

# Attractions

## MANAGEMENT

@attractionsmag

Volume 29 Issue 1 2024

Futuroscope's

**RODOLPHE  
BOUIN**

“We're creating a  
waterpark unlike  
anything that's been  
done before”

**FONS  
JURGENS**

A new era  
for Efteling

**V&A  
EAST**

Dedicated  
to change

*Seven*  
new  
museums to  
get excited  
about

# AI & Attractions

*The good, the bad & the unknown* p50

Sign up  
FREE





**40**  
**years**

OF TRANSFORMATIVE  
HUMAN EXPERIENCES.

'Legend of Luna' at Great Wolf Resort Perryville | Perryville, MD

**BRC Imagination Arts** is a full-service, strategic design and production company that translates brand and cultural stories into transformative, human experiences. For 40 years, we've stood on the front lines, helping our clients build more meaningful, enduring relationships with audiences around the globe.

Our unique body of work has earned us over 500 awards for some of the most respected and acclaimed brand and cultural destinations in the world.

[www.brcweb.com](http://www.brcweb.com)





# VAC2024



## THE ANNUAL NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF VISITOR ATTRACTIONS

**Thursday, 10 October 2024**  
**QEII Centre, London**

The essential event for owners, managers and marketers of a visitor attraction, for opinion formers and tourism or heritage professionals. VAC is a national conference organised by the industry, for the industry where you can:

- Get involved in a unique forum for industry professionals.
- Network and share experiences.

### **Don't miss this opportunity to:**

- Understand your business in the context of the wider visitor attractions market.
- Keep up to date and find new directions for your business.

**SAVE  
THE  
DATE**

**10th  
October  
2024**

### **More event details**

Follow us on [@vac\\_conference](https://twitter.com/vac_conference) or more info to follow on our website: [www.vacevents.com](http://www.vacevents.com)



# Tomorrow's world

Like it or not, artificial intelligence is set to transform both our sector and our world. Those who get on board early are set to reap the rewards



There's no ignoring the issue of artificial intelligence (AI) right now, but for most of us, we're still getting to grips with what it actually means in practice.

For now, everyone is looking at one another, and it's important to learn from the early adopters about what works – and what doesn't.

Many visitor attractions have traditionally been a little slow to adopt new technologies, but this is not the time to hang back.

It's important to be aware of the potential pitfalls of AI, but it offers huge opportunities – for customising experiences, collating and interpreting data, improving efficiency, saving money, enhancing storytelling, offering novel in-person experiences and much more.

Attractions organisations currently using AI give valuable information about its potential for the industry. Disney, ever the pioneer, has set up a taskforce to study AI and how it can be used across its entertainment and theme park businesses.

Disney Research recently unveiled a prototype Baby Groot robot that uses AI machine-learning techniques to adapt to real-world scenarios, meaning it has the potential to move and act on its own, and interact with theme park visitors. The potential for this kind of technology to meet a growing desire for personalised experiences is huge. Characters could engage with individual guests, for example, and simulator rides could offer unique stories for each visitor.

Making sense of data to offer improved experiences is another area where AI can prove immensely useful.

London's National Gallery has developed its own AI systems to predict the popularity of temporary exhibitions using past attendance



AI technologies are changing fast

**Those who don't get to grips with AI run the risk of being left behind**

data, and the British Museum has partnered with the Alan Turing Institute to use AI systems to process information from visitors to provide detailed analysis of their behaviour.

So where's this all going? The simple answer is, no-one knows, but with AI set to enmesh itself more and more into our lives, those who don't get to grips with it now run the risk of being left behind.

This industry is great at collaboration and sharing knowledge – this was particularly evident during the COVID-19 pandemic. Now is the time for experimenting, sharing and being bold. We'd love to hear how you're getting on.

Magali Robathan, editor  
magalirobathan@leisuremedia.com



### 05 Editor's letter

Artificial intelligence is set to transform our industry. Don't get left behind

### 10 People: Ma Yansong

MAD Architects have unveiled designs for a major new arts centre in Guangdong, China

### 14 People: Linda Zou

Merlin Entertainments appoints a chief strategy officer to help transform the business

### 16 People: Helen Smout

On the aims of the new £26.5m Perth Museum

### 20 AM News

The top international news stories from the *Attractions Management* news feed

### 30 A decade of deconstruction

Rapid changes in technology and customer values are set to revolutionise the industry, according to new research

### 32 Fons Jurgens

Big changes are coming for much-loved Dutch theme park Efteling, with the launch of a Grand Hotel and major new attraction. Its CEO lets us into the plans

### 38 Ones to watch

Some seriously exciting new museums are taking shape across the globe. We highlight some of our favourites

### 46 Josh Kirk

As Copenhagen's Home of Carlsberg relaunches after a five year revamp, the project design lead tells us how ground-breaking technology was used to bring the brand to life

### 50 AI – friend or foe?

How can attractions best exploit AI technologies? What are the dangers? What does the future hold? We get an expert opinion



58

Celebrating Black British music



FUTUROSCOPE

Futuroscope's Rodolphe Bouin

70



V&amp;A East director Gus Casely-Hayford

64



76

SHUTTERSTOCK/PEOPLEIMAGES.COM - YURIA

What are today's visitors looking for?

