pushed back due to problems with humidity and temperature controls.

Located on the former site of Gadsden's Wharf – one of the nation's most prolific slave trading ports – the International African American Museum aims to give visitors the opportunity to engage with authentic and lesser-known history through transformative storytelling, compelling artefacts and exhibitions, as well as its unique setting. According to its founders, the mission of the museum is to: 'Honour the untold story of the African American journey at one of America's most sacred sites'.

The museum will feature nine galleries ranging in theme from introducing the African origins and diasporic connections of African Americans to taking 'an unvarnished look at slavery and enslaved people's fight for human dignity.'

"This museum will be a must-see space of courageous curiosity and authentic engagement with our nation's history – with African American



PHOTO: LUCINDA MACHBERSON

The museum will use 'transformative storytelling'

history," says Dr Tonya Matthews, president and CEO of the International African American Museum.

"Committed reckoning with history is a necessary stop on the road to healing and reconciliation. Charleston is a port city, a global city, a historic city – and there is no better place for our museum to steward these stories that have such national and international significance and impact."



Dr Tonya Matthews



PHOTO: ELIAS CHIEK PHOTOGRAPHY

Nine galleries will explore African American history

The Gallery's entire portrait collection is being rehung

NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY London, UK

London's National Portrait Gallery is set to reopen in June 2023, following the most significant redevelopment in its history. Visitors to the museum will see a complete top-to-bottom redisplay of the collection, a new 'more open and accessible entrance and forecourt' and a 'transformational refurbishment' of the Grade I listed building and many of its historic features.

The redevelopment project – designed by Jamie Fobert Architects and titled *Inspiring People* – will see the gallery's entire collection reorganised and rehung in refurbished galleries and will also see the return of the Gallery's East Wing to public use as the Weston Wing, restoring original gallery spaces and creating new retail and catering facilities. A new Learning Centre will feature studios, breakout spaces, and high-quality facilities.

The redevelopment will enable the gallery to become "more welcoming and engaging and fulfil our role as the nation's family album," said Nicholas Cullinan, National Portrait Gallery director. "We eagerly look forward to welcoming visitors back into our transformed Gallery in June."

Since closure, the National Portrait Gallery has facilitated a number of partnerships with

museums, local groups and schools, with the aim of bringing its collection closer to communities across the UK.

The *Coming Home* project saw more than 30 portraits of well known figures including Virginia Woolf, Stormzy and Jessica Ennis-Hill exhibited in their hometowns. In 2020, the Gallery undertook a community exhibition called *Hold Still*, resulting in a collective portrait of the UK during the first national lockdown. ●



Nicholas Cullinan



The project aims to make the gallery more accessible

PHOTO: JAMIE FOBERT ARCHITECTS FOR BIE MASSIE



SCREAMING FOR SCREENING

Merlin's London Dungeon teamed up with social agency Rocket to help young adults improve their sexual health in a highly innovative campaign. Merlin's Hannah Ferguson tells us more

With its edgy brand,
the London Dungeon
appeals to young people



PHOTO: HANNAH FERGUSON

Hannah Ferguson



***We especially loved the
skits we created with our
Victorian sex doctor using
the terms Villagers with
Vaginas and Peasants with
Penises – not being too
gender specific was our
goal and it really worked***



ictorian-era England was
known for its high prevalence
of sexually transmitted
infections, with syphilis and
gonorrhoea causing serious

health problems across all social classes. Fast
forward to 2021 where most chlamydia and
gonorrhoea diagnoses were in people aged
15 to 24 years, with a 13 per cent decline in
testing and a 3 per cent increase in diagnosis.

As Merlin's London Dungeon attraction is
based on the darker side of the city's history,
has an edgy brand and is highly popular
with young adults, its marketing team saw a
unique opportunity to get the message out
about the need to test for STIs, and teamed
up with youth marketing agency Rocket.

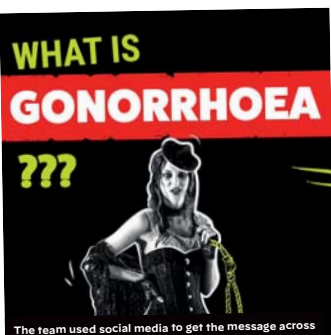
Partnering with sexual health charity Brook,
the team developed a social media strategy
spanning across Facebook, Instagram, Twitter
and – most successfully – TikTok, with the
launch of the London Dungeon brand-first owned
TikTok channel. The London Dungeon also used
their actors to create educational skits within
the attraction, and provided information and
resources at the Dungeon's Tavern, which was
temporarily renamed The Cock and Beaver.

Here Hannah Ferguson talks us through
the campaign, and why it was so effective.

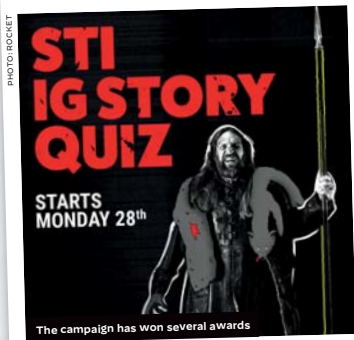


PHOTO: MERLIN ENTERTAINMENTS

PHOTO: ROCKET



The London Dungeon is continuing its partnership with health charity Brook



► Hannah Ferguson, head of marketing at Merlin Entertainments

What was the aim of this campaign?

We wanted to break the stigma around talking about sexual health, especially among young adults who are our core demographic.

The London Dungeon is based on dark history, and Victorian era England was well known for its high prevalence of STIs, particularly syphilis and gonorrhoea. We didn't want history to repeat itself, as both are on the rise again in London, so we decided it was an issue we could support in the 21st century with our Screaming for Screening campaign.

Why did the London Dungeon choose Rocket and Brook as partners to get this message out to young people?

Rocket helped us launch our TikTok account in May 2021 and its team just get our brand and tone of voice. The agency has its finger on the pulse when it comes to TikTok and other social trends and instinctively knows how to make brilliant content that fits the platform. Our partnership with Rocket and Brook has been hugely successful and this particular campaign has been recognised with several awards.

The charity Brook is the only one to offer both clinical sexual health services – as well as those for education and wellbeing – for young people and its team are comfortable talking about sexual health day in, day out. Brook was open to our ideas and could see the benefits of getting involved in a partnership that would help them talk to people outside their regular audience.



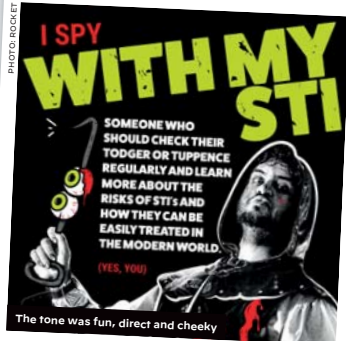
And why did the London Dungeon decide to do this?

The campaign dealt with an issue that has context and alliance with the historical element of our attraction. Although STIs affect all ages, they mainly impact young adults between 15 to 24 years, which is the age of many of our guests. When we first launched the campaign back in 2021 (it's had further bursts since then) our seasonal show was around Victorian surgery and had a health focus. We used our well-known characters, such as the Plague Doctor, to bring the topic to life. Our brand tone of voice and edgy approach means we can talk to young people on their level and tackle the language barrier head on.

Skits were
designed especially
for the campaign

PHOTO: ROCKET

PHOTO: ROCKET



“

TikTok was a new social channel for the London Dungeon – being on it brings the brand to life in a new way

What were the results?

We had a dedicated area within the London Dungeon ‘tavern’, which we renamed ‘The Cock & Beaver’, where we provided resources for guests and had staff on hand to answer questions about the campaign. We found that young people were really open to asking questions and took an interest in the resources we had available. Meanwhile, our TikTok campaign got lots of traction and we were delighted the conversation was flowing.

Can you highlight any particularly successful elements of this campaign?

TikTok was a new social channel for London Dungeon and being on it felt innovative and exciting. It’s been a huge growth channel that we use predominantly for awareness and engagement with our audience. We’ve really enjoyed following trends and making TikToks, as opposed to just creating adverts; it brings the brand to life in a new way. We especially loved the skits we

created with our Victorian sex doctor, where we pushed the boundaries in an educational but fun way. We were also able to remain inclusive by using the terms ‘Villagers with Vaginas’ and ‘Peasants with Penises’ – not being too gender specific was our goal and it really worked.

What are the implications of the success of this campaign for the attractions sector?

Hopefully we can inspire other attractions to take up their own causes. It’s also been a great business case for us internally to showcase the benefits of branching out and engaging with a new audience, even if it feels scary and out of our comfort zone.

Does the London Dungeon have any plans for similar campaigns in the future?

Yes. We’re entering the third year of our partnership with Brook, so will continue to make great content – but we’re always on the lookout for new partners, as the landscape is ever-changing and we want to stay relevant. ●

“

Game-inspired attractions represent a largely unrealised IP at theme parks

On the RIGHT TRACK

US theme parks are seeing growth again and with innovation in key areas, they could appeal to a wider clientele, according to new research. Mintel's Mike Gallinari makes sense of the numbers



Mike Gallinari

PHOTO: UNIVERSAL THEME PARKS & RESORTS



It's been a rollercoaster few years, but the US theme park industry is broadly back on track against its pre-pandemic growth trajectory, having generated an estimated US\$22.9bn in revenue in 2022.

As parks reopened, sales rebounded from the pandemic decline, however, the recovery isn't complete, as international travellers have yet to return in full. While only accounting for 10 to 20 per cent of guests, they tend to spend more than domestic guests on high-margin items; as a result, the full potential of theme park revenues is still waiting to be realised.

According to Mintel, year-on-year growth for theme park holidays is projected to be a little slower than in the years preceding the pandemic. The steadiness in growth, however, doesn't mean the industry is without headwinds due to economic factors. Inflation continues to dog consumers, making them reconsider their discretionary spending.

THEME PARK HOLIDAYS

Travel's roaring rebound has brought about a reorganisation of holiday priorities, meaning theme park trips have been pushed down the list of desired options. So while theme park visitation has recovered in general, the rebound

has come on the back of single-day visits, leaving multi-day trips with ground to make up.

Mintel's consumer research confirms the challenges the industry faces. The reality is that for many, theme park holidays aren't a top travel priority. Only 34 per cent of Americans say this would be one of their top five choices in the next year and in returning to travel, consumers are instead setting their sights on beach holidays and road trips.

Theme park visits are also considered a big undertaking by some. Among travellers considering this kind of holiday, 76 per cent say such trips are expensive and nearly half say they're exhausting to plan, so making the experience more frictionless could help business.

THE OPPORTUNITIES

Game-inspired attractions represent a largely unrealised IP at theme parks, which have historically been built on the back of movie properties, harking back to Disneyland's leaning on its animated film characters.

Just as media has evolved in the years since that park's opening in 1955, so too have media preferences. To this end, potential theme park vacationers say that video game IPs (39 per cent) are second only to movies (47 per cent) when it



Universal is tapping into gaming IPs with the launch of Super Nintendo World

comes to seeing IP-inspired rides and attractions in parks. With relatively few video game IPs appearing in theme parks, there's potential for partnerships, such as that being undertaken by Universal with its Super Nintendo World launches.

Prospective visitors were also asked about secondary spend. Fast pass/line skipping (56 per cent) took priority, followed by dining/drink deals (52 per cent) and early entry (44 per cent).

VISITOR PRIORITIES

These responses show holidaymakers aren't just concerned with moving through the park quickly; otherwise, early entry would hold more weight. Rather, they're thinking about the quality of their visit. A park-affiliated travel provider that can provide for this will be more appealing to travellers.

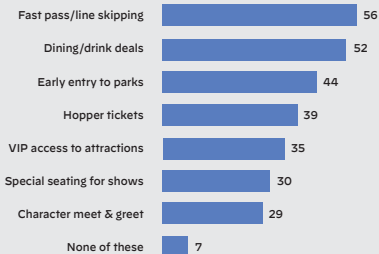
Offering deals on fast passes or early entry could convince guests to choose to stay on-property, as opposed to in cheaper, unaffiliated hotels. The same can be said for offering in-park dining credits, which can be appealing given that over half (58 per cent) of the sample say they'd rather eat at the park than at an affiliated hotel.

All these changes will help parks to increasingly welcome back greater numbers of theme park travellers as the market continues to strengthen. ●

WILLINGNESS TO SPEND ON PARK EXTRAS, 2022

"What are you willing to spend more on while during a theme park holiday? Please select all that apply."

Base: 682 internet users aged 18+ who would consider a theme park vacation in the next 12 months



Source: Kantar Profiles/Mintel

FISH TALE

Inspired by shimmering fish scales and housing exhibition and event spaces, a private cinema and a rooftop terrace, this floating visitor centre aims to explore more sustainable ways of feeding the planet

The cladding of the Kvorning-designed visitor centre was inspired by fish scales



Arne Kvorning of Kvorning Design, who designed the new visitor centre

The Salmon Eye centre aims to educate visitors about the future of fish farming

FAST FACTS

Project: Salmon Eye
Client: Eide Fjordbruk, Hålandsdalen, Norway
Location: Hardangerfjord at Hågardneset just outside Rosendal, Norway
Architecture and experience design: Kvorning Design, Denmark
AV: Creative Technology Norway
Contractor AS: Fluctus, Norway
Fabrication: Marketex Marine, Estonia
Project period: 2019-2022

A new floating visitor centre and art installation is showcasing aquaculture, informing the world on how to better feed the planet with sustainable seafood. Called Salmon Eye, the aquaculture centre is located in Norway's Hardangerfjord, just outside the town of Rosendal.

Created by Kvorning Design, the project was conceived and financed by Sondre Eide, the CEO of third-generation salmon farming business Eide Fjordbruk.

A world-class visitor and learning centre, Salmon Eye aims to highlight the impact of aquaculture and its production techniques. The centre is intended to be a leading forum for learning, teaching and holding open discussions about the future of fish farming.

The aim is to build and evolve toward creating highly sustainable means of aquaculture practices.

Measuring 1,000sq m and with a height of 14,55m, the interior space spans four levels. The exterior

DATA

Double-curved ellipsoid structure
Height: 14,55 m spanning 4 levels (above and below the water)
Area: 1,000.6 square meters
Weight: 1,256 tons
Location: Located above 300m depth, designed and built to withstand over 4m waves
Access: Guided visits by electric boats from Rosendal, Norway.



design of the centre mimics the shiny, silvery skin of salmon and the shape takes after the fish's eye – which means it can be seen from miles away.

Arne Kvorning, CEO of Kvorning Design – and mastermind of the architectural design of the pavilion – said: "Salmon Eye will become an international design icon for Eide Fjordbruk and revolutionise sustainable aquaculture in the future."

"I'm convinced the floating aquaculture visitor attraction and art installation will set new standards for sustainable aquaculture in every aspect."

"I'm thrilled to see how the initial ideas have emerged intact – from design, interaction, research and technology to the realisation of the immersive experience."

"Salmon Eye looks completely like our early visuals. It has been fantastic to design the floating pavilion together with such a trusting, ambitious and visionary entrepreneur like Sondre Eide, the Eide family, and the dedicated team at Eide Fjordbruk who believed in the idea and envisioned its full potential from the very beginning three years ago." ●

THE ART OF PERSONALISATION

Advances in AI are bringing enhanced personalisation to the online visitor experience. Andy Povey explains how you can use audience-based engagement tools to increase conversion rates and create better experiences for guests

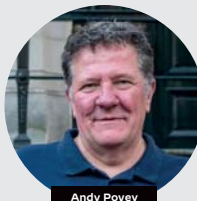


PHOTO: CONVOYUS

Andy Povey

Today, the visitor's journey begins online, often long before they visit their destination. This makes it vital your Google searchability, website usability/UX and representation by partners is carefully implemented.

One key difference between offline and online is the ability to offer a personalised experience. In person, it's easy to recognise someone, make them feel valued and flow to the next stage of an interaction accordingly.

Online however, this presents a challenge. A visitor to your website could be encountering your operation for the first time, they could be a returning visitor, someone who previously abandoned a cart or who already has tickets and is checking final details for their visit. This presents an obvious need for the information they see to be tailored accordingly.

IDENTIFYING BUYER PERSONAS

Personalisation is a game-changer for attractions, especially given the industry is all about delivering peak experiences. This hinges around providing relevant experiences to visitors at all times, bridging the gap between unfiltered exposure to your business and their needs.

Research has shown that 76 per cent of customers are tired of generic experiences

and are more engaged when content speaks directly to them, quickly meeting their needs at that given moment.

Today's online customer is smart, well-informed, empowered and time-conscious. Statistics show that people are likely to leave a web page within 10 – 20 seconds if they don't see what they're looking for, leaving you very little time to capture their attention.

To help with this targeting, we need to create and understand our 'buyer personas'. When creating these, you're picturing your 'best customer' in the target segment and working to gain more insight into their habits, attitudes, behaviours and challenges – not to manipulate them, but to provide them with higher value.

DATA-DRIVEN PERSONALISATION

It's essential to understand how your specific users behave, what they expect, their buying habits and how you make them feel, to improve the user experience.

You can achieve this using AI and predictive analytics to recognise where a customer is on their buying journey so you can deliver a clear and targeted value proposition.

For example, if a customer has abandoned their cart, the AI will recognise it's the same person and start from that



AI and apps can be used to alert visitors to special events, such as feeding times

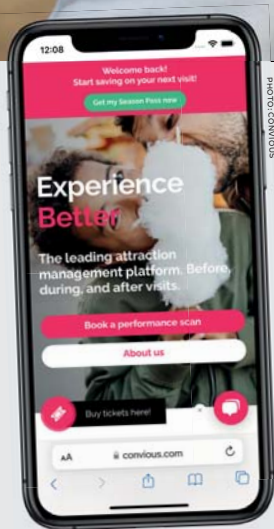


PHOTO: CONIVOUS

Customers are tired of generic experiences

“ Research shows 76% of customers are tired of generic experiences and are more engaged when web content meets their needs

stage of the messaging cycle, rather than beginning the process again at the start.

Destinations can use this knowledge to create profiles that group visitors into different audiences. This can include first time visitors, repeat visitors and those who pre-booked tickets and are revisiting the website to check details such as opening times or parking.

CUSTOMER JOURNEY

However, obtaining good data is only half the story. The key is understanding it, segmenting it and knowing how to use it.



AI can be used to customise the visitor journey, driving overall satisfaction rates

- The first step is to collect, sort and analyse visitor data. From here, templates can be created for predefined audiences, based on where they are in their personal purchasing journey.

Customised calls to action and a system that adjusts to the customer's way of buying – rather than expecting them to adapt to your way of selling – mean they're more likely to make desired decisions. This creates win-win outcomes for visitors and attractions and is a proven method of optimising booking conversion rates.

To make the messaging more effective and keep repetitive manual work to a minimum, have templates styled for your brand, make them available in multiple languages.

FROM DIGITAL TO PHYSICAL

Once at the destination, it's important to ensure that this level of personalisation and seamless customer experience continues, with a smooth transition from online to the physical space.

The most effective way to do this is by connecting the journey through an app that guests can access on their personal devices. This needs to have the ability to store purchased tickets and reservations in an e-ticket wallet for a seamless entrance.

Data similar to that obtained during their online journey can now be applied to the physical space, with destinations targeting guests based

on GPS locations to share personalised and automated push notifications for upsells and offers, with easy purchasing and ordering within the app. Guests can use these geo location features to plan their day, find quieter areas of the attraction and locate key services.

To finish the personalisation cycle, it's important to find out what individuals think, so that you can finish the conversation you've been having with them throughout their visitor experience. It's also a great opportunity to turn someone into a repeat visitor.

OPERATOR BENEFITS

In an increasingly digitised world, these tools for getting to know your online audience are essential. Personalisation across the visitor cycle gives operators the chance to connect with their guests from that very first interaction.

This allows you to enhance guest experiences by organising your marketing efforts and give them the exact information they need. By streamlining the process and better identifying customers' pain points, needs and wants, conversion rates increase. By learning from the data and your customer personas, you can improve your products and services by offering personalised upsells, helping to curate the customer experience even further. ●

Andy Povey is with www.convivous.com

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SimEx-Iwerks reveals first customised fly film in collaboration with Red Raion

Immersive cinema specialist SimEx-Iwerks, which celebrates its 30th anniversary in 2023, has created its first custom-production fly film in collaboration with CGI specialist, Red Raion.

Frostbite: Dino Island III takes guests to a mysterious island in Antarctica to see frozen dinosaurs which have been preserved within ice caves for 65 million years.

Without warning, a nearby volcano erupts and the ice caves experience dramatic flash melting, causing the dinosaurs to unfreeze, coming alive and leaving guests face-to-face with the world's fiercest predators.

Available for worldwide distribution in early 2023, the film has been made for the SimEx-Iwerks FlyRide theatre which launched in 2020. This family-focused attraction takes guests on a series of adventures as they fly and dive through the action on the screen.

"Similar to what we did for our 4D and motion attractions, we're now drawing on our experience to build a catalogue of high-quality, adventure-based flying theatre films," said Mike Frueh, SimEx-Iwerks' senior VP of licensing and distribution on the launch of *Frostbite: Dino Island III*.

"*Frostbite* is distinctly different from the live-action, regional-based themes of most flying films," he said.

SimEx-Iwerks produced the film in partnership with Red

The fly film brings guests face-to-face with dinosaurs



PHOTO: SIMEX-IWERKS ENTERTAINMENT



PHOTO: SIMEX-IWERKS ENTERTAINMENT

The film has been made for the FlyRide theatre

Raion, who created the CGI content for the experience.

Valeria Rizzo, business development director at Red Raion, said: "Our team is thrilled to be part of the newest chapter of SimEx-Iwerks' highly successful *Dino Island* franchise."

The launch of the customised content is part of SimEx-Iwerks Entertainment's year-long celebration of its 30th anniversary which kicked off at IAAPA in

Orlando in November 2022 and will run throughout 2023.

During the year-long celebration, SimEx-Iwerks says it will announce three new experiential attractions; the first of which is the newly-developed Immersion Theater, which will deliver a 'next-level, fully immersive experience from entry to exit'.

[attractions-kit](https://attractions-kit.net) keyword

SimEx-Iwerks

LCI Productions delivered 20m projection mapped tree at Longleat's Festival of Light

The Festival of Light returned to Longleat Safari & Adventure Park in Wiltshire, UK, at Christmas after a two-year hiatus due to COVID-19, placing storytelling at the heart of the experience.

The Wondrous Worlds of Roald Dahl trail invited visitors to meet their favourite childhood characters from the Road Dahl collections including *James and the Giant Peach*, *Fantastic Mr Fox*, *Matilda*, *The Twits* and *Danny the Champion of the World*. The lantern trail illuminated more than 30 acres of the park using projection mapping and light displays.

"The IP for Roald Dahl was secured back in 2019 and the team unanimously agreed that it would be a fantastic family favourite to return with," said Daisy Mercedes, event & product development manager at Longleat Safari & Adventure Park.

"Every year we come up with a new narrative for the lanterns and use audio and lighting effects to bring the stories to life and create an enchanting

experience for visitors. The creation and planning of the lantern show took more than two years – finally opening the park with such a unique theme was an incredible experience."

The annual Festival of Light also featured a 20m projection mapped Christmas tree which marked the end of the lantern trail. The concept and design of the tree was delivered by design specialists LCI Productions.

"The tree forms part of a projection mapped show, which uses a 52m-wide Longleat stable building to project upon, said LCI Productions design director Rob Paul.

"We designed the tree using more than 100,000 LEDs – it's controlled by 14 pixelators, each of which run on 24 light chains. We programme these to create animated sequences, controlled using a 2x2 Disguise media server."

LCI delivered the full audio, visual and lighting production, including technical design, concept creation, original media and audio scores, installation, show programming and onsite maintenance throughout the live dates. This included hand stitching the LEDs on to the rolled steel tree frame to form an accurate grid pattern.

"The original content has been created by our in-house team of character artists, animators and motion graphic experts to include festive imagery and mischievous elves," said Paul.

attractions-kit keyword
LCI Productions



Longleat's Festival of Light had a Roald Dahl theme



The 20m-high tree featured more than 100,000 LEDs



Guests enter the theme park with a tap of their MagicBand+

Disney launches wearable MagicBand+ for Disneyland Resort

Disney is using wearable technology to provide guests at its Disneyland Resort in Anaheim, California, with "hands-free conveniences and immersive experiences".

The new MagicBand+ wristband unlocks a new dimension of Disney

storytelling and marks the first time guests can utilise a smart device of its kind across the park.

Described as a next-generation wearable, the rechargeable and waterproof band enables guests to see and feel select park

experiences through customisable features, from colour-changing LED lights and haptic vibrations to gesture recognition.

The bands create "surprising and magical touches" at certain locations at the resort's Avengers Campus, for example, while night-time spectacles become "even more dazzling," as MagicBand+ illuminates and pulses in sync with special moments.

Disneyland Resort president, Ken Potrock, said: "We're always looking for innovative ways to make magic."

"MagicBand+ is another way we are leveraging technology to delight our guests and create experiences that are unlike any other."

"This is just the beginning, we have plans to continue to grow MagicBand+ offerings at Disneyland Resort."



Disney has launched its MagicBand+ at Disneyland Resort

attractions-management keyword

Disney



The Qube simulator was unveiled at IAAPA

Triotech unveils Qube simulator

Triotech revealed its new Qube simulator – an interactive multiplayer coin-op game – at IAAPA Expo in Orlando, Florida.

Triotech described the game as an “attendant free four player simulator that requires a low footprint and provides high immersion.”

The Qube simulator features a 4k projected display, four motion

seats, wind blasters, 5.1 surround sound system, and a full library of content powered by the Unreal game engine.

According to the designers, the game was inspired by Triotech’s XD Dark Ride interactive theatre – the aim was to develop a new game that is affordable, attendant-free and fits

PHOTO: TRIOTECH



Ernest Yale

into a much smaller footprint, making it accessible for arcades and family entertainment centres.

“Qube was born from the idea of disrupting the deluxe coin-op video game world by combining the robustness and reliability

expected from a coin operated product with an unparalleled sense of immersion,” said Ernest Yale, CEO & founder of Triotech.

“Key to Qube’s success is the fact that we worked closely with customers and distributors during the development and testing phase.

“The product was designed through close and operators of FECs and arcades,” added Yale. “This helped balance excellent game-play, look, and appeal with other important operator benefits such as durability and ease of maintenance.” ●

attractions-kit keyword

Triotech



Qube features four motion seats and a 4k display

PHOTO: TRIOTECH

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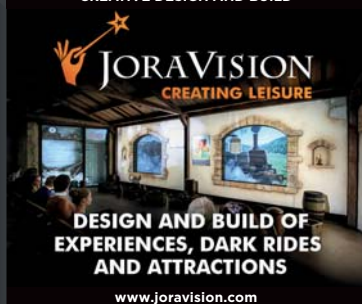
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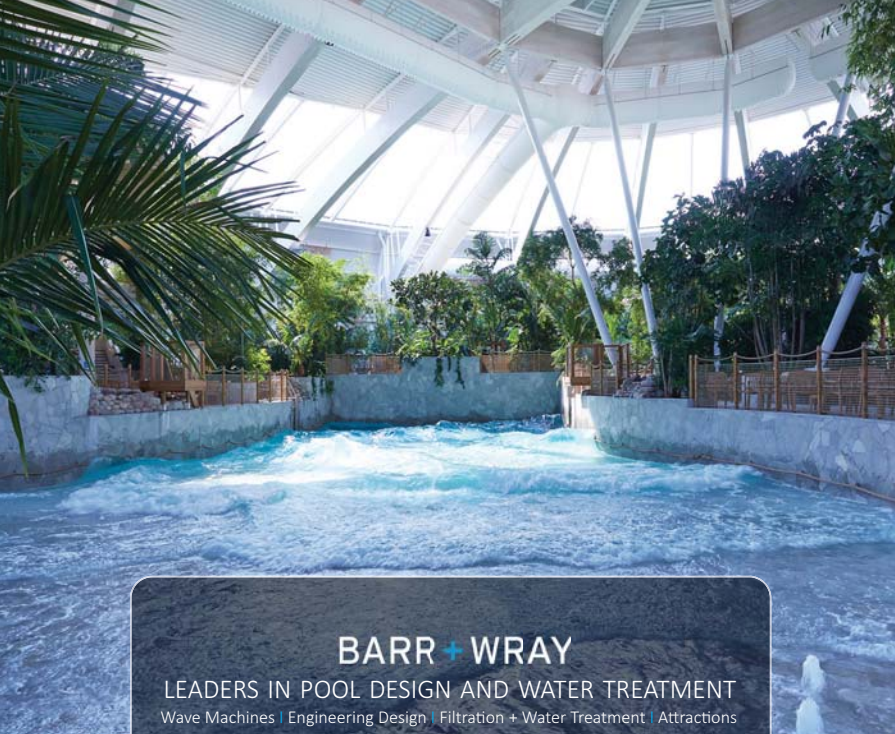
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