

# Attractions

## MANAGEMENT

@attractionsmag

Volume 27 Issue 4

### "Who is this girl?"

How Ramona Bass transformed Fort Worth Zoo

### COST OF LIVING CRISIS

*How to keep visitors coming*

### The path to reconciliation

Justin Trudeau at Canada's Indigenous Peoples Experience

# ES DEVLIN

**THE WORLD'S HER STAGE** p12



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# Creating change

This industry has the potential to transform the world around us - and we've never needed it more than we do now



In the summer, Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau visited the Indigenous Peoples Experience at living history museum Fort Edmonton Park in Edmonton, Canada. Opened in 2021, this immersive exhibit explores the history and culture of Canada's Indigenous peoples via stories, artworks, artefacts and music. Crucially, it tells their story in their voice - the information has been collected via interviews with elders and community members, and all of the staff working in the space are Indigenous.

On p20 we interview Evert Poor, Indigenous narratives supervisor at Fort Edmonton Park, who showed Trudeau around. Poor explains that the museum is about far more than just giving visitors a memorable experience - it's a space for visitors to speak to Indigenous people and ask difficult questions. It addresses the colonial narrative that infers that history didn't start until the Europeans arrived in North America, and, crucially, it aims to become a tool for reconciliation. And for Poor, it's highly personal - Poor's mother grew up in one of Canada's notorious residential schools, and he has made it his mission to tell her story.

Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 calls to action included several actions for museums - demonstrating the potential of our industry to create real change.

Museums and attractions are powerful tools for change because they can connect us emotionally to history and culture in a unique way. They can build bridges and foster unity, make us think and question ourselves, and they reach out to large audiences.

This issue is full of examples of the impact our industry has on the world - we interview Fort Worth Zoo co-chair Ramona Bass on p36, who has transformed what was once a



The Indigenous Peoples Museum aims to be a tool for reconciliation

PHOTO: FORT EDMONTON PARK

***The museum is about more than just giving visitors a memorable experience***

depressing zoo into a place of conservation, education and fun that's helping to protect future species. Es Devlin, featured on p12 uses her profile to convey her message about climate change. And Gordon Hartland, founder of Morgan's Wonderland, speaks on p10 about how launching a theme park designed with visitors with special needs in mind has helped change the conversation around inclusion and seen real advances.

This industry provides fun and entertainment, but so much more. It has the potential to change attitudes and improve lives, and that's something we've never needed more.

Magali Robathan, editor



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Margaret Kerrison



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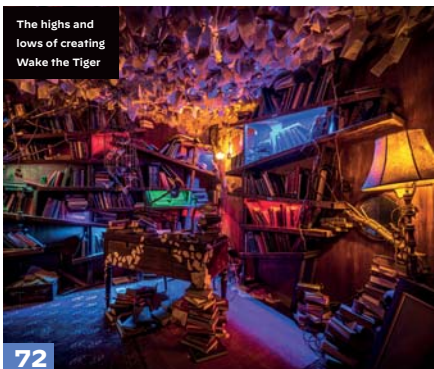
PHOTO: PHILIP GRENDL

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PHOTO: ANDRE PATTENSON

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# Write to Reply

Let us know what you think about the issues that matter to the industry. We'd love to hear from you [letters@leisuremedia.com](mailto:letters@leisuremedia.com)

“

***We've seen a welcome shift to more inclusion-centric thinking and action. Together, we're making a difference***

**Gordon Hartman, dad and founder, Morgan's Wonderland**



PHOTO: MORGAN'S WONDERLAND

I read the recent article in *Attractions Management* on helping to make museums and attractions more inclusive with interest. [AM Issue 2 2022]

In 2010 we launched Morgan's Wonderland in San Antonio, Texas, US – the first theme park designed with individuals with special needs in mind. The completely wheelchair-accessible park features more than 25 elements, including rides, playgrounds, and other colourful attractions. From the very beginning, anyone with a special need has been admitted free of charge, no questions asked.

When we opened Morgan's Wonderland, our belief was: Together, we can make a difference! During the ensuing years, we've seen a welcome shift to more inclusion-centric thinking and action. Thus, we've amended our belief to: Together, we are making a difference!

Earlier this year, we were delighted to help host the 2022 Amusement Today Golden Ticket Awards. Discussions with colleagues from throughout the industry suggested that much more thought is being given to inclusion and accessibility so our guests can have the best time.



Morgan's Wonderland was designed for everyone

PHOTO: MORGAN'S WONDERLAND

Further embracing inclusion was my message – think about modifications and practices that make attractions more accessible for visitors with physical and cognitive special needs. At Morgan's Wonderland, we've trademarked Ultra Accessible to serve as our guide in creating all of our follow-on ventures – Morgan's Inspiration Island splash park, Morgan's Wonderland Sports complex, Morgan's Wonderland Camp and our new Multi-Assistance Center at Morgan's Wonderland, which brings together more than 30 organisations to tackle medical and non-medical problems confronting individuals with special needs.

We're so focused on inclusion that we've incorporated it into the name of our umbrella organisation, Morgan's Inclusion Initiative, which we established to coordinate all our inclusion-centric endeavours.

To learn more, visit [www.GoInclusion.com](http://www.GoInclusion.com).



PHOTO: MORGAN'S WONDERLAND



“

**Let's fast track our future leaders and show them an industry that can deliver a career like no other**

**Fiona Eastwood, COO, midway attractions and executive champion for inclusion and diversity, Merlin Entertainments**



The XCalibre Rising scheme aims to increase diversity

PHOTO: MERLIN ENTERTAINMENTS

In October I was delighted to welcome Merlin's first cohort of young people starting our brand-new accelerated management programme, which is targeted directly at our global frontline staff. Entitled XCalibre Rising (we always love to continue a theme), it is the sister programme to our senior management scheme called XCalibre – which has been running now for over a decade. This new Rising version, however, was created with two main goals in mind.

The first goal was to really live our values. As Merlin's executive lead of inclusion and diversity, part of my role is to champion and drive real concrete actions, to deliver the words of our I&D vision: 'Everyone Matters at Merlin'.

At Merlin we see a good amount of diversity in our frontline staff – both ethnically as well as in gender. Many young people come to the industry as seasonal workers or take up a role as part of a summer job, but as you then move up the company and our grading system, we start to see less diversity and a larger disparity between the genders. It's something that myself and the whole of the Merlin executive team are resolute about changing.

We knew that if we wanted to make meaningful change, we needed to start from the beginning of the career journey: cue XCalibre Rising. The idea is much like one of our fast rollercoasters (think Rita at Alton Towers or Stealth at Thorpe Park). We need to get talented individuals on board early, build a robust and sturdy framework, ensure there are tools and power which allow for quick acceleration and then LAUNCH.....with real momentum!

We first communicated the programme in June, and I was delighted to hear we'd been inundated with entries from across the world. The final cohort was eventually whittled down to 14 successful candidates, who come from across a range of attractions in the USA, Australia,



UK, Germany and the Netherlands. For some of those candidates, it was the first time they had travelled away from home and out of their country – a huge, but very exciting step.

Coming back to the main aims around the programme, the second reason it was created was more broadly around showcasing this industry. We want to demonstrate to these young people that as a business within the industry, we offer a long-term and really exciting career – one which, unlike many other sectors, can take you anywhere in the world - is creative, exciting, inspiring and ultimately, immensely rewarding.

For us the programme is about more than just supporting our talented young people; it's about showcasing the fact that you can have a long and rewarding career in the attractions industry.

Sometimes personal circumstances don't allow people the same opportunities to get formal qualifications or really pursue the career of their dreams, or they just don't see this industry as a long-term option. But with the right opportunity put in front of them, and the right guidance, they can go on to achieve a career like no other.

I've always known we have talented individuals across all of our businesses; but where I think this new XCalibre Rising programme will really deliver is the fact it will bring whole new and fresh perspectives right across our business, at all levels. This new cohort will not only change their own career story, but others around them too. Maybe they will challenge traditional company views, come with new ideas around innovations or technology, or tell us the next IP we should be working with.

One thing I do know these 14 'rising' participants will bring to the programme is passion. Passion for their own career and others – and that won't just last for the 12 months of the programme, but hopefully for the rest of their lives. ●

PHOTO: MERLIN ENTERTAINMENTS

# Attractions People

Artist Es Devlin was recently made a CBE at Buckingham Palace

PHOTO: HOLIE FERNANDO

“  
This work invites  
us to learn and  
remember the  
names and sing  
those under threat  
into continued  
existence

Es Devlin, designer

**A**rtist and stage designer Es Devlin was made a Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) for services to design in a ceremony at Buckingham Palace in October. She was awarded an OBE in 2015.

Devlin is known for her large scale public art installations, often inspired by nature, which include the Forest for Change – when she filled the courtyard of London's Somerset House with trees – and indoor forest Conference of the Trees, created for the COP26 climate conference in Glasgow, UK.

She also created the mirrored maze-like installation Forest of Us for the inaugural exhibition at Superblue Miami, and was





Superblue Miami  
opened with an  
installation by Devlin

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Devlin created an  
indoor forest as a  
venue for COP26

PHOTO: ESDEVILIN STUDIO



Es Devlin: Mask was  
created for Somerset  
House in London

PHOTO: SOMERSET HOUSE



- responsible for the sets for the closing ceremony at the London 2012 Olympics and the opening ceremony at the Rio 2016 Olympics, as well as the British Pavilion at the Dubai 2020 Expo.

Devlin began her career in the theatre, after studying Fine Art at Central Saint Martins in London, and has created catwalk shows for designers including Louis Vuitton and stage sets for Kanye West, Beyonce and U2.

Her most recent work, called *Come Home Again*, saw Devlin create a large scale illuminated sculpture to highlight the 243 species on London's priority conservation list – moths, birds, beetles, wildflowers, fish and fungi. Created in collaboration with Cartier, a St Pauls Cathedral-inspired pavilion featured Devlin's line drawings of the endangered animals on the list and was showcased outside the Tate Modern and opposite St Pauls Cathedral.

Each evening at sunset, an interpretation of Choral Evensong was performed within the illuminated sculpture by London-based choral groups, combined with the calls of

**Come Home Again**  
raises awareness of  
endangered species



PHOTO: DANIEL DEVLIN

**Devlin's latest work**  
features her drawings  
of endangered species



PHOTO: DANIEL DEVLIN

Devlin's set for  
the 2012 Olympic  
closing ceremony



PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

“

***As we relinquish  
our isolation, we  
come home to our  
mutual belonging***

native birds, bats, and insects. The installation was on show in the Tate Modern Garden.

“A dome originally meant a home,” said Devlin, speaking about the Come Home Again sculpture. “The work invites us to see, hear, and feel our home, our city as an interconnected web of species and cultures, to learn and remember the names and sing those under threat into continued existence. The work echoes the invitation invoked by the 92-year-old climate activist Joanna Macy: “Now it can dawn on us: we are the world knowing itself. As we relinquish our isolation, we come home again... We come home to our mutual belonging.” ●



Visitors to Mirror  
Maze were taken on  
a ‘journey of scent’

PHOTO: ESDVLN STUDIO



Sustainability is  
key at Marwell says  
James Cretney

PHOTO: PHOTO: MARWELL ZOO



## “The world needs us all to be more ambitious”

James Cretney, CEO, Marwell

**A**s Marwell Zoo celebrates its 50th anniversary, it is renewing its focus on sustainability and conservation, with wildlife tracking and protection programmes in Kenya and North Africa, the generation of renewable energy from animal waste and plans to go beyond carbon neutral. CEO James Cretney speaks exclusively to *Attractions Management* about zoo poo, animal welfare and Marwell's international conservation work.

### How has 2022 gone so far?

2022 has been a great year for Marwell Zoo in terms of our conservation and sustainability work. Earlier this year, we won the Queen's Award for Enterprise: Sustainable Development, as a result of work on our sustainability aims – particularly converting zoo poo into energy that we use to heat our Energy for Life tropical house. The scheme has been such a success that we are now heating many

of the larger buildings within the park using energy from our zoo poo energy centre.

2022 is also the first year since COVID that we've been able to welcome guests all year round, plus we're launching Glow Marwell, our first ever after-dark lights event.

### Tell us about your new Energy for Life tropical house

Energy for Life is the most immersive exhibit at Marwell Zoo. Spanning two levels, the building was designed to give guests the best vantage points and face-to-face encounters with our tropical animals and plants. What makes it truly special though, is that it's helping us achieve our goal of becoming carbon neutral.

Next door to the tropical house, our energy centre converts the 700 tonnes of animal waste we previously paid to dispose of into energy, reducing our carbon footprint and our dependency on fossil fuels. The heat required to create the tropical house's humid environment comes directly from the energy centre.



Animal waste is now being converted into energy at Marwell

PHOTO: JASON BROWN



PHOTO: JASON BROWN

The tropical house is totally self-sufficient for energy and water

The building's curved roof uses materials that allow natural light to shine through whilst insulating the building against heat loss.

Rainwater is harvested from the roof into two 50,000 litre tanks that provide the water for the building. In essence, the building is totally self-sufficient and provides the perfect habitat for the hundreds of plants and animals that live there.

#### What other initiatives are helping to improve sustainability at Marwell?

We have 170kWp of solar panels on our rooftops generating around 150,000kWh of electricity per year. We're also repairing ageing underground pipework to reduce water wastage and we've installed water filling stations to encourage guests to refill bottles and reduce the use of single-use plastic.

These changes have helped us to reduce water consumption by 23 per cent, waste by 46 per cent and our carbon footprint by 77 per cent.

We're looking into large scale rainwater capture to further reduce our water usage by up to 60 per cent ▶



PHOTO: PATEL COLLINS

Marwell has already reduced its carbon footprint by 77 per cent



► cent, surpassing carbon neutral and introducing new recycling options to reduce the amount of waste generated. In addition, our ethical sourcing strategy ensures items in our gift shop are made from recycled and sustainable materials and we only use paper or home-compostable packaging.

These goals are particularly important to Marwell because our core mission as an organisation is to conserve biodiversity and other natural resources, both locally and internationally. We hope to inspire others by demonstrating ways of conserving our planet's natural resources.

### **You are involved in conservation projects in North Africa. What work are you doing there?**

Our work in Tunisia has included the translocation of 10 barberry sheep to Zaghouan National Park to establish the species in a new area. The species had declined dramatically due to illegal, unsustainable hunting and habitat degradation to the extent that only a few free-living groups remain. It's hoped, through the implementation of the national strategy, that the species will return to more of the arid mountain landscapes.

This work follows in the footsteps of Marwell's engagement in work to reintroduce scimitar-horned oryx, a species that had been classified as extinct in the wild but are now – thanks to reintroductions to the wild from captive bred populations – breeding in the wild once again.

Similarly, Addax and North African Ostrich are important species that are either critically vulnerable or now extinct in these former range areas, that we are working with.

### **You're working in northern Kenya to monitor wildlife. Can you tell us more?**

We're engaging with local communities to monitor wildlife and gather information about native animals including Grevy's zebra, dik-dik, black-backed jackals and cheetahs. In these areas, poaching seems to be on the increase, so our team is working closely with Kenya Wildlife Service and a number of local partners to share information that will help the authorities protect the wildlife. We've been working with community conservancies to help provide movement corridors with quality resources for animals to ensure their survival. During the recent droughts, supplementary hay provision was supplied to help them survive the harsh conditions.

Our long-term goal in Kenya is to ensure the survival of species that might otherwise become extinct, while supporting biodiversity. Whilst the tactics we use to achieve this will likely change over time with the knowledge our research brings, biodiversity absolutely underpins this work.