## 54 Future shock

What can we learn from operators currently using AI? Lesley Morissetti gets some tips from early adopters

## 58 Jacqueline Springer

V&A East Museum will celebrate Black British music in its first exhibition. Its curator tells us more

## 64 Look to the East

Everything you need to know about the V&A East project

## 70 Rodolphe Bouin

Futuroscope's CEO takes us behind the scenes at the fast-changing future-themed park

## 76 What visitors want

Visitors are reshaping the industry in surprising and unexpected ways, according to new research

## 80 Imagining the future

Machine learning, robotics, VR, biotech... A unique festival explores how new technologies are transforming our lives

## 86 Product innovation

New products on the market

## 90 AM Directory

Get fast access to products and enjoy our company profiles service [attractionsmanagement.com/profiles](https://attractionsmanagement.com/profiles)

80



ARS ELECTRONICA / VOS PHOTO

Crystal ball gazing in Austria



### Choose how you read Attractions Management

#### PRINT

Attractions Management is available in print on subscription at [leisuresubs.com](http://leisuresubs.com)

#### DIGITAL/DESKTOP

Read free online and enjoy extra links and searchability  
[attractionsmanagement.com/digital](http://attractionsmanagement.com/digital)

#### ONLINE/MOBILE

Each issue of AM can be read online at  
[www.attractionsmanagement.com](http://www.attractionsmanagement.com)

#### PDF

A PDF edition is available to read offline  
[attractionsmanagement.com/pdf](http://attractionsmanagement.com/pdf)

### Other resources from Attractions Management

Attractions Management website  
[www.attractionsmanagement.com](http://www.attractionsmanagement.com)

Attractions Management  
Ezine & Instant News Alerts  
[www.leisuremedia.com/signup](http://www.leisuremedia.com/signup)

Buyer search engine  
[www.attractions-kit.net](http://www.attractions-kit.net)

Leisure Media  
[www.leisuremedia.com](http://www.leisuremedia.com)

# Attractions MANAGEMENT

## MEET THE TEAM



EDITORIAL DIRECTOR  
Liz Terry  
+44 (0)1462 431385



EDITOR  
Magali Robathan  
+44 (0)7779 785543



PUBLISHER  
Jan Williams  
+44 (0)1462 471909



SALES SUPPORT  
Tyler Landry  
+44 (0)1462 431385

CIRCULATION Michael Emmerson  
+44 (0)1462 471932

SUBSCRIPTIONS  
+44 (0)1462 471910

FINANCE & CREDIT CONTROL  
+44 (0)1462 431385

DESIGN Ed Gallagher  
+44 (0)1462 431385

WEB Tim Nash  
+44 (0)1462 471917

For email use: [fullname@leisuremedia.com](mailto:fullname@leisuremedia.com)



COPYRIGHT NOTICE Attraction Management magazine is published by The Leisure Media Company Ltd, First Floor, 2 Railton Road, Woburn Road Industrial Estate, Kempston, MK42 7PN, UK. The views expressed in this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the publisher. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recorded or otherwise (please) without the prior permission of the copyright holder, Cybertrek Ltd. Printed by The Manson Group Ltd. Distributed by Royal Mail Group Ltd and Whistl Ltd in the UK and Total Mail Ltd globally. ©Cybertrek Ltd 2023 ISSN 1479-9154 (print) ISSN 2397-2416 (digital). To subscribe, log on to [www.leisuresubs.com](http://www.leisuresubs.com), email [subs@leisuremedia.com](mailto:subs@leisuremedia.com) or call +44 (0)1462 431385. Annual subs rates UK £48, Europe £65, rest of world £94, students (UK) £25



# GIVE YOUR GUESTS THE THRILLS THEY'RE SEEKING



Scan the QR code or visit the link to sign up and explore Red Raion's expanding collection of movies available for licensing in XD, VR, Dome, and Fly formats, to offer your audience the excitement they look for in your venue!

[bit.ly/redraion-am](http://bit.ly/redraion-am)



**RED RAION®**

The CGI studio specialized in  
media based attractions

IMAGE: MAD ARCHITECTS



The new waterfront arts centre will include a major new museum

“

## The culture of southern Guangdong is about the gathering of people

Ma Yansong, founder, MAD Architects

**M**

AD Architects has unveiled the design for a waterfront arts centre featuring a museum, theatre and sports centre in Foshan City, Guangdong, China.

Spanning 120,000sq m, the mixed use Nanhai Art Center has been designed to resemble a continuous wave, with three separate buildings set under canopies inspired by the traditional architecture of Lingnan, the larger area in which Guangdong is located.

Led by MAD Architects founder Ma Yansong, Nanhai Art Center will be a “new public gateway” to the waterfront and a creative, cultural hub for the citizens of Guangzhou and Foshan.

The development is located in Nanhai Cultural District, the heart of the Guangdong-Hongkong-Macao Greater Bay Area, an urban site that bridges the cities of Guangzhou and Foshan.

“The traditional culture of Nanhai is in the drum beat and boat drift during the dragon festival boat race and in the kung-fu, in the lion dance,” said Ma Yansong. “Watching them, you can feel the dynamic, vibrant and innovative spirit from ancient times. We want to bring that spirit back to modern living here.”

The design is arranged around a central axis, with the 89,269sq m museum and grand theatre on one side, and the 32,000sq ft sports centre set slightly apart on the other. The Grand Theatre ▶





will include a 1,500-seat amphitheatre and a 600-seat multi-purpose hall, suitable for varied performances and conferences. Further details of the museum haven't yet been released.

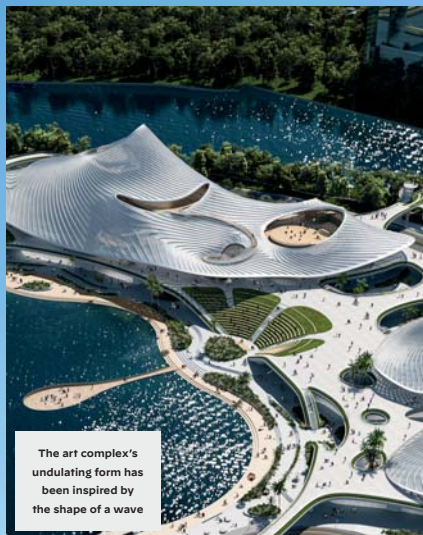
"The local culture of southern Guangdong is about the gathering of people," said Ma Yansong, adding that the creation of new contemporary cultural facilities is important to support this traditional culture.

"The design of the Nanhai Art Center wants to provide the maximum grey spaces for such activities," said Yansong.

Sustainable features include solar panels, a rainwater collection system and vertical greening systems. The roof will be made from translucent ETFE, which will allow natural light to enter the complex, reducing energy consumption on lighting and heating.

The site will also feature viewing platforms overlooking the lake. ●

IMAGE: MAD ARCHITECTS



The art complex's undulating form has been inspired by the shape of a wave

IMAGE: MAD ARCHITECTS



The site will feature viewing platforms and open spaces overlooking the lake





An ETFE roof will allow natural light in, reducing energy consumption

“

***You can feel the vibrant and innovative spirit from ancient times***

“

**This is a dynamic time for the leisure  
and entertainment industry**

**Linda Zou, chief strategy officer, Merlin Entertainments**

Linda Zou has been hired  
to help drive the growth of  
Merlin's global portfolio



Merlin's brands include  
Madame Tussauds, Sea  
Life and the Dungeons



lobal attractions company Merlin Entertainments has appointed Linda Zou as chief strategy officer.

Zou – who was previously managing director and partner at Boston Consulting Group – will report directly to Merlin CEO Scott O'Neil and work closely with the rest of the leadership team on designing and executing the company's strategic vision. Her role will also involve leading key programmes to accelerate growth and improve effectiveness within the business.

"This is a dynamic time for the leisure and entertainment industry," said Zou.

"Customer sentiment and tourism patterns are evolving. New technologies bring new opportunities for innovative guest experiences. Advanced analytics tools can make it easier for frontline teams to respond effectively to the market.

"I'm excited about the opportunities ahead for Merlin, as we bring more data-driven insight

to enhance our guest experience, strengthen our core commercial capabilities across the portfolio, and expand our avenues for growth."

"As Merlin transforms into a premium positioned, innovative and data driven company focused on driving enterprise value, we'll continue building capabilities to be world class in dynamic pricing, optimising trade, exploring the future of branded accommodation, maximising retail opportunities and investing in technology to drive efficiencies," said O'Neil.

"Linda is the perfect executive to lead our