### **What are the results of your work?**

The best example of the results of our conservation work is probably the scimitar-

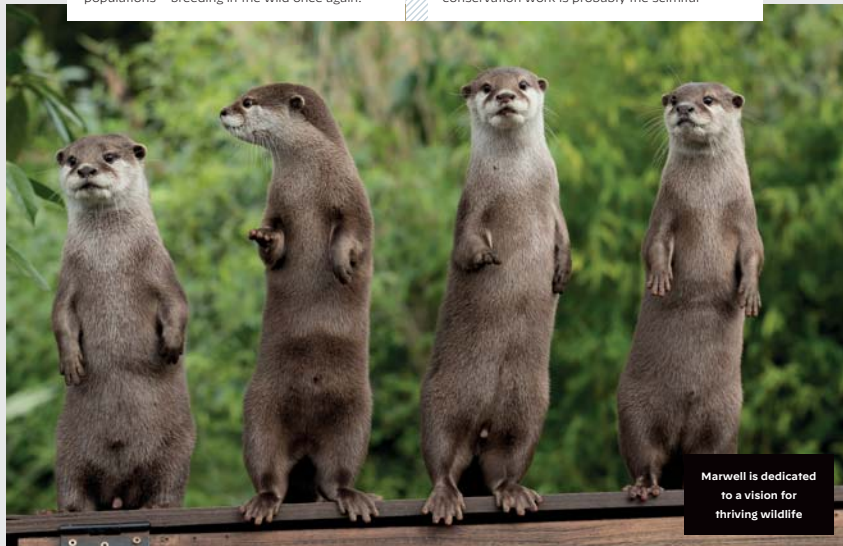
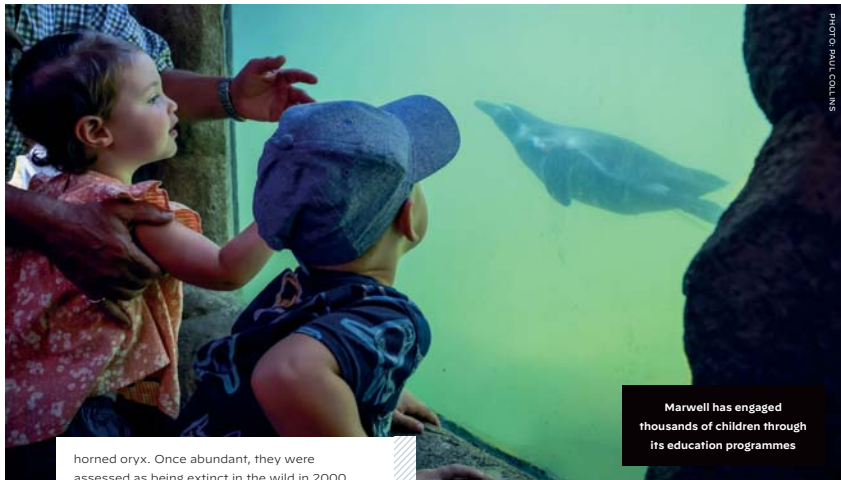


PHOTO: JASON BROWN

**Marwell is dedicated  
to a vision for  
thriving wildlife**



Marwell has engaged thousands of children through its education programmes

horned oryx. Once abundant, they were assessed as being extinct in the wild in 2000. Hunting, fragmentation and competition with livestock caused populations to decline to the point of extinction and it's thanks to captive bred populations that we've been able to help reverse this process.

Scimitar-horned oryx have been reintroduced in Chad and are now beginning to breed in the wild. Similar reintroductions in protected areas of Tunisia started in 1985 with 10 animals from Marwell and Edinburgh zoos. In 1999 and 2007 Marwell co-ordinated the release of scimitar-horned oryx in three more protected areas within their historic range.

#### What other plans do you have?

We have lots of plans for the zoo and the work we do overseas. Underlying all our work is a very clear mission to support biodiversity, encourage sustainability and connect people to the nature around them.

Sharing our knowledge is vital to engage others in our sustainable journey. We've reached audiences worldwide and engage with tens of thousands of children and young people through our education programmes.

We know there's still more we can do and we're always looking at new ways of working, of conserving natural resources and of helping wildlife to thrive, even when the odds are stacked against it.

The world needs us all to be more ambitious – not just achieving but surpassing carbon neutrality; not just saving but having a vision for thriving wildlife; not just being economic with resources but making better use of them. ●

“

**Sharing our knowledge is vital to engage others in our sustainable journey**

Connecting people to nature is one of Marwell's missions

PHOTO: PAUL COLLINS



## This is our story, by our people

**Evert Poor, Indigenous  
Narratives Supervisor,  
Fort Edmonton Park**



Evert Poor has worked  
at Fort Edmonton  
Park since 2000

PHOTO: JORDAN HILLINGER



Visitors learn about  
Indigenous history via  
stories and artefacts

PHOTO: FORT EDMONTON PARK

This summer, Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau visited the Indigenous Peoples Experience at Fort Edmonton Park in Alberta, Canada, along with several other government ministers.

After the visit, Trudeau said: "The Indigenous Peoples Experience showcases the long, intricate histories of First Nation and Métis culture. The exhibit was created to share with us the stories and teachings from local elders and community members that have been passed down from generation to generation. Being able to showcase your language and culture is critical to self-determination and advancing reconciliation."

Opened in July 2021, the Indigenous Peoples Experience aims to educate visitors about Indigenous history and culture via stories, music, artwork and immersive exhibits, gathered through engagement with local Indigenous communities and historical documents. It was developed in collaboration with the Métis Nation of Alberta and the Confederacy of Treaty Six First Nations, alongside elders and community members, Fort Edmonton Management Company, and the City of Edmonton.



PHOTO: FORT EDMONTON PARK

Since opening, the Indigenous Peoples Experience has won the Thea Award for Outstanding Achievement – Heritage Center; and the Urban Land Institute (ULI) Americas Award for Excellence.

Here Evert Poor, Indigenous narratives supervisor at Fort Edmonton Park, tells *Attractions Management* about Trudeau's visit, and the aims and plans of the centre.

### What did Justin Trudeau's visit mean for the Indigenous Peoples Experience?

The Prime Minister's visit offered the opportunity to present our community's stories, history, and culture.

This is significant as we speak to history from our perspective, sharing what we as a people have experienced. This covers what contact with Europeans meant to us as a people and as a culture – we speak to the lasting and residual impacts of these historical events on Indigenous peoples today. A good example is the negative impacts of Residential Schools that still resonate within our communities now.

It was important for me personally to be allowed to share my perspective on these

impacts. My mother was a Residential School survivor – one of my obligations in life is to share her story and the story of the devastating impacts of Residential Schools more widely.

I was pleased that the Prime Minister and the ministers representing the government of Canada in their dealings with the Indigenous peoples were also present – they spent significant time with us and were engaged and interested in what we shared.

I was also pleased that the Prime Minister had the opportunity to engage with other members of my team, who are all of Indigenous ancestry, meaning they can share their own experiences and connection to the artefacts, stories and historical events explored in this space. This is important and offered a valuable opportunity for the Prime Minister and his team to interact on a personal level with a cross-section of the local Indigenous community.

The visit also spoke to the importance of the Indigenous Peoples Experience – a place that is totally about the Indigenous narrative.

It is our story, by our people. Visiting this centre and listening to our stories is one step toward reconciliation.





## ***The Indigenous peoples' story has been missing or misrepresented in North American dialogue***

### ► **What is the aim of the Indigenous Peoples Experience?**

The Indigenous peoples' story has been missing or misrepresented in North American dialogue. The colonial narrative inferred that real history began with the arrival of the Europeans. Indigenous peoples are portrayed as lacking history or culture. The Hollywood version has romanticised our people, making some believe that we have disappeared from the world.

The Indigenous Peoples Experience tells the true Indigenous story from our perspective as told by our people. One aim is to tell non-Indigenous people that we have always been here and are still here, which begins the process of decolonising the history and the narrative.

Another aim is to address Indigenous underrepresentation. When living history museum Fort Edmonton Park opened in 1974, there wasn't a defined area focusing on Indigenous history and culture, and there were few employees of Indigenous ancestry. The opening of the Indigenous Peoples Experience in 2021 saw a significant increase in the number of Indigenous employees, growing the visibility of Indigenous history and culture.

Canada's Indigenous Truth and Reconciliation Commission resulted in 94 calls to action.

These are calls to action for governments, businesses, and education that impact the treatment of Indigenous peoples. There are action items that called for museums and archives to make changes. One of the aims of the Indigenous Peoples Experience is to take action toward reconciliation.

### **How are the histories and stories of the Indigenous peoples of Canada shared within this experience?**

Visitors to the Indigenous Peoples Experience often say that it's not what they expected. The sound, lighting and video presentations offer an immersive experience that's quite different from other museums. Individual quotes and stories are associated with the artefacts. These stories result from more than 50 interviews with Indigenous elders, knowledge keepers and educators. The artefacts and displays are the work of many local Indigenous artisans who used the process handed down from their ancestors to create the works.

The history and stories are all presented from the perspective of the Indigenous

**Stories were collected from interviews with local Indigenous elders**



PHOTO: FORT EDMONTON PARK



PHOTO: FORT EDMONTON PARK



PHOTO: JORDAN HILLINGER

**Staff are able to share their own stories and experiences**

peoples, and all of the staff in this space are Indigenous. The stories and interpretation could be their family history or based on their personal experience, meaning that visitors have the opportunity to have unique and personal discussions with team members.

### **Why is it so important to share these stories and histories?**

There exists a great deal of discrimination, underrepresentation, poverty and racism directed toward Indigenous people in Canada. Sharing our stories and histories offers a true insight into the Indigenous peoples of western Canada. It tells our stories in our voices.

We share the impacts of colonisation on our populations historically and speak to the legacy of these events in today's terms. The hope is that non-Indigenous people begin to see us differently and to understand our history and social and family structures, as well as the fact that our culture was strongly guided by our language and connection to nature.

We hope that we can educate others to begin to see our way of being and its value to the world.

### **What do you hope visitors will take away from their visit to the museum?**

We hope that people walk out of the Indigenous Peoples Experience with an understanding that we've always been here and are still here.

Our relationship with the newcomers to our world was one of sharing and goodwill. We entered a treaty relationship with the Crown and the peoples of Canada that we viewed as a covenant. We were willing to share the land, respect their laws and live in peace with those that came to this land. In return, we asked for our culture, beliefs, way of knowing and who we are as a people to be respected. It was not a sale of land but an offer to share the land.

As one of our Chiefs stated: "As long as the sun shines, the grass grows, and rivers flow, we will live as relations." This awareness, I feel, will reframe what the relationship with Indigenous peoples should be today. ●

## JAPAN

### Studio Ghibli park enables fans to discover wonders

The world's first visitor attraction featuring IP owned by hugely popular Studio Ghibli is set to launch in Nagakute, Aichi Prefecture, Japan.

More than five years in the planning, the anime park opens to the public in November and is based on the stories and characters created by the animation studio.

While it is being described as a theme park, the site – located inside the Expo 2005 Aichi Commemorative Park – will feature no rides nor Disney-style fireworks displays. Instead, the park will offer visitors the opportunity to “discover all the secrets hidden in the world of Studio Ghibli”.

“It is a park that represents the world of Studio Ghibli,” the studio said.

“With close consultation with the surrounding forest, it is being built so there are no big attractions or rides. Instead, we invite guests to take a stroll, feel the wind, and discover the wonders we have created.”

The park will initially open with three main sites: Hill of Youth, Dondoko Forest and Ghibli Grand Warehouse.

According to Ghibli, the Grand Warehouse has been built inside an expo hall and is the largest of the spaces opening in the first wave.

There is also a small cinema with 150 seats.

More: [http://lei.sr/q6Y4J\\_T](http://lei.sr/q6Y4J_T)



STUDIO GHIBLI

“

While it is being described as a theme park, the site – located inside the Expo 2005 Aichi Commemorative Park – will feature no rides nor Disney-style fireworks displays

## US

### Kings Island to add Adventure Port for 2023 Season



LINKEDIN.COM/MIKE KOONTZ

“

We've taken parts of the Adventure Express story and built upon it

Mike Koontz

Kings Island theme park in Ohio, US, is adding a new area, called Adventure Port, for the 2023 season.

The theme and design of the new area – led by JRA – features the myths of an ancient civilization and its mighty city carved out of stone.

Adventure Port will feature two new family rides.

Sol Spin features open-air, suspended passenger vehicles, with guests experiencing the sensation of flying 60ft through the air at 25mph.

The other, called Cargo Loco, offers riders the

opportunity to board shipping barrels in which they will be able to manually control the speed of their spin with a wheel in the middle of the barrel.

Mike Koontz, vice president and general manager of Kings Island, said: “What I love about Adventure Port is that we've taken parts of

the Adventure Express story and built upon it to create this new themed area.”

In addition to JRA, companies working on the Adventure Port project include RSL Commercial Architects, Schaefer Engineers, Abercrombie and Associates and SHP Architects.

More: [http://lei.sr/y9g5Z\\_T](http://lei.sr/y9g5Z_T)



KINGS ISLAND/CEAR PAIR

US

## Sea World to launch major rides at its three parks

Sea World will open new major rides at each of its three parks in early 2023.

At Sea World Orlando, the operator will introduce the world's first surf coaster, called Pipeline.

Pipeline: The Surf Coaster will give riders an immersive experience, with rising and falling seats that mimic the sensation of riding on a wave. Riders will encounter the rush of "hanging loose" on a massive wave, while in a standing position, with five airtime movements and an innovative 'wave curl' inversion and maximum speed of 60mph.

At Sea World San Diego, the group will add a family-friendly coaster called Arctic Rescue.

The ride will launch guests at up to 40mph as they race through the unpredictable Arctic climate to help animals in danger.

At Sea World San Antonio, guests will be able to experience what Sea World is describing as the world's steepest flume drop – and North America's only vertical lift flume coaster. Called Catapult Falls, the ride will feature a 53-degree drop, with the chute plummeting riders into a watery splashdown at more than 37mph.

Marc Swanson, CEO of Sea World Parks & Entertainment, said: "2023 promises to be another exciting year for our Sea World parks."

More: [http://lei.sr/B3a5j\\_T](http://lei.sr/B3a5j_T)



Pipeline: The Surf Coaster will feature a 53-degree drop



SEA WORLD

“

2023 promises to be another exciting year for our Sea World parks

Marc Swanson

NIGERIA

## Nigeria's film city project gets name and reaches milestone



DEL YORK INTERNATIONAL

“

The film industry has long desired a home, that special place on the continent

Linus Idahosa

A huge 'film city' and visitor attraction project in Nigeria has reached a major milestone, following the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between marketing and development agency Del York International Group and the Lagos State Government.

The two partners signed what they described as a "monumental agreement to transform the face of the creative industry on the continent of Africa."

As part of the MOU, the project has been called Kebulania – a play on the word Alkebulan, the ancient



Kebulania will become a leading destination in Africa

YOUTUBE/STORYLAND STUDIOS

name for Africa, which translates to 'Mother of Mankind' or 'Garden of Eden'.

In 2021, Del York International appointed US-based experience design and production group, Storyland Studios, to masterplan and design the project. It is set to feature leisure, entertainment and learning

with a focus on sustainability.

Linus Idahosa, president and founder of Del York International Group, said: "The industry has long desired a home, that special place on the continent that would galvanise our young people to new hope while igniting the fire of their creativity."

More: [http://lei.sr/e9j9d\\_T](http://lei.sr/e9j9d_T)



UK

## Battersea Power Station reopens as leisure district

The iconic Battersea Power Station on the south bank of the River Thames, London, UK, has finally reopened, following a £9bn redevelopment project.

The Grade II\* listed former coal-fired power station has been transformed into an entirely new district featuring a blend of residential and leisure, with health clubs, a visitor attraction, spa and wellness offerings, retail, bars, restaurants, entertainment venues, parks and historic spaces.

Developments within the 42-acre site include a cinema, a theatre and London's first art'otel, designed by Spanish artist and interior designer, Jaime Hayon.

Designs for the restoration and repurposing were led by architect studio WilkinsonEyre.

Among the site's visitor attractions is the Chimney Lift Experience, a glass elevator that will transport visitors 109m up inside one of the Power Station's iconic chimneys before they emerge at the top to enjoy 360-degree views of the capital's skyline.

Sebastien Ricard, director at WilkinsonEyre, said: "It has been a privilege to restore and transform this iconic building, not only saving and celebrating the original features but creating interventions which bring the structure alive again."

More: [http://lei.sr/u9q5m\\_T](http://lei.sr/u9q5m_T)



BATTERSEA POWER STATION DEVELOPMENT COMPANY



WILKINSONEYRE

“It has been a privilege to restore and transform this iconic building”  
Sebastien Ricard

GLOBAL

## Universal theme parks report record revenues

“

For the nine months ended 30 September 2022, revenue from the Theme Parks segment increased 71.6 per cent to \$5.4bn, primarily reflecting improved operating conditions compared to 2021

Comcast

Universal's theme parks saw revenues increase by more than 40 per cent during the third quarter of 2022.

The figure comes from parent company Comcast's Q3 earnings report. According to Comcast, revenues in its Universal theme park division for the three-month period ending 30 September increased by 42.1 per cent – from US\$1.45bn to US\$2.1bn.

The results reflect increased attendance and guest spending at Universal parks in the US and Japan, compared to the prior year period.

There was also an increase from the operations



SHUTTERSTOCK/MAZYAU

Revenues at Universal parks increased by 42.1 per cent

of Universal Beijing Resort, which opened in September 2021.

Theme Parks Adjusted EBITDA increased 88.6 per cent to US\$819m during the period.

Comcast said: "For the nine months ended 30 September 2022, revenue from the Theme Parks

segment increased 71.6 per cent to \$5.4bn, primarily reflecting improved operating conditions compared to 2021, when each of our theme parks in the US and Japan was either operating at limited capacity or closed during certain periods as a result of COVID-19."

More: [http://lei.sr/H4Z9D\\_T](http://lei.sr/H4Z9D_T)

## DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

### Falcon's Beyond reveals Punta Cana park plans

Falcon's Beyond has revealed further details for a theme park it is developing in Punta Cana, the Dominican Republic.

US-based Falcon's Beyond is an entertainment development company specialising in IP-based attractions and is a joint venture with Spanish hospitality giant, Meliá Hotels International.

Expected to open in early 2023, Katmandu Park will feature a range of rides and attractions that immerse guests in the company's proprietary franchise, The Hidden Realms of Katmandu.

The overarching, episodic Katmandu theme will mean each ride and attraction will

live within the Katmandu universe, playing out a chapter in the storyline.

According to Cecil D Magpuri, CEO of Falcon's Beyond, each aspect of the park has been designed in a way that immerses guests in the unfolding adventure, while allowing them to enjoy each as an independent experience.

"Katmandu Park Punta Cana will deliver a theme park experience based on the popular characters of our very own Katmandu fantastical universe," Magpuri said.

"Through innovative rides and attractions that deliver immersive storytelling, guests will truly lose themselves in the theming."

More: [http://lei.sr/e4u4x\\_T](http://lei.sr/e4u4x_T)



Voyage of the Fathom Wanderer is among the signature rides

FALCON'S BEYOND



FALCON'S BEYOND

“

The park will deliver an experience based on the popular characters of our very own universe

Cecil D Magpuri

## US

### Disney launches wearable MagicBand+ at Disneyland

LINKEDIN.COM/KEN POTROCK



“

MagicBand+ is another way we're leveraging technology

Ken Potrock

Disney is utilising wearable technology to provide guests at its Disneyland Resort in Anaheim, California with a wide range of "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



The new MagicBand+ wearable unlocks storytelling

DISNEY

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

For example, the bands will create "surprising and magical touches" to certain locations at the resort's Avengers Campus, while nighttime spectaculars will also become even more

dazzling, as MagicBand+ illuminates and pulses in sync with special moments.

Disneyland Resort president, Ken Potrock, said: "We're always looking to innovate and MagicBand+ is another way we're leveraging technology to delight our guests."

More: [http://lei.sr/S4G2c\\_T](http://lei.sr/S4G2c_T)

UK

## Mary Rose Museum adds 4D attraction

Plans have been announced for the biggest ever expansion of the museum housing the Mary Rose, the historic warship of King Henry VIII.

The main new addition to the attraction – which opened its doors in 2013 – is a new 4D immersive theatre experience, called '1982 – Dive the Mary Rose'. Set to open in the spring of 2023, the theatre will showcase the untold story of the finding, excavation, and recovery of the Mary Rose.

Built in 1510, the Mary Rose served in the English Navy for more than 30 years, before sinking during the Battle of the Solent in 1545. It was then found and raised in 1982.

Using 4D technology and previously unseen footage of

the recovery, the theatre will bring the raising of the ship to life through the smells, sounds and movement from the operation, with visitors given 3D glasses and CGI used to optimise the experience.

Dominic Jones, CEO of the Mary Rose Trust, which owns and manages the museum, said: "Never in the history of the Mary Rose Trust have we undertaken such a monumental expansion.

"This technological innovation will help bring the fascinating story of the Mary Rose into the modern day."

The Mary Rose Trust has partnered with Fimment Productions to create the new 4D experience.

More: [http://lei.sr/Z7C4Z\\_T](http://lei.sr/Z7C4Z_T)



The theatre will showcase the recovery of the ship

MARY ROSE TRUST / FIMMENT PRODUCTIONS



MARY ROSE TRUST

“

This innovation will help bring the story into the modern day

Dominic Jones

UK

## Museum of London to close its doors with festival

“

We're celebrating London Wall's closure on 4 December 2022 after 45 years with two spectacular free weekend festivals  
*Museum of London*

The Museum of London in the UK capital is to hold two free weekend festivals and all-night openings ahead of the closure of its current home at London Wall in the City of London.

The museum is moving to its new home in Smithfield in the heart of the capital at the beginning of 2023.

Described as one of Europe's biggest cultural projects, the new £337m museum space has been designed by Stanton Williams, Asif Khan and Julian Harrap Architects.

Before it leaves its London Wall site, however



A range of family festivities will mark the closure of the site

MUSEUM OF LONDON

– which it has occupied since its inception in 1976 – the museum will hold a number of special events.

A wide range of family festivities are to be held at the end of November, in addition to a music festival taking place – during which guests and visitors will be able to explore the museum overnight.

"We're celebrating London Wall's closure on 4 December 2022 after 45 years with two spectacular free weekend festivals – expect DJ sets, London's biggest table football competition, immersive theatre, and late-night cinema," the museum said.

More: [http://lei.sr/657y7\\_T](http://lei.sr/657y7_T)

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US

## Grammy Museum campaign co-chaired by stars

The Grammy Museum has launched its first ever Campaign For Music Education, co-chaired by some of the biggest names in music – from Billie Eilish and Dua Lipa to Bruno Mars, Shawn Mendes and Rosalía.

The campaign is a call to action for the music industry to ensure that music education is accessible, sustainable and available for any and all who want it.

As part of the campaign, a fundraising initiative will seek to provide a boost for the museum's educational endowment and programmes.

Grammy Museum president and CEO, Michael Sticka, said: "Our goal with this campaign is very simple, to

do our best to democratise music education by expanding our reach into underserved communities where access to our museum could make a huge impact."

The funds raised will also provide free admission to the Grammy Museum in downtown Los Angeles for all students, and expanded access to their music education programmes across the country.

Billie Eilish said: "I was able to visit the Grammy Museum a lot when I was growing up.

"We saw so many amazing artists perform that I never would've been able to see otherwise. I love the exhibits and the whole experience."

More: [http://lei.sr/f5F4v\\_T](http://lei.sr/f5F4v_T)



Bruno Mars is among the co-chairs of the campaign

GRAMMY MUSEUM



GRAMMY MUSEUM

“

I was able to visit the Grammy Museum a lot when I was growing up

Billie Eilish

US

## Christian Lachel appointed to the board of Ryman Arts



BRC IMAGINATION ARTS

“

It is an incredible privilege to be joining an elite group of board members  
Christian Lachel

Non-profit organisation, Ryman Arts, has appointed Christian Lachel, chief creative officer of BRC Imagination Arts, to its board.

Ryman Arts' mission is to transform lives by creating access and opportunity for a diverse community of young artists through "rigorous education in fundamental art skills and mentoring" – at no cost to the students.

Founded in 1990 to honour the legacy of legendary Disney artist, Herbert D Ryman, the organisation has served over 6,000 teens from 190 communities with its core programme and engaged

over 21,000 students from low-income communities through its outreach work.

Ryman Arts said the appointment of Lachel will provide a clear example of how the arts can impact people's lives beyond the walls of an art show.

Lachel said: "BRC Imagination Arts and Ryman

Arts have always had a joint commitment to guiding and nurturing talented artists.

"The arts have always been an important part of my personal and professional life – that's why it is an incredible privilege to be joining an elite group of board members who embody true mentorship."

More: [http://lei.sr/z6v2m\\_T](http://lei.sr/z6v2m_T)



Ryman Arts transforms lives through art

RYMAN ARTS



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UK

## Eureka! Science + Discovery centre ready to launch

Eureka! Science + Discovery Centre in Seacombe, UK, will open its doors to the public on 11 November.

Using interactive and immersive exhibits and attractions, the £12m centre is dedicated to helping young people explore science stories and bring STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics) subjects to life.

Eureka! Science + Discovery's founding partner is renewable energy company Ørsted, and the project is funded primarily by £6.4m from the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority's (LCRC) Strategic Investment Fund.

Further investments have come from a £3m award from

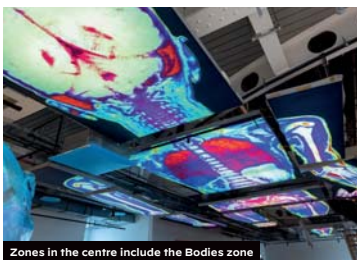
the Inspiring Science Fund, a £0.5m grant by Wirral Council and private donations.

Located in the former Spaceport building at Seacombe Ferry, the centre is expected to attract almost 200,000 visitors a year.

Metro Mayor of the Liverpool City Region Steve Rotherham said: "We approved a £6.4m grant to help bring Eureka! to the banks of the Mersey because we recognised what a fantastic addition it will be to our city region and its world-class museums.

"Eureka!'s focus on STEAM subjects will spark children's interest in these essential areas."

More: [http://lei.sr/F7Q9H\\_T](http://lei.sr/F7Q9H_T)



Zones in the centre include the Bodies zone

EUREKA!



LIVERPOOL CITY REGION

“  
Eureka's focus on  
STEAM subjects will  
spark children's interest  
Steve Rotherham

### GLOBAL

## IAAPA names Jakob Wahl president and CEO

“  
Wahl's vision for  
IAAPA is focused on  
adapting the association  
for today's fast-paced,  
change-driven world  
and enhancing the value  
of IAAPA membership  
through our regional  
offices around the globe

IAAPA, the global association for the attractions industry, has announced that Jakob Wahl has been selected as the association's new president and CEO effective from 1 January 2023. Wahl will succeed the association's current president and CEO, Hal McEvoy who will retire in April 2023.

Wahl will lead the association's 94-member team in Orlando, Brussels, Hong Kong, Mexico City, and Shanghai, and will be responsible for IAAPA's executive management and day-to-day operations. He will also be the primary

strategic advisor to the IAAPA Board of Directors.

"Jakob is the right person to lead the IAAPA team into the future," said chair of the CEO Search Committee and IAAPA treasurer Curt Caffey. "His vision for IAAPA is focused on adapting the association for today's fast-paced, change-driven world,

and enhancing the value of IAAPA membership through our regional offices."

Wahl joined IAAPA as program manager for IAAPA Europe in 2009, and became executive vice president and chief operating officer of the association in November 2021.

More: [www.attractions/jakob](http://www.attractions/jakob)



Jakob Wahl first joined IAAPA in 2009

IAAPA



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## UK

### Visitor Attractions Conference held in Birmingham

The National Visitor Attractions Conference (VAC 2022), has been held for the 19th time.

Taking place at the International Convention Centre (ICC) in Birmingham, UK, in October, VAC is the UK's leading networking and learning event for visitor attractions organisations and businesses.

VAC attracts a wide range of professionals and experts from across the visitor attraction industry, from operators and designers to policymakers and academics.

Topics discussed at the conference included sustainability, marketing, tourism policy and market insight and intelligence.

Speakers at VAC 2022 included Patricia Yates (new CEO of VisitBritain) and Bernard Donoghue OBE (CEO, ALVA).

*Attractions Management* magazine is a co-founder of the event and its editorial director, Liz Terry MBE, was among those on stage at this year's conference.

Terry chaired a session on HR Innovation called The Battle for Talent, which offered insights into how to win at recruitment, retention and motivating your workforce, with panellists Tina Lewis, director of people at the National Trust and Judith Owens, CEO of Titanic Belfast.

More: [http://lei.sr/5Z8R9\\_T](http://lei.sr/5Z8R9_T)



AM editorial director, Liz Terry MBE, was among the speakers



VAC attracts a wide range of professionals and experts from across the visitor attraction industry, from operators and designers to policymakers

## MIDDLE EAST

### Dave & Buster's signs Al Hokair deal to enter Middle East



WWW.ALHOKAIR.COM/



This franchise partnership marks a strategic milestone

Mishal Al Hokair

US-based amusement franchise Dave & Buster's has revealed plans to launch sites across the Middle East.

The deal with Abdul Mohsen Al Hokair Holding Group will result in 11 units being opened in Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Egypt.

To help drive the expansion into a new region, Dave & Buster's has developed strategic initiatives aimed at offering support "on the ground".

These include customisable footprints of sites, localised menus to reflect regional tastes and a proprietary, dynamic pricing model.



The deal will result in 11 units opening in the Middle East

Mishal Al Hokair, deputy CEO of Abdul Mohsen Al Hokair Holding Group, said: "Dave & Buster's is a preeminent entertainment brand and this franchise partnership marks a strategic milestone for our organisation, as we continue expanding our entertainment and hospitality portfolio across the region."

Founded in 1982 Texas, US, Dave & Buster's owns and operates 200 venues in North America. Each site offers entertainment and dining experiences.

The move into the Middle East is part of the group's larger international expansion plans. ●

More: [http://lei.sr/f8W6x\\_T](http://lei.sr/f8W6x_T)



## FRANCE

### Sea Life's AR app recognises species in real time

Sea Life Paris Val d'Europe in France has launched an educational, gamified app.

The Sea Scan app is the first of its kind and has the ability to recognise and identify sea creatures in real-time.

Sea Scan was created in collaboration with Sea Life and start-up Tiko, a project set up by students at ECE Paris (Ecole D'ingénieurs, an engineering school).

It combines augmented reality and artificial intelligence to help guests learn more about the species in the aquarium, while offering entertainment through quests and quizzes.

The app works by visitors capturing the species

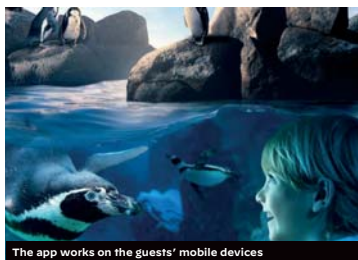
they want to know about in the viewfinder of the smartphone camera.

The app then recognises the observed species in real-time and once the species is identified, an information sheet appears.

Guests are encouraged to capture as many species as possible through a gamifying aspect – for each species identified, a small amount of money is donated to associations working for the protection of nature.

Sea Scape is free to download and is available in seven languages (French, English, German, Spanish, Italian, Dutch and Portuguese).

More: [http://lei.sr/w9C4j\\_T](http://lei.sr/w9C4j_T)



The app works on the guests' mobile devices

SEA LIFE PARIS



The app helps guests learn more about the species in the aquarium, while offering entertainment through quests and quizzes

## GLOBAL

### Disney files patent for AR ride without the need for headsets

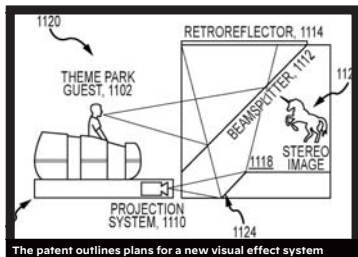


Due to its nature and innovation, the patent could potentially revolutionise the way 3D rides are created at theme parks and visitor attractions

Disney is developing an augmented reality (AR) ride which could offer riders 3D experiences without the need for headsets or other devices.

The information comes from a patent filed by Disney with the US Patent and Trademark Office, which outlines plans for a visual effect system that allows users to see 3D AR images without the use of any form of glasses.

The patent application reads: "A system creating an autostereoscopic augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR), or other visual display experience involving 3D



The patent outlines plans for a new visual effect system

US PATENT OFFICE

images, presented to a viewer without glasses or other head-gear.

"The system includes a projection screen, which includes a reflective surface formed using retroreflective material.

"The system includes a projection assembly and a beamsplitter, which is

disposed between an outlet of the projection assembly and the projection screen. The system includes a physical scenic space facing a lower side of the beamsplitter and a viewing space.

The patent could potentially revolutionise the way 3D rides are created.

More: [http://lei.sr/f9m9E\\_T](http://lei.sr/f9m9E_T)



Philanthropist Ramona Bass and her team have transformed Fort Worth Zoo



# RAMONA BASS

**This year, Fort Worth Zoo's new Elephant Springs habitat was awarded a Thea Award for Outstanding Achievement – a sign of how far the zoo has come since co-chair Ramona Bass first visited in the 1980s and decided something needed to be done. Magali Robathan finds out how she turned it around**



When Ramona Bass first visited Fort Worth Zoo on a date in 1983, it was a depressing place.

"What I found was a very disturbing, old time zoo," she tells me. "Animals in cramped, concrete enclosures with chain link fences. I was frankly horrified."

Lifelong animal lover Ramona Bass turned to her then fiancé, now husband – businessman and philanthropist Lee Bass – and told him what she thought of the place, and he said, "Why don't you do something about it?"

And so she did.

"I'm not sure he knew what he was getting into," she says with a laugh. "It became my passion and my purpose."

Over the next four decades, Bass and her team transformed the zoo, opening 18 new permanent habitats and support facilities, releasing "countless" animals back into the wild, welcoming 30 million visitors and raising hundreds of millions of dollars.

Today, Fort Worth Zoo is one of the US's best loved zoos and a key player in conservation efforts worldwide, supporting projects in more than 30 countries. This year, it won a coveted Thea Award for Outstanding Achievement for its new Elephant Springs habitat, which is part of a \$130m masterplan vision to further



PHOTO: FORT WORTH ZOO

improve animal habitats across the zoo. It also plays a key role in conservation education, partnering with universities, offering research opportunities and internships and providing a wide range of learning opportunities for children.

"The whole thing just started with me wanting to make things a bit better for the animals," Bass tells me. "It grew to be a much more complex educational and conservation behemoth. Now look what it has turned into!"

## EARLY DAYS

Once Bass had committed to the project, she started by recruiting local people to the cause and re-establishing the effectively defunct Fort Worth Zoological Association (FWZA) with a new board of directors and executive committee.

The zoo, which opened in 1909 with one lion, two bear cubs, an alligator, a coyote, a peacock and some rabbits, was owned by the City of Fort Worth and had suffered for years from decreasing support and funding. Bass and the team set about trying to convince the city to set up a public-private partnership, with the city retaining ownership and the FWZA in complete control of fundraising and the management of the zoo.

"We realised we weren't going to be able to do what we wanted to do with a publicly run institution," says Bass. "There was too much red tape; too much politics."

Persuading the city to accept their proposal wasn't easy though. "It was a battle," Bass admits. "They were wary, but I can understand that. We were young, I came out of nowhere – people were asking, Who is this girl who

thinks she can run our zoo? We had to build up trust, but we won them over in the end."

FWZA assumed complete management of the zoo in 1991 and fundraising began in earnest – since the privatisation, more than \$300m has been raised to improve conditions and update the zoo. I ask Bass how much of a challenge fundraising has been.

"I'm like the Eveready battery – I never quit," she says, and after spending just a short time in her company, I can see how she would be hard to say no to.

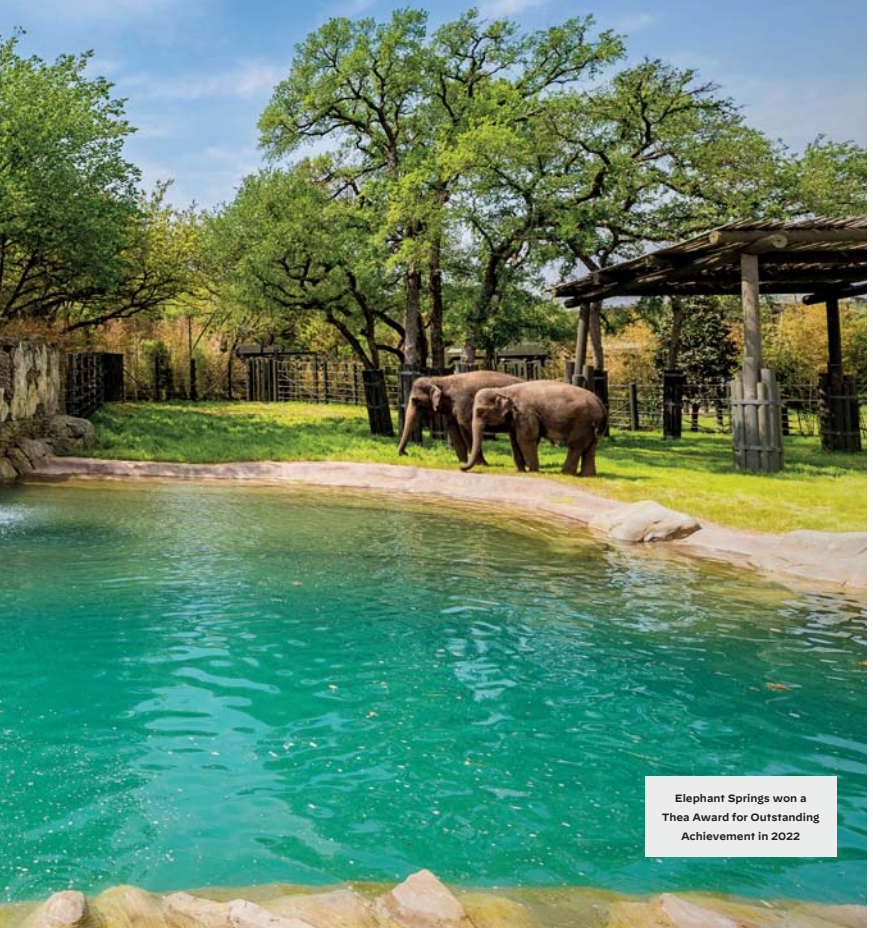
"In the beginning it was tougher, but our record began to speak for itself," she adds. "People in Fort Worth realised we were serious about our mission and what a treasure the zoo had become and how we got here. Now they don't try to run away from me anymore – well, maybe a few!"

Bass's perseverance and passion for improving conditions for the animals began to pay off – the first big project was an overhaul of Texas Wild, a \$40m, eight acre exhibit celebrating the ecological diversity of Texas and its wildlife, which opened in 2001.





***I came out of nowhere. People  
were saying, who is this girl who  
thinks she can run our zoo?***



Elephant Springs won a  
Thea Award for Outstanding  
Achievement in 2022



Next was the Museum of Living Art (MOLA) – an inspired name for the zoos new heptarium. Designed by architects Gideon Toal and opened in 2010 it marked a move away from traditional zoo buildings, with its dramatic architectural shell housing a range of habitats including tropical forests, deserts and swamps. Large windows display the animal exhibits as though they are living pieces of art and allow visitors to get up close to amphibian and reptile species including snakes, lizards, crocodilia, komodo dragons, lizards, tortoises and frogs.

“We wanted to change the perceptions of the way people see these ‘creepy, crawly creatures,’” says Bass, of the inspiration behind MOLA. “They’re beautiful animals that make contributions to their ecosystems and they should be observed in beautiful habitats, in a worthy space to help foster an appreciation.”

## A WILDER VISION

For Ramona and the team, the big focus now is on A Wilder Vision, an ambitious \$130m masterplan that includes renovated habitats and 10 acres of new exhibit space.

“In our ever-urbanizing world there is a worrisome disconnect between people and nature,” says Bass. “We must explore solutions that mutually benefit man and animal, and further man’s proactive role in the survival of these magnificent creatures. A Wilder

Vision encompasses not only a mission for conserving the animal kingdom, but also for educating and motivating future leaders.”

Planning started in 2011; since then Bass and FWZA board president Ardon Moore have put together a team of designers and architects to bring the vision to life, and they are now halfway through the four phase plan. The first exhibit, African Savanna, opened in 2018 – designed by Halbach-Dietz Architects, it aims to immerse visitors in the animals’ environment, offering several panoramic views of species including giraffes, springboks, ostriches, hippos and antelope sharing a habitat.

“To be able to put all of the wildlife together was wonderful,” says Bass. “The hippos in particular needed a new place so badly – I used to walk past them and say, ‘Girls, soon, I promise. I’ll get you a new place.’”

In Elephant Springs, opened in 2021, three generations of Asian elephants roam among interconnected yards and watering holes and a 400,000 gallon river, while greater one horned rhino explore neighbouring habitats. Earlier this year, Elephant Springs won a Thea Award for Outstanding Achievement from the Themed Entertainment Association (TEA) – the only zoo to receive the award.

“We knew we were creating something special with Elephant Springs – both for our beloved herd and our guests,” says Bass. “We’re

**The Museum of Living Art  
heptarium opened in 2010  
and won several awards**

PHOTO: FORT WORTH ZOO

Approximately 65,000  
children visit Fort Worth  
Zoo on field trips each year



PHOTO: FORT WORTH ZOO

Educating young people  
about conservation is a key  
part of the zoo's mission



PHOTO: FORT WORTH ZOO



**Ramona Bass – What I've learned**

*"It's important to me that we don't sink large dollars into non-animal related projects at the zoo. For example, our office is a double-wide trailer, we're not out there building \$7m entrances either."*

*"Be persistent. Don't take no for an answer."*

*"Be sure to surround yourself with the best and brightest people that you can find."*

*"You have to think outside the box. Don't think about the easy way, think about the right way."*

incredibly proud to be recognised for creating a space that offers a highly immersive guest experience, but more importantly provides a natural, lush and enriching environment for this amazing and critically endangered species."

The next two phases of A Wilder Vision are the opening of Hunters of Africa & Asia Predators, which will house lions, tigers and zebras and is due launch in spring 2023; and Forests and Jungles, which will introduce okapi to the zoo and is set to be completed by 2025.

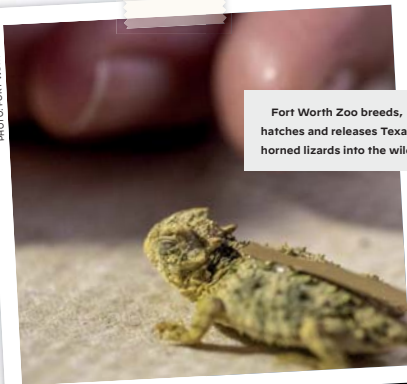
"We love to make everything beautiful and evocative of where these animals live in the world, so people get an idea of what these countries are like," says Bass.

## CONSERVATION AND EDUCATION

Conservation is a major focus. "We're involved in conservation projects in more than 30 countries around the world," says Bass. The zoo is a world leader in elephant conservation, and established independent non profit organisation the Elephant Foundation in 1998; it is also a founding member of the International Rhino Foundation (IRF).

Bass and the team are also involved in conservation efforts closer to home. "I'm very proud of the zoo's efforts in saving our Texas wildlife, notably the Texas horned lizard," says Bass. "After watching this beloved native reptile's numbers rapidly decline, we were the first zoo to successfully breed, hatch and release these animals into the wild. To date, our herpetology team has successfully introduced more than 800 hatchlings since 2011."

PHOTO: FORT WORTH ZOO



**Fort Worth Zoo breeds, hatches and releases Texas horned lizards into the wild**

For Bass, education is key to protecting wildlife and animals. "Although there have been failures in the past, man has been and must be a catalyst for positive change," she says. "We believe that we're accountable for the survival of wild things and wild places and that through responsible and wise stewardship, man can forge a working partnership with his environment."

"What if future generations don't have the understanding or the interest to conserve and manage the birthright they've been given? It's essential that the guiding principles of this message is taught to our children and grandchildren."

To this end, Fort Worth Zoo offers conservation expeditions for university students, veterinary externship opportunities, internship and residency programmes, postdoctoral research opportunities and mentorship. For younger children, there is an onsite preschool programme, home school classes and virtual programming, and around 65,000 students visit annually on field trips.

"We've outgrown our current education centre with more than 400 children on the waitlist each year, so we're building an additional Exploration and Learning Center to accommodate more children and classes," says Bass. "Texas Nature Traders (TNT) is a formalised programme, created here at the zoo, that encourages children to explore the outdoors, learn about their environment and collect treasures from nature."

"We're not simply a piece of land with beautiful animals and habitats; we're an idea, a philosophy, and a vision that permeates throughout the zoo in all of our messaging and educational concepts. ●

***We believe that humans are accountable for the survival of wild things and wild places***

#### A WILDER VISION

In 2016, Fort Worth Zoo announced A Wilder Vision, a \$130m capital campaign that includes new habitat space, renovated habitats, special events space, multiple dining areas and new ways to observe, interact with and learn about animals.

Divided into four stages – African Savanna, Elephant Springs, Asian Predators & Hunters of Africa and Forests & Jungles – the plan encompasses not only a mission for conserving the animal kingdom but also for educating and motivating future leaders.

The African Savanna opened to the public in the spring of 2018 and imitates the natural ecosystem of east Africa, where diverse species roam freely together.

Elephant Springs opened to the public in April 2021. Almost tripling its original size, this updated habitat serves as the home of the zoo's Asian elephant herd, which includes a three-generation family, and features the addition of multiple, expanded yards and varied habitats as well as a 400,000 gallon river.

Other areas will be completed over the next three years and

will change the way visitors explore the zoo and interact with the animals. Reimagined and modernised habitats will change the physical landscape of the zoo, allowing guests to wind through shaded trails during their visit. It will also become home to new species, including wild dogs, African leopards, clouded leopards and okapi.

The final two phases of the masterplan are Asian Predators & Hunters of Africa, due to open in spring 2023, and Forests & Jungles, predicted to open in 2025.



# TOUGH TIMES

The cost of living crisis is already having an impact on leisure spend, but BVA BDRC's travel and culture director Jon Young is confident that with careful targeting, attractions can continue to draw in guests

People are concerned about their finances and the sector will be hit, but some attractions will be insulated



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*If theme parks, zoos and farm attractions can communicate their role in boosting mental health, that's likely to help as people choose where to make cuts to their spending*

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In the current climate you'd be forgiven for thinking that attractions visitors would favour venues that are warm and inside as they try to offset the chill of inflation and rising interest rates.



PHOTO: BVA BDRC

Despite the cost of living crisis however, there are opportunities for attractions to continue to attract visitors and counterbalance the economic challenges faced by the public. There can be no doubt that the increased cost of living will have an impact on leisure spend.

At consumer and business insight consultancy BVA BDRC, we've carried out research that shows three quarters of the UK public are either 'already hit hard' or 'cautious' and having to be 'very careful'. Around 80 per cent think the worst is still to come, meaning that they're likely to hold back even if they built up savings during the pandemic.



Gardens and country parks are seen as being good for mental and physical health

It's important to remember that the public won't cut back on all of their disposable spending in equal measure though. There will be a hierarchy of non-essential to essential leisure spending and some types of attractions are much better insulated from cost-of-living pressures than others.

We asked consumers which types of activities they were most likely to cut back on over the coming six months. Out of a list of 25 different leisure activities, 'museums, art galleries and historic houses' and 'gardens and country parks' were very low down in the list – coming 20th and 22nd in the list respectively. Trips to coffee shops, pubs, restaurants, the cinema and streaming services are a few examples of activities respondents said they would cut back on first. Less positively, 'theme parks, zoos and farm attractions' were more vulnerable – ranked

fourth in the list of activities consumers would choose to cut back on, behind restaurant visits, holidays, shopping and visits to pubs and bars.

The clear implication, perhaps unsurprisingly, is that more expensive attractions will suffer first.

However, cost is not the only driver. If we look at the cut-backs ranked ahead of some of the cultural attractions, many of these are fairly inexpensive; visits to cafés or coffee shops and streaming services are relatively cheap.

A key difference is the value consumers place on these activities in boosting their physical and mental health. The main planned cut-backs are to indulgent activities. Those seen to boost physical and mental wellbeing are least likely to be cut and most visitor attractions fall into the latter category. If theme parks, zoos and farm attractions can communicate their educational benefits and their role in improving mental



Theme parks were high up on the list of attractions visits people might cut back on



PHOTO: MERLIN ENTERTAINMENTS

health, that's likely to help them as people choose where to make cuts to their spending.

Attractions operators may also want to actively promote membership packages – although 'attraction memberships' were mid-table in terms of cut-backs, their value during difficult financial times means they could act as a kind of leisure safety net for some members of the public.

While most people will be negatively impacted by the cost of living crisis, we should remember that around a quarter of the UK population are unlikely to be affected. This is relatively consistent across life stages which suggests there's still a place for exclusive, premium experiences. These could go some way towards off-setting rising costs and a reduction in spending by the cash-strapped majority.

The conversation around lost admissions can be a little too inward-looking. Rather than



PHOTO: MERLIN ENTERTAINMENTS

Clearly communicating a family-friendly offering is vital

“

*Rather than worrying about the visitors we might lose, we might want to think about the ones we can gain – a large majority of the UK public haven't visited an attraction in the last two years*



Even some of the most iconic attractions have never been visited by a large proportion of the UK public





worrying about the visitors we might lose, we might also want to think about the ones we can gain. Our research shows that a large majority of the UK public haven't visited a visitor attraction in the last two years.

Moreover, according to our brand health research, even some of the most iconic attractions in the UK have never been visited by a large proportion of the UK public.

Of the top 10 most-visited attractions ever – only 37 per cent of people had visited the most popular attraction, Alton Towers (45 per cent of people who live in the Midlands) and only 35 per cent of people have visited Madame Tussauds.

There's also an opportunity to increase the public's understanding of what attractions offer. Some household names boast very high awareness but very low understanding of what a visit actually involves. A lack of understanding of what happens when you walk through the door is a big issue when trying to attract people who may already have internal barriers around visiting. Heritage sites in particular need to communicate their offer more clearly.

A further area for development is communicating the fact that an attraction is family-friendly. Our findings revealed a number of family-friendly venues that people

**Heritage sites need to communicate their offer very clearly**

stated they were familiar with, but didn't think they had a family offer. This will be driven by perceptions rather than product and some perceptions are driven by the type of venue rather than the venue itself.

Cutting past sector perceptions – as National Trust and English Heritage have done in the Heritage sector – is important. One attraction that has done this well is Eden Project – overcoming traditional perceptions of botanic gardens to be ranked in the top 12 most perceived family friendly attractions – Top 5 amongst residents of the South West.

In summary, people are concerned about their finances and the sector will inevitably be hit, but some attractions will be insulated and there are opportunities there – not just to protect your market, but to grow it too. ●



The Ars Electronica Center is a key part of the transformation of Linz



# ARS ELECTRONICA

Linz in Austria – once blighted as the Third Reich's cultural centre – has reinvented itself as a city of innovation with world-class visitor attractions, as Terry Stevens discovers



Terry Stevens

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**The city of Linz was  
so unattractive it was  
free to reinvent itself**

**Manfred Grubauer, chair, Linz Tourism**

**L**ocated astride the Danube between Austria's cultural giants of Salzburg and Vienna, Linz is becoming one of the world's most dynamic and experiential cities. 'In Linz beginnts' (it all begins in Linz) is a famous Austrian saying which reflects the city's newfound identity and confidence.

Not so long ago Linz had a reputation, as 'Linz stinks!' – literally and metaphorically, firstly for its heavy industry and secondly for its 1930s connections with the Third Reich, when Linz was the Nazi's cultural centre and a patronage city of Adolf Hitler who planned to retire there.

#### **Post-war division**

Post-war Linz was a divided city for 10 years, with a demarcation between the Soviet-occupied northern zone and the US-occupied zone to the south of the Danube. Extensive bombing during the war necessitated bold new plans and

a strong investment in culture and education, as Linz remained heavily industrialised, with none of the tourist appeal of other Austrian cities.

It has no high mountains, few historic buildings and no snow sports; but from 1986, as war-time factories were turned to civilian use, it became a city with exceptional things to do and see – including the Voestalpine Steelworks visitor centre and the Mural Harbour outdoor graffiti gallery.

Also noteworthy is the wonderful Höhenrausch hybrid rooftop sculpture park-cum-observation tower-cum-theatre – a network of wooden bridges, walkways and frequently-changing immersive art installations that sits high above a school and shops, passing through a church tower in the city centre, unmissable and exhilarating in its boldness, simplicity and innovativeness.

Today, the charm of Linz rests in the juxtaposition of the old city with new



► technology and architecture; with its dark past and brave vision for the future. It's a city of open conversations, a desire to experiment and a collective will to do things that are good for the community.

"This city was so unattractive it was free to reinvent itself and it is now impossible to stop the revolution", says Manfred Grubauer, chair of Linz Tourism.

Among the catalysts for the transformation of Linz have been its role as European Capital of Culture in 2009 and UNESCO City of New Media in 2017 and today, Linz is synonymous with progress, vitality and vision founded on culture, new media, sustainable urban development and highly creative tourist experiences. Few post-industrial cities have transformed themselves as radically and successfully and it's recently been voted as the city with the best work-life balance in Austria.

#### **Ars Electronica – a catalyst for change**

At the heart of this metamorphosis is the remarkable Ars Electronica Linz GmbH – a hybrid cultural, scientific, and educational organisation dedicated to facing the future head-on.

Since 1970, this not-for-profit has explored relationships between art, science and technology and their impacts on society. The organisation's four interrelated divisions work to create a self-fuelling ecosystem which finds applications for innovative, radical and eccentric ideas.

The creation of the Ars Electronica Institute began with a festival in 1979 when it was realised that a culture-led transformative initiative was

**Prima Materia at Ars  
Electronica took visitors on  
an 'audiovisual journey'**

“  
***Few post-industrial cities in the world have transformed their physical, perceptual and tourist image as radically and successfully as Linz***



PHOTO: CREDIT ARS ELECTRONICA

required to change Linz from an industrialised, heavily-polluted city burdened with an unenviable history, to a city based on innovation and people.

As a result, four inspirational locals:

journalist Hannes Leopoldseder; musician Hubert Bognermayr; physicist Herbert Franke and music producer Ulrich Rutzel conceived and delivered the first festival exploring the confluence of art, technology and society.

Since then the Ars Electronica Festival has been a proving ground for innovation and research, becoming a global phenomenon and a pillar of the renaissance of the city.

Every year, in September, the festival turns Linz into an experimental setting, inviting artists, scientists and researchers from all over the world to confront a specific, interdisciplinary theme through speeches, workshops, exhibitions and symposia.

#### **A creative feedback loop**

Each festival is dedicated to a different issue and the formats are the very opposite of sacrosanct. The festival is accompanied by Prix Ars Electronica – a competition and international trend barometer run by a team constantly on the lookout for what's new, exciting, radically different and making an impact right now.

A showcase of technology and arts excellence, the prix attracts entrants ranging





***The charm of Linz rests in the juxtaposition of the old city and new technology and architecture; with its dark past and brave vision for the future***



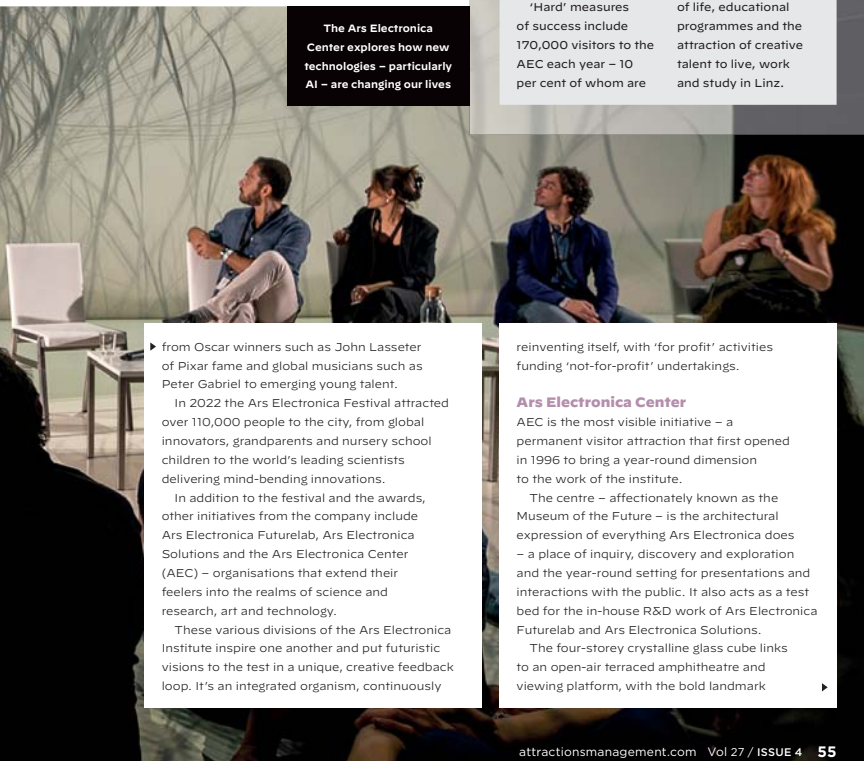
Ars Electronica explores the connection between music, mathematics and mechanics via exhibits and performances





PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/SALICAP

**The Ars Electronica Center explores how new technologies – particularly AI – are changing our lives**



► from Oscar winners such as John Lasseter of Pixar fame and global musicians such as Peter Gabriel to emerging young talent.

In 2022 the Ars Electronica Festival attracted over 110,000 people to the city, from global innovators, grandparents and nursery school children to the world's leading scientists delivering mind-bending innovations.

In addition to the festival and the awards, other initiatives from the company include Ars Electronica Futurelab, Ars Electronica Solutions and the Ars Electronica Center (AEC) – organisations that extend their feelers into the realms of science and research, art and technology.

These various divisions of the Ars Electronica Institute inspire one another and put futuristic visions to the test in a unique, creative feedback loop. It's an integrated organism, continuously

## Funding Ars Electronica

The Ars Electronica initiative is financially supported by the Republic of Austria and the City of Linz Council, which act as underwriters and are the owners of the building in which the AEC is located; they regard the Ars Electronica Institute as a long-term, multi-beneficial, investment which generates benefits for the city that extend far beyond traditional KPIs and ROIs.

'Hard' measures of success include 170,000 visitors to the AEC each year – 10 per cent of whom are

out-of-state tourists – 100,000 who visit the Ars Electronica Festival – the majority of whom are out-of-state tourists – plus the significant export earnings generated by Ars Electronica's 'for profit' commissioned international R&D.

'Soft' measures of success include: the international profile for the city and its internationalisation, the stimulus of new ideas positively impacting quality of life, educational programmes and the attraction of creative talent to live, work and study in Linz.

reinventing itself, with 'for profit' activities funding 'not-for-profit' undertakings.

### Ars Electronica Center

AEC is the most visible initiative – a permanent visitor attraction that first opened in 1996 to bring a year-round dimension to the work of the institute.

The centre – affectionately known as the Museum of the Future – is the architectural expression of everything Ars Electronica does – a place of inquiry, discovery and exploration and the year-round setting for presentations and interactions with the public. It also acts as a test bed for the in-house R&D work of Ars Electronica Futurelab and Ars Electronica Solutions.

The four-storey crystalline glass cube links to an open-air terraced amphitheatre and viewing platform, with the bold landmark

## Ars Electronica Linz RECIPE FOR SUCCESS

An integrated eco-system of cross-subsidising, mutually supportive activities drives the Ars Electronica Institute's business model, however, public financial support for core not-for-profit activities remains essential to the delivery of a wide range of benefits:

- Constantly pushing the boundaries of innovation and invention in order to remain relevant to audiences
- Using the festival and the international competition to inject momentum on an annual basis
- Consistently refreshing the content of the core attraction by driving R&D and encouraging innovation
- Harnessing revenues from for profit activities to support not-for-profit activities
- Ensuring there are direct, tangible, benefits to the community, including product development; the application of research to enhancing quality of life; delivering exciting events; attracting tourists; generating civic pride; and enhancing the city's reputation as a place to live, work, study and visit

► building a contemporary counterpoint to neighbouring historic churches, completing a triptych of modern, bold cultural buildings – the other two being the Brucknerhaus Concert Hall and the Lentos Kunstmuseum, a contemporary arts museum.

Unpretentious by day and shimmering by night, what goes on in this building is awe inspiring and extraordinary, combining art and science in ground-breaking ways to arrive at new perspectives and approaches to the challenges facing society.

The transparent glass surfaces of the AEC can be illuminated from behind as a projection screen, creating a night-time light sculpture that can be populated with LED and LCD screens, allowing light shows and interactive, viewer-generated content.

This interaction with people is driven by Bluetooth-connected pads along the banks of the Danube which link to mobile phones, creating a

unique light show that's visible across the city.

The exhibitions on art, technology and society segue into laboratories and these segue into exhibitions throughout the centre, purposefully appealing to many different audiences, from cruise ship passengers to local schoolchildren.

### What's inside?

The highlight of the Ars Electronica Center is the unique 'Deep Space – the Theatre of the Future': an extraordinary VR experience which opened in 2009 to celebrate European Capital of Culture. Other current exhibitions include: Understanding AI; Me and the machine; Machine learning studio; Global shift; Kids' research laboratory; AI x music; The open SoundStudios and the Deep Space 8K.

Also on show are four open labs which consist of interactive stations, works of art, research projects and large-scale projection laboratories. Personal highlights include 'There is No Plan B' which explores where energy





Deep Space is a large-format projection space for interactive, stereoscopic and high-definition content



PHOTO: PHILIPP GREINOLD



PHOTO: ARS ELECTRONICA - ROBERT BAUERNHANS

comes from; and Neuro Bionics, an exhibition that explores the brain and how all our conscious and unconscious functions are controlled, how we feel and perceive, think and decide.

AEC is also showing a large exhibition called 'In transfer – a new condition' which is an outreach project from the European Capital of Culture of Esch in Luxemburg.

### A city reborn

But the AEC is more than an architectural icon, it's the symbol of the 'new' Linz, offering the antidote to what the city was 40 years ago when it was all about steel, chemicals, tobacco, pollution and traffic.

Linz is not trying to stop being an industrial city, but instead trying to become an industrial city of the 21st century. Companies based there are developing new technologies – Voestalpine, for example, is working on producing green steel – and an institution such as Ars Electronica

## About Linz

Innovation and creativity are driving constant change

**Population of city:** 200,000

**Population of wider area:** 400,000

**International airports:** Linz, Salzburg, Vienna and Munich

**Key websites:**

[www.ars.electronica.at](http://www.ars.electronica.at)

[www.linztourismus.at](http://www.linztourismus.at)

**Icons:** The Danube, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Ars Electronica Centre and Festival, The Lentos Contemporary Arts Centre, The Bruckner House Concert Hall, Mural Harbour, Höhenrausch, Schlossmuseum, old and new cathedrals, Die Klangwolke Festival ('The Sound Cloud'), Tabacfabrik Innovation Centre, The Kepler Salon. The video Linz is Linz

[www.attractionsmanagement.com/LinzisLinz](http://www.attractionsmanagement.com/LinzisLinz)

reflects what this trend means for us as a society.

Linz is an exemplar of a post-industrial city which has successfully transformed itself and placed tourism, visitor attractions and culture at the heart of this transformational process. Importantly, the process continues – the concept of 'Linz Changes' has to be ongoing by its very definition. ●

*Professor Terry Stevens is a global tourism advisor and author of the Wish You Were Here series, about inspirational tourism and attractions best practice. Find out more about Wish You Were Here at*

[www.attractionsmanagement.com/TerryStevens](http://www.attractionsmanagement.com/TerryStevens)



# Emotional REWARD

**Scientists have developed a video game that adjusts difficulty based on player emotions, with applications for visitor attractions, as Tom Walker reports**

**K**orean scientists have developed a dynamic way of adjusting the difficulty of video games – by estimating the players' emotions based on in-game data. The new technology has important applications for the visitor attractions sector.

A team at the Gwangju Institute of Science and Technology (GIST) have created a model in which the difficulty level is tweaked to maximise player satisfaction.

Until now, most developers have relied on dynamic difficulty adjustment (DDA) to crack the tough nut of appropriately balancing a videogame's difficulty – something deemed essential to provide players with a pleasant experience.

Using DDA, the difficulty of a game adjusts in real-time according to player performance. If a player's performance exceeds the developer's expectations for a given difficulty level, the game's DDA agent automatically raises the difficulty to increase the challenge presented to the player.

While DDA is useful, it's limited, as the level of

difficulty is adjusted simply on player performance – not on how much fun they are having.

Therefore, the team at GIST decided to put a twist on the DDA approach.

## A different focus


Instead of focusing on the player's performance, they developed DDA agents that adjusted the game's difficulty to maximise one of four different aspects related to a player's satisfaction: challenge, competence, flow, and valence (positivity or negativity).

The DDA agents were trained via machine learning using data gathered from actual human players, who played a fighting game against various artificial intelligence (AI) systems and then answered a questionnaire about their experience.

Using an algorithm called Monte-Carlo tree search, each DDA agent employed actual game data and simulated data to tune the opposing AI's fighting style in a way that maximised a specific emotion, or 'affective state.'

The team verified – through an experiment with





The new technique to adjust difficulty levels could have a major impact on tech-based entertainment and simulation-type rides at visitor attractions

20 volunteers – that the proposed DDA agents could produce AIs that improved the players' overall experience, no matter their preference.

This marks the first time that affective states have been incorporated directly into DDA agents, which could be useful for commercial games.

#### **Major impact**

The new technique to adjust difficulty levels could have a major impact on tech-based entertainment and simulation-type rides at visitor attractions.

It also has potential for other fields that can be 'gamified' – including physical activity and exercise.

Professor Kyung-Joong Kim, who led the study at GIST, said: "One advantage of our approach over other emotion-centred methods is that it doesn't rely on external sensors, such as electroencephalography.

"Once trained, our model can estimate player states using in-game features only.

"Commercial game companies already have huge amounts of player data. They can exploit these data to model the players and solve various issues related to game balancing using our approach," he said. ●

*Instead of focusing on the player's performance, they developed agents that adjusted the difficulty to maximise player satisfaction*

”



PHOTO: FOSTER KERRISON

Kerrison set herself a challenge to write a guide to immersive storytelling



# MARGARET KERRISON

The award-winning storyteller learned about creating absorbing worlds while at BRC Imagination Arts and Disney Imagineering. Now she's written a book to share her expertise

Kerrison was a Disney Imagineer  
and is now senior experiential  
creative lead for Airbnb

**My goal is to have every  
guest walking out of an  
experience believing  
they're stepping into  
a better world**

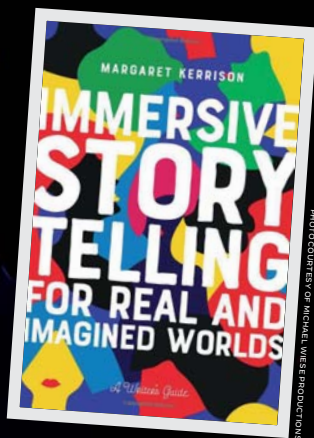


PHOTO COURTESY OF MICHAEL WESSE PRODUCTIONS

In 2020 when the world was in lockdown, I set a personal challenge. If I were to pen a book about writing for themed entertainment and immersive storytelling, what would be the best way to teach it?

Writers hold the power and responsibility to share stories that get into the hearts and minds of every single guest. How to even begin to explain this craft? Is it more of a science or an art? What to include? How to use my experience to share some of the collective wisdom gained? How to tell a story about storytelling?

For the next year, I wrote from 6am to 8am each morning before starting my 'real job' as a Disney Imagineer. We'd just opened *Star*

*Wars: Galaxy's Edge*, which took five years to complete and I was looking for my next great endeavour – ideally a new challenge – and this book was the answer. I called it *Immersive storytelling for real and imagined worlds*.

I had no idea whether anyone would be interested in reading it, but was determined to explain the important role of writers as champions of the story and the many responsibilities they have when working on complex, multi-disciplinary projects.



PHOTO: TY PORRO/DISNEYLAND RESORT

To draw out a guest's emotion you must put them at the heart of the action

## CREATING A GUIDE AND ROADMAP

The aim was to write a guide, rather than a textbook, by breaking down the process and using examples of great storytelling. By using these tools and techniques, the book becomes a roadmap rather than a step-by-step instructional manual. After all, the field of immersive storytelling is changing by the day. What's relevant today may not be relevant tomorrow and that's what makes it such an exciting field.

There isn't one way to tell a story – in fact, there shouldn't be. There's space for all of us to share our unique stories in differing and compelling formats.

While studying screenwriting at the University of Southern California School of Cinematic Arts, I'd never seen a book specifically written

***My hope is that every guest can take their emotional transformation and carry it with them for the rest of their lives***



Kerrison has worked on projects including Avengers Campus



for immersive storytellers and writers – we'd only read scripts and books about writing for screen and TV. I had no idea the world of themed entertainment existed; I discovered it when our professor asked us to consider extending our work to other industries. It was the perfect storytelling niche for me, as stories are not limited by screens or pages, meaning they can be shaped in multi-sensory, multi-dimensional worlds.

Writing for immersive storytelling is an art form which combines talent, instinct and craft. Talent and instinct are something we're born with, but craft can be taught. Even a naturally-gifted writer must continue to practice their craft to improve their skill. Writers must write. There's no way around it.

This is a very rewarding industry in which to work as a writer. Those of us who are fortunate enough to create experiences that connect people often feel this isn't work at all in the conventional sense.

## IMMERSING THE GUEST IN THE STORY

The key to bringing a narrative to life for the guest and moving from telling a story to creating a world lies in their emotional journey. In considering how to draw out the guest's emotion, you have to put them at the heart of the action. How can they be the hero of your story? How can you make them feel as though they belong in the story rather than being a mere observer?

In immersive storytelling versus other traditional storytelling formats, you have to

### EXCERPT

#### IMMERSIVE STORYTELLING FOR REAL AND IMAGINED WORLDS


"We're given an incredible opportunity to create stories and spaces for people to play together. As storytellers, we strive to create experiences that are moving, compelling, and meaningful. We design spaces so visitors can escape and leave their ordinary lives behind. We make places where the audience can see themselves and feel a sense of connection and belonging. We make experiences full of magic so that we are reminded that our lives are magical in themselves."

PHOTO: BREYTON MACK/Disney

Consider how the experience can be personal for each guest







Kerrison shares what she's  
learned from working on  
projects including Disney's  
Star Wars: Galactic Starcruiser



► consider how the experience can be personal to the guest, as well as being multi-sensory, and social. In creating an experience that makes them the protagonist, the world around them must react to their presence. *Immersive storytelling for real and imagined worlds* describes how this can be done by asking questions that get to the right answers.

The social aspect of immersive storytelling is also considered. In modern society, we're witnessing a breakdown of community and this has been exacerbated by the pandemic. Social media is incredible in that it connects people all over the world, but there's also a very strong urge for us to meet in-person and in communities of like-minded people.

We can't exist individually – our stories start, end and continue with one another and only by understanding our unique role in our community and wider society can we fully appreciate how important we are to each other.

Since the release of *Immersive storytelling for real and imagined worlds*, many people – from students and professors to working professionals in design, engineering, arts, music, live entertainment, technology and management – have reached out to say



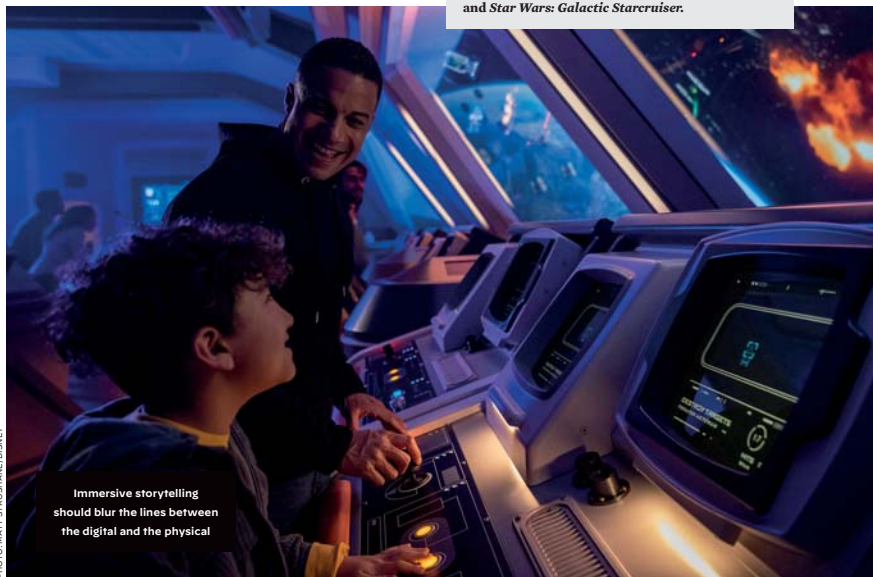
PHOTO: JOSTEN KERRISON

Kerrison worked for BRC Imagination Arts and Disney Imagineering before joining Airbnb

#### MORE ABOUT MARGARET KERRISON

Following time at BRC Imagination Arts and Disney Imagineering, Kerrison joined Airbnb's experiential creative product team in 2021, working under former Imagineer, Bruce Vaughn.

While at Imagineering, Kerrison worked on projects including *Avengers Campus* at Disney parks in California and Paris; *National Geographic HQ*; *Guardians of the Galaxy: Cosmic Rewind*; *Storyliving by Disney*; and *Star Wars: Galactic Starcruiser*.



Immersive storytelling should blur the lines between the digital and the physical

PHOTO: MATT STROSHANE/DISNEY



Kerrison's work  
includes Star Wars:  
Galactic Starcruiser



## The key to moving from telling a story to creating a world for the guest lies in their emotional journey

how useful they found it and to suggest collaborations. The most surprising thing is that non-writers have loved it as much as writers.

Ultimately, I believe we can all be storytellers and it's up to us individually to decide how we use our discipline to share stories with the world.

### CREATING CHANGE IN THE GUEST

The most important aspect of designing an immersive experience is the change you create in your guest.

A great story changes the world, one person at a time. Think about the last exceptional book you read or film you watched, they stay with you, lingering and making you think and ponder. That's the power of a good story. It makes you reflect on the human condition and feel less alone.

There are four ways you can increase your audience's likelihood of feeling moved and transformed.

Firstly, tell an emotional story that embraces universal truths, secondly, make it personal, thirdly meet your audience 'where they are'

to maintain the status quo and fourthly, focus on community – create a world where they can connect with others.

The future of immersive storytelling should involve blurring the lines between digital/virtual and physical, reducing friction for guests when they attend your experience, creating jumping-off points for further stories and developing opportunities for more meaningful connections. The immersive storytelling landscape is ripe with possibilities and it's up to each one of us to create stories that are meaningful to the world and transformational for each guest.

My goal is to have every guest walking out of an experience believing they're stepping into a better world. After all, isn't a great story one that creates empathy and compassion for other people?

My hope is that every guest can take their emotional transformation and carry it with them for the rest of their lives. ●

*Immersive storytelling for Real and Imagined Worlds – A Writer's Guide* by Margaret Kerrison is out now



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/MARTIN MICHALOWSKI

# BIRD PARADISE

**Singapore is bringing all its nature-based attractions together in a new location at the Mandai Wildlife Reserve, to drive conservation and improve the visitor experience, as Tom Walker explains**

**T**he Mandai Wildlife Reserve in Singapore will gain a new visitor attraction in the second quarter of 2023 – a 17-hectare sanctuary called Bird Paradise. The move is part of larger plans to co-locate all of Singapore's wildlife parks and other nature-based experiences together at the Mandai Wildlife Reserve.

Bird Paradise will be the first of the new wildlife parks located at the reserve to open to the public. The new area will transport visitors

into a colourful world that will be home to 3,500 birds from over 400 avian species.

Designed to encourage discovery at every turn, Bird Paradise will welcome visitors into immersive and naturalistic mixed-species habitats. Visitors will be able to explore eight large walk-through aviaries which reflect different biomes of the world such as dense African rainforests, South American wetlands, Southeast Asian paddy fields and Australian dry eucalypt forests.



24 per cent of the species in Bird Paradise will be threatened, the highest percentage under human care in a single zoological park



“

We've designed Bird Paradise to bring visitors as close as possible to some of the world's most stunning bird species

### ► ENDANGERED SPECIES

Some of the park's most threatened species will be housed in Winged Sanctuary, a zone specially dedicated to birds of high conservation value including critically endangered species like the Philippine Eagle and Vietnam Pheasant.

In total, 24 per cent of the species in Bird Paradise will be threatened, the highest percentage listed under human care in a single zoological park. The new bird park will also have the world's largest living genetic reserve of Hornbills under human care, with over 20 species.

The site's operator, Mandai Wildlife Group, wants to position the park as a unique destination for nature and wildlife activities.

While Bird Paradise will open in 2023, development work for the rest of the large park is also well underway and the remaining features are set to open progressively through to 2025.

### CREATING AN IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCE

Mike Barclay, Group CEO of Mandai Wildlife Group said, "When the Mandai Rejuvenation Project was envisioned, we wanted Bird Paradise to exemplify our commitment to operating open, immersive wildlife parks that place animal welfare at the centre of what we do.

"We've designed Bird Paradise to offer guests carefully themed and choreographed walk-through aviaries that will bring them closer to some of the world's most stunning bird species.

"The support facilities are also of the highest standard, including a state-of-the-art avian hospital and an extensive breeding facility.

"I'm confident that Bird Paradise will provide us with the perfect platform to further our education programmes, capacity-building initiatives and our important work helping to protect threatened bird species across the region. ●

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/INDEPENDENT BIRDS



Vietnamese pheasants





The park will house  
Philippine Eagles

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/IVAN SARENAS



A key highlight is  
the reserve's Heart  
of Africa zone

PHOTO: MANDAI WILDLIFE GROUP

# GRAHAM MACVOY

There has never been a shortage of creativity from the team behind Boomtown Festival, and when they decided to create a permanent attraction, they really let it loose. Magali Robathan finds out more from Wake the Tiger co-founder Graham MacVoy



Graham MacVoy joined Boomtown in 2017 as site and operations director

### What is Wake the Tiger?

It's the world's first Amusement Park®. It's an otherworldly experience that takes you through a portal to a world where alchemists and scientists have been experimenting with solutions to their world's problems, which are not too dissimilar to those facing our planet now.

It's very hard to describe – you really have to experience it. There's a narrative, but it's also very abstract in parts. You walk through rooms of insanely creative installations. Everyone comes out with a smile on their face, just saying: Wow!

### How was the idea for the attraction born?

Chris Rutherford and Lak Mitchell founded Boomtown 13 years ago – it's an immersive music festival near Winchester that's also a living theatre. They effectively build a film set full of actors and music for four days. There's nothing quite like it.

Rutherford and Mitchell bought the building that now houses Wake the Tiger in 2015 – at that time it was a burnt out shell. My favourite quote is that when they bought it, there were no keys, because there were no doors.

They gutted and refitted it, with the idea that they wanted to do something for Bristol. It was used for various things to begin with; as a workshop for Boomtown, for crew parties and at one point there was a 3,000 person nightclub there.

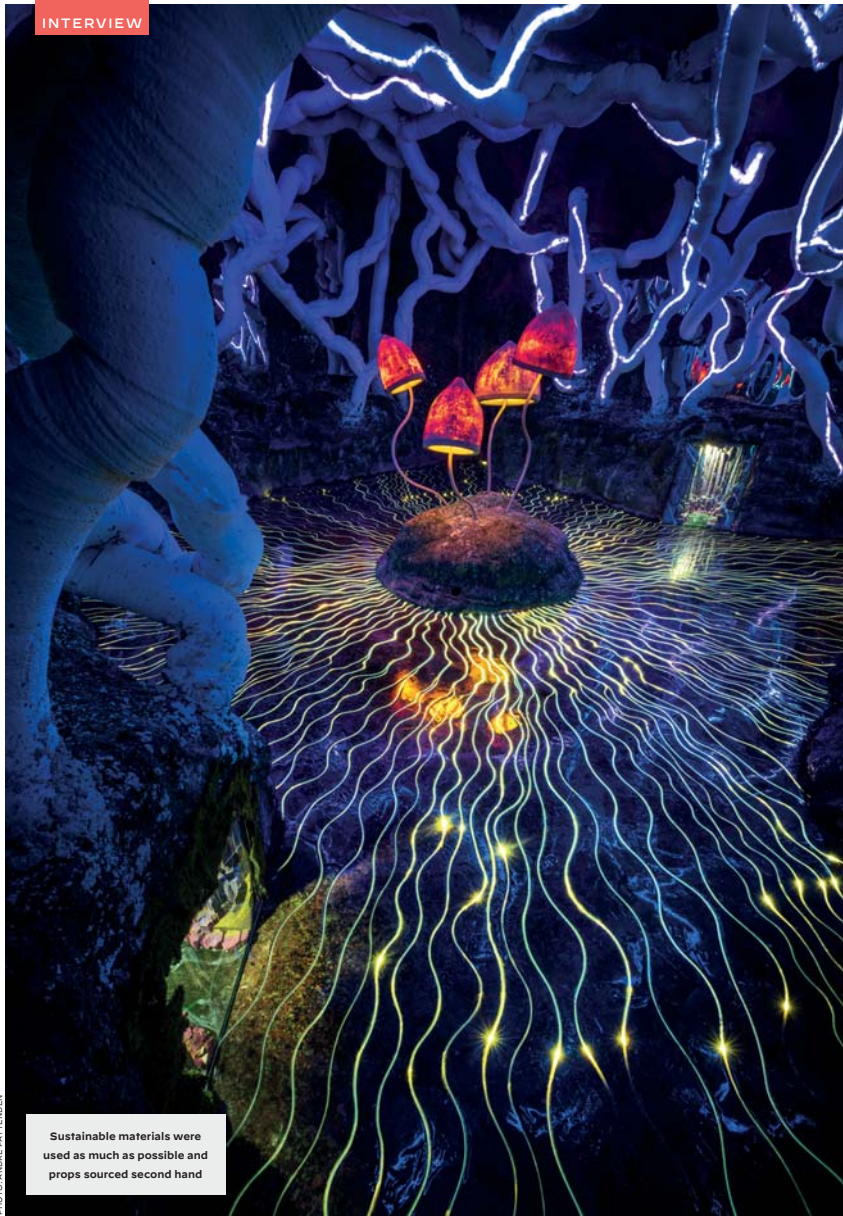
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***With any creative process, you get friction, and that can be difficult sometimes, but that's also what creates the magic and the fire***

I joined in 2017 as site and operations director, and over the next few years, Mitchell and I talked a lot about creating a permanent space and began thinking about what kind of attraction we could build, how it would work and what we might want to achieve with it. We watched *The Imagineering Story* – the story of Disney – on Disney+ and found it really inspiring.

Then COVID-19 came along, and meant that Boomtown was put on hold. Once we got the furlough and support for staff in place, we had the opportunity to dedicate all of our time to bringing together the ideas we'd talked about for the last five years to try to make something cohesive out of them.





Sustainable materials were used as much as possible and props sourced second hand



### How did you go about turning the idea into reality?

We had great input from different people, James Wheale from Innovate UK gave us some really good guidance and help and he said: You guys can deliver stuff no-one else can do. Just do that. At that point we realised we should stop trying to be clever and just do what we're good at.

We spent the first eight months working on the business plan; developing the ideas and a name, and playing around with the concept. Our initial funds were from the Arts Council, which came through Boomtown as part of the Cultural Recovery Fund to support the costs of the premises. We used that money and built out the cafe and about six test rooms to show investors around and give them an idea of what we were trying to create.

Everyone was totally blown away by what we were doing, and we managed to raise enough investment from private investors to start building the attraction.

### How did the concept develop?

We had an idea of the journey and vision of what it might look like, but we didn't plan out all of the final room detail. When you've got amazing, creative people working together, the magic is in the way it develops; sometimes unexpectedly. It was such a diverse thought process that it created this really different experience that wasn't too formulaic.

It was all done in-house by the team and the network of artists, carpenters, set

A series of themed rooms are connected via secret passageways

designers, scenics, painters, seamstresses and robotics experts that we'd built up over 13 years with Boomtown – a lot of whom are based in Bristol. It was pretty intense, but we opened on time – just. It was completed about six hours before we actually opened.

We're really proud of what we did, and we're always looking for ways to evolve the narrative and interactions, and see where we can take it. We hold regular maintenance weeks where we change bits up and off the back of these we've got really positive feedback. We're hoping to bring in some quest elements soon, so that visitors can play a more in-depth part in the story.

### Where did you source the props and sets?

The props teams sourced a lot of items from car boot sales. I give big props to our artistic director, Doug Francisco, as he's really passionate about recycling and reusing materials – as we all are. I recently saw a photo of him going through a skip finding barrels and a couple of columns – with permission, I might add. Recycling and reusing are really important to Mitchell and I, so we made sure to source as many of our props second-hand as we could.

“

***Festivals are based on whether you like the music, if you can stomach the rain and toilets and camping.***

***We wanted something all year round that allows everyone to experience this amazing wonder***

Of course, we couldn't build this without having an impact on the environment, but we have tried to take responsible decisions wherever we can. We had to use a bit of cement and a couple of steel beams, but we tried to minimise that where possible. We built with as much sustainably sourced timber as we could, and we also installed a massive air source heat pump system, which was expensive, but we wanted to do it because we felt it was the right thing to do.

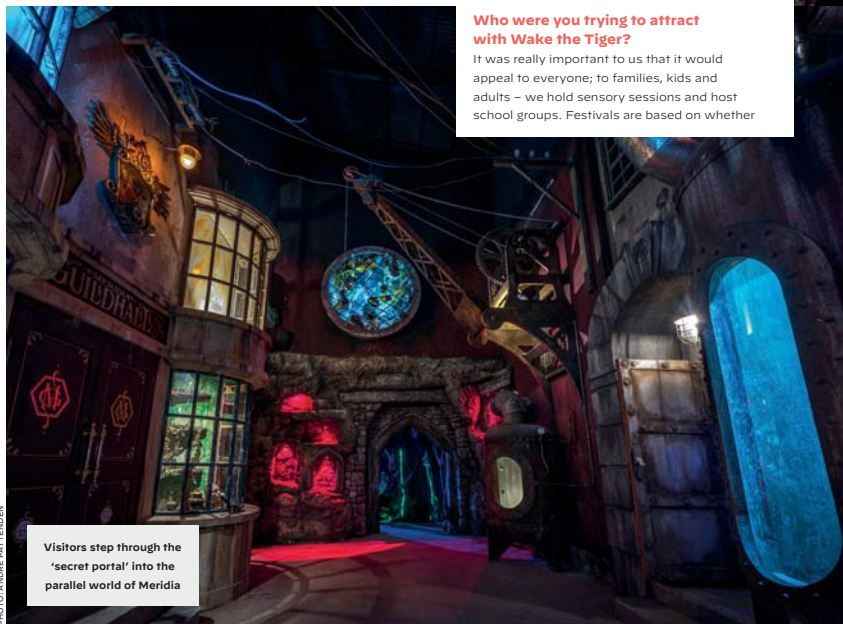
**What were the biggest challenges of the project?**

For me, the biggest challenge was making sure we had an operational team in place and could raise the money. We continued to raise money through private investors as we were building and creating the attraction – that was an ongoing process. We managed to stay ahead of the curve with it.

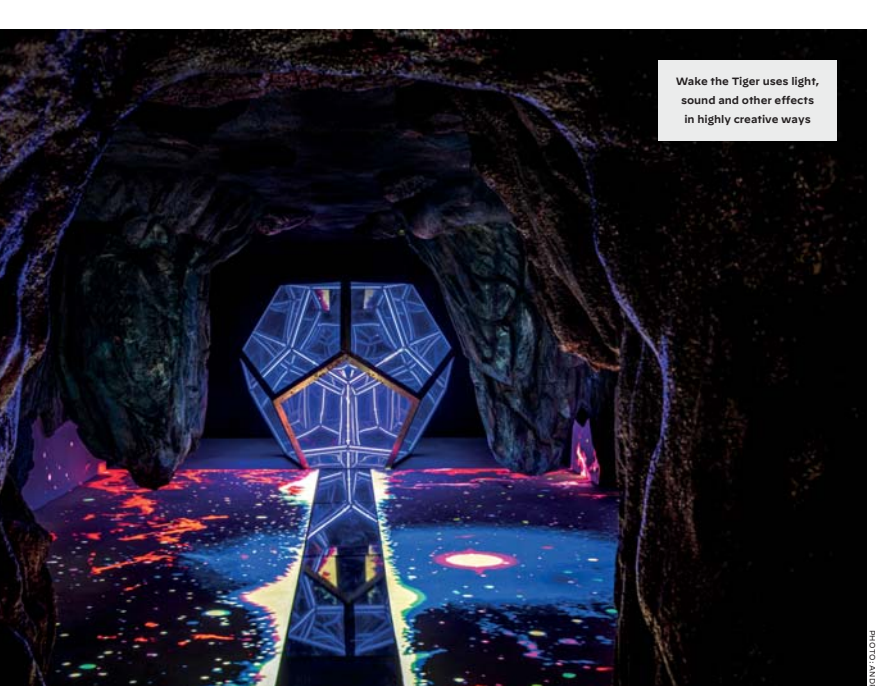
With any creative process, you get friction, and that can be difficult sometimes, but that's also what creates the magic and the fire.

**Who were you trying to attract with Wake the Tiger?**

It was really important to us that it would appeal to everyone; to families, kids and adults – we hold sensory sessions and host school groups. Festivals are based on whether



Visitors step through the 'secret portal' into the parallel world of Meridia



Wake the Tiger uses light, sound and other effects in highly creative ways

PHOTO: ANDRE PATTENDEN

you like the music, if you can stomach the rain and toilets and camping. We wanted something that allows everyone to experience this amazing wonder all year round.

### How are you marketing the attraction?

It's tricky because it's such a difficult thing to describe. When we were pitching to investors, they kept asking for our elevator pitch. I just said, it's not that simple. You can't describe this in 10 seconds. In the end, enough of them got it, and believed in us, based on our track record, I guess.

We gave very little away to the public before we launched. We had some assets to put out there, and they generated intrigue, but it was important to have a sense of reveal.

In terms of marketing, we started small, marketing to people in Bristol – we're slowly reaching out as we see where ticket sales are coming from: the M4 corridor, Cardiff to London.

We recently had a ticket sale from Italy; someone from our marketing department contacted them to ask how they knew about us. They told us they were planning to come to London for the weekend, but had read about

us, and decided to come and visit. I was in the cafe the other day and a family had come from Pembrokeshire in West Wales specifically to visit Wake the Tiger. It's growing all the time.

We always knew user-generated content was going to be key to driving our marketing – the feedback from the public and press reviews have been amazing.

### What are your plans?

We've only been trading a couple of months, so for now it's about continuing to establish ourselves and ensure we've got that consistent footfall to stabilise the business. The focus over the next 18 months will be on building our brand and looking to the future.

We've got loads of ideas. Developing a narrative is really important to us, but it's also important that it's not a 100 per cent narrative-led experience. The art and the installations are key; if you have a really tight narrative it limits what you can do and it can take away a bit of that magic.

Everyone's along for the ride, to see what happens next. ●

# UNDER THE SEA

A new Red Sea tourist destination and scientific research centre will offer AR experiences, submarine dives, underwater walks and an insight into the region's unique marine life, finds Tom Walker

The Red Sea Development Company (TRSDC), the developer behind the AMAALA tourism project on the shores of the Red Sea, has revealed detailed plans for a marine life institute. Designed by Foster and Partners, the institute will function as both a scientific research centre and a tourist destination, with 10 zones providing a range of experiences, from augmented reality to submarine dives.

The 10,340sqm institute will be built three levels – one above ground and two below – and offer panoramic views of the Red Sea and marina.

Inspired by the Red Sea's coral formations, the glass-reinforced concrete being used to build the institute will be intricately moulded to resemble reef patterns. Inside, exhibition displays have

also been integrated into the infrastructure, with visitors flanked by suspended semi-spherical tanks containing colourful local marine life.

Expected to host up to 650 people at any one time, guests will be able to walk underwater, snorkel with rare species, participate in lab tours and dive into the depths of the Red Sea in a submarine. The marine life institute is part of phase one of AMAALA Triple Bay, which is set to welcome its first guests in 2024.

John Pagano, Group CEO of TRSDC, said: "We wanted to design a first-of-its-kind facility that extends far beyond any existing marine life attraction.

"With 10 zones that provide everything from augmented reality experiences to night diving and spaces for the scientific community





**The institute will offer visitors a range of experiences**

PHOTO: FOSTER + PARTNERS



PHOTO: FOSTER + PARTNER

**Gerard Evenden**

“

**We wanted to design a first of its kind facility that extends far beyond any existing marine life attraction**

to effectively progress their environmental projects, the facility is undeniably unique.

“Not only will it drive global green and blue innovations, it will also help put Saudi Arabia on the map for travellers seeking trips that enrich their lives.”

More than 40 per cent of the site will be covered by native plants, and a system to collect runoff water put in place to prevent erosion and pollution while reducing mains water use. The lighting throughout the institute has also been designed with the company’s green ambitions in mind, with an innovative framework to prevent light pollution to protect the nocturnal environment.

Gerard Evenden, head of studio at Foster and Partners, said: “The marine life institute will take guests on a vibrant, educational, and awe-inspiring journey that unveils the natural wonders of the Red Sea and blurs the boundaries between the institute and the ocean.

“By recreating natural marine habitats, offering unforgettable marine interactions, and sharing glimpses into conservation projects, it will provide guests with an immersive marine experience unlike any other.”

TRSDC is wholly owned by the Public Investment Fund of Saudi Arabia.

AMAALA is marketed as an ultra-luxury destination and as the “first global integrated family wellness destination.”

Phase One of Triple Bay is set to be complete in 2024. It will consist of eight resorts offering upwards of 1,200 hotel keys.

Once complete, AMAALA will be home to more than 3,000 hotel rooms across 25 hotels, and approximately 900 luxury residential villas, apartments, and homes, alongside high-end retail, dining, wellness, and recreational facilities. ●

TECH

# GETTING PERSONAL

The Met in New York used a mobile app during lockdown to allow access to its art

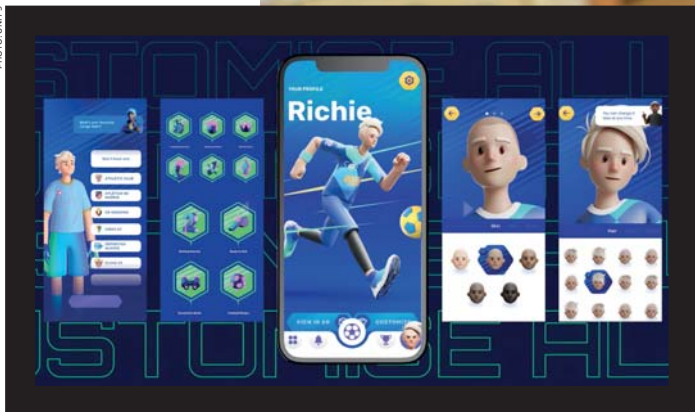
Digital companions are driving deeper connections and helping to personalise the experience at visitor attractions, says Daniel Burzlaff, head of Attractions by UNIT9



Options for tech-led personalised convenience now surround us in our day-to-day lives – from recommended shows on Netflix, to Alexa helping

out with recipes in the kitchen. Audiences have come to expect that same level of tailored guidance and careful curation in every experience they have – and all the more so when they're a guest. With 83 per cent willing to share their data to create a more personalised experience, visitor attractions are presented with a clear opportunity to track, analyse and tailor the guest experience at every touchpoint, utilising augmented reality, artificial intelligence and other digital technologies to create bespoke 1:1 connections with their guests and keep them coming back time and again.

Mobile companion apps are emerging as the perfect addition to any guest experience. From bringing visitors closer to collections, facilities, or rides, to providing the ability to book special events, enter competitions, pre-order add-ons or receive reminder notifications, digital apps put more control directly into guests' palms to help them get the most out of their visit.



PortAventura World's football-themed app allows guests to customise their visit

During the pandemic, the virtual doors of the Metropolitan Museum of Art were flung open thanks to a mobile app that gave access to immersive digital galleries, art history trivia, games and AR masterpieces. Although designed for use at home, a similar principle would work fantastically in the museum itself, enabling visitors to learn more about each painting, test their knowledge and interact with the artwork by scanning with their phones to uncover hidden details. Combine this with a preference selector like the High Museum of Art's Tinder-style Heartmatch app – which allows guests to create a customised map for their visit by swiping right for their favourite artworks – and you can start to see how a fully-rounded omniscient digital companion can be formed.

Taking this one step further, we can introduce location-based technology to create an even more functional and engaging guide that also reinforces a venue's IP or narrative. AR apps that use positional Cloud Anchors to connect real world locations with digital content can now provide an elevated service to visitors, making the

sometimes tricky task of navigation not only easy, but enjoyable. This is wayfinding of the future.

Changdeok Palace in Seoul used a digitally-mapped AR experience to introduce visitors to Haechi, a mythical animal tour guide who leads them through the palace grounds while telling stories of the Joseon dynasty. Added accessibility features such as step-free route options and an at-home edition for those not visiting the palace in person effectively extended this experience to an even wider audience.

As well as wayfinding, location-based AR can also enhance the visitor experience through gamification. PortAventura World's football-themed app The Beat Challenge invited users to create their own digital avatar before choosing a custom path through the park, unlocking exclusive games and content in each zone – including AR football challenges against super-size La Liga players. Earning rewards the more they explore, apps like this can bring the physical park to life for visitors, encouraging repeat visits to discover a different experience each time.

Along with smartphone-based apps, wearable

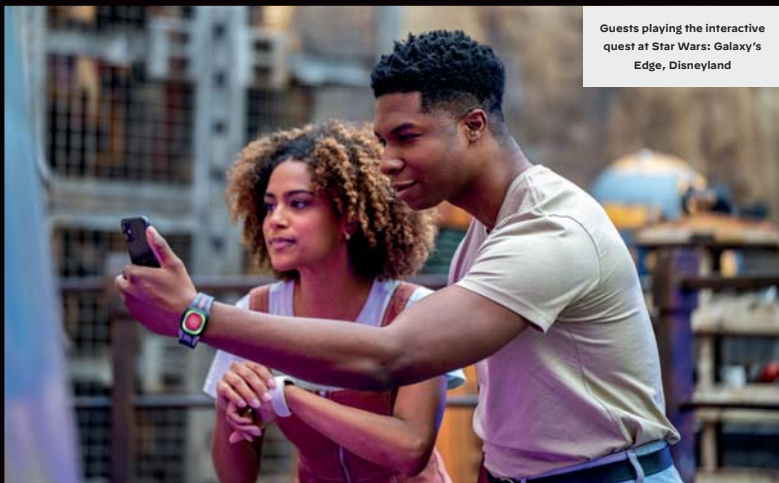


The High Museum of Art's  
Tinder-style app provides  
guests with a custom map



“

*Sensor-integrated wearables can also help venues to track visitor sentiment, measuring key emotions such as joy, nervousness and boredom to see what part of the experience makes them tick*



Guests playing the interactive quest at Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge, Disneyland

technology can also offer the chance to differentiate the visitor experience. Disney's latest Magic Band+ update, recently launched at Disneyland, sees further integration between the digital wearables and the physical park. As well as facilitating seamless admission, photo access, cashless payments and personalised lighting and vibrations, the wristwear gives guests the power to bring Disney statues to life and enjoy extra interaction with experiences such as the Star Wars: Batuu Bounty Hunters quest.

It will be interesting to see if the Magic Band+ will also make use of any technology to decipher visitor behaviour and sentiment. Theoretically, every interaction could be tracked, recorded and used by Disney to build a unique personal profile of each visitor, used to make tailored recommendations both during and after the visit. This would allow the franchise to deliver highly personalised future experiences to guests while also collecting valuable learnings for their business.

Manchester City Football Club have recently trialled a similar technology in collaboration with Cisco, introducing a Connected Scarf that allows the team to understand the emotions of their supporters. Analysing this biometric data using artificial intelligence can identify factors affecting audience behaviour and enable venues



Disney's interactive MagicBand+ was launched at Disneyland in October 2022

to leverage them to their advantage – an effective way to determine which rides need an extra dash of scare factor, or which exhibits need livening up.

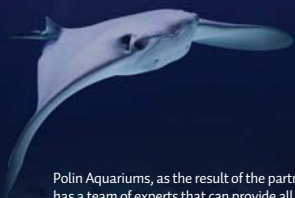
Data-driven digital tools are offering guests more relevant and accessible experiences that are perfectly tailored to them, plus giving venues that all-important overview on behaviour and preferences for more meaningful long-term connection. Premium, holistic hospitality experiences are now available in the palm of visitors' hands. ●



# PolinAquariums

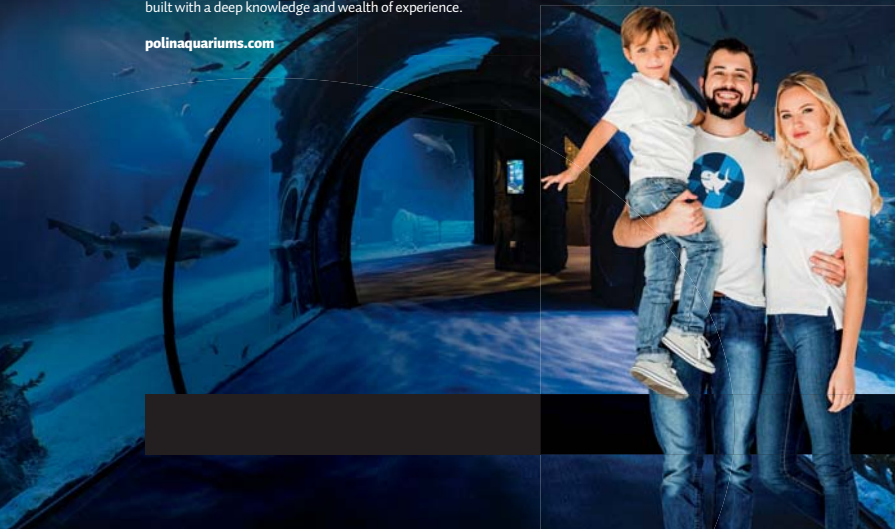
CONCEPT + DESIGN  
CONSTRUCTION + MANAGEMENT

## EXPERIENCE THE UNDERWATER



Polin Aquariums, as the result of the partnership between Polin and Ocean Aquariums, has a team of experts that can provide all details needed in projects including conceptual designs, engineering, architecture, construction, business plans, procurement of living creatures and brand identities. With this team of experienced architects, engineers, biologists, veterinarians and technical experts, the success of the attraction centers is built with a deep knowledge and wealth of experience.

[polinaquariums.com](http://polinaquariums.com)



For the latest supplier news and company information, visit [attractions-kit.net](http://attractions-kit.net)

# Product Innovation

Suppliers tell *Attractions Management* about their latest product, design and technology news



The dinosaurs are designed and built in Texas, US



## Billings Productions supplies dinosaurs to Columbus Zoo and Library

Provider of life-size animatronic dinosaurs Billings Productions has provided a Megalosaurus, Stegosaurus, and Triceratops for the atrium of Columbus Metropolitan Main Library, Columbus, US as part of a special autumn programme of activities.

While the three dinosaurs provided for the library are static, Billings Productions has also provided 17 moving animatronic dinosaurs for Dinosaur Island at Columbus Zoo and Aquarium, including a Brachiosaurus, Megalosaurus and Tyrannosaurus Rex.

"Our dinosaurs not only increase attendance and excitement for

zoos and museums, but they're a fantastic way to teach conservation," said Billings Productions' Ande Davidson. "Children look at our dinosaurs to see the animals that we've lost in the past and connect that to the endangered animals that we must save now for the future."

Also known as the Dinosaur Company, Texas-based Billings Productions designs and develops animatronic exhibits for zoos, museums and theme parks across North America, with the aim of helping to promote awareness of prehistoric life and endangered wildlife by making learning fun and entertaining.



The company has a collection of more than 300 dinosaurs

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

Billings productions





The ride was designed by Simworx and Katapult

Attractions developer Simworx has teamed up with themed entertainment designers Katapult to design a cops and robbers themed ride concept for Simworx's Automatic Guided Vehicle (AGV) Dark Ride.

Called *Overdrive: Ultimate Heist*, the concept was officially launched at IAAPA Expo Europe in London in September, where a vinyl wrapped police car-styled ride vehicle was showcased on the company's stand.

Guests are pitted against one another from the outset; during the queue they are separated into cops and robbers before boarding the ride vehicle and being briefed on their chosen mission. Riders then navigate a series of scenes from

## Simworx unveils new cops and robbers ride concept

the backstreets of the Metropolis to underground tunnels, parking garages and construction sites, with the AGVs interacting with the media as each vehicle follows its own path.

The ride uses a trackless system, which enables flexible movement around show spaces, where the ride vehicles can chase and duel one another in a variety of locations while avoiding hazards and other obstacles in the ride.

The finale sees the race spill out onto the city's busy highway culminating in a final death-defying pursuit across

the city's suspension bridge.

"Katapult looked at all the unique elements that really made the AGV special and worked that into the concept. We wanted to highlight the unpredictable motion of a trackless ride and how it could work in a duelling format where riders are pitted against one another as they experience multiple ride experiences and endings," said Simworx CEO, Terry Monkton

"With the AGV being the fastest trackless dark ride within the themed entertainment market, acceleration was a key component to integrate and focus on when imagining the kind of story we wanted to tell," added Simworx lead designer, Matt Clarkson.

*Overdrive* is designed to fit into a large sprawling footprint, made up of 10 scenes, with the last two interchangeable to suit the result of the chase. The layout uses 10 AGV vehicles, delivering a throughput of 1,100 riders an hour.



The police-style ride vehicles chase and duel one another

attractions-kit keyword

Simworx

Madame Tussauds  
uses AromaPrime  
scents across its sites



PHOTO: AROMAPRIME

## AromaPrime releases most popular scents

Themed scent company AromaPrime has released its top 10 'weird and wacky' smells over the past few years.

At number one, according to 'smell experience experts' at the company, is Kylie Minogue's Breath, which was created for Kylie Minogue's wax figure at Madame Tussauds by AromaPrime.

Number two is 'unbearably fishy' Penguin Vomit, used by zoos as part of their learning programmes. Number three is The Dentist, used in Halloween scare mazes to trigger personal fears.

Other popular smells on the list include Jaguar Urine, which was created in the AromaPrime lab using real jaguar urine and other poo as inspiration; the scent of the Tyrannosaurus Rex, created for the Natural History Museum, and the smell of Queen Elizabeth II, created to accompany her Madame Tussauds

figure. The aroma was based on Buckingham Palace and the Queen's favourite flowers.

Unicorn is also in the top 10, as well as Burning Witch – used by The London Dungeon – and the scent of Sports Changing Room, which is apparently popular at sports museums.

According to Liam R Findlay, themed smell consultant at AromaPrime, appealing to visitors' sense of smell can help attractions operators boost profits.

"Our scent receptors are connected to the part of the brain which processes memories and emotions, which is why fragrances help experiences stick in our minds. They also make us feel different emotions, like excitement, fear, or happiness," he said.

"Not only does this boost guest satisfaction, but it also boosts



Liam R Findlay

PHOTO: AROMAPRIME

ticket sales, gift shop sales and food sales, which is why post-pandemic attractions are opening themselves to the potential of aroma.

"The proof is really in the pudding. An ice cream shop at Universal Orlando Resort saw a 45 per cent boost in sales after six months of using scents for the first time. In a retail study, 84 per cent of participants valued shoes in a scented room as being worth more money than shoes in an unscented room.

"During the COVID-19 lockdowns, theme park fans were buying our most horrid ride stench for their homes – Rotting Flesh even became a bestseller, all in an effort to transport themselves back to happy days out!" ●

attractions-kit keyword

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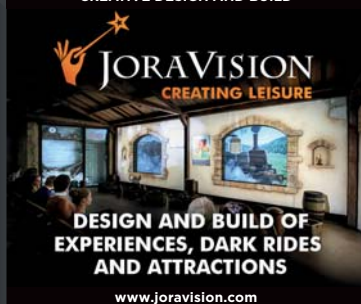
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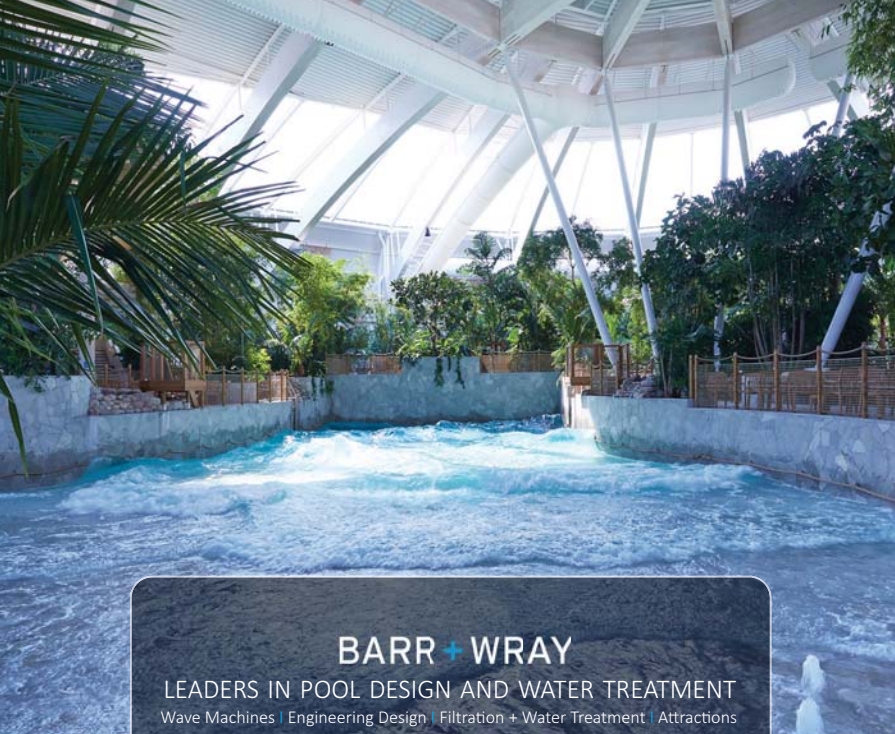
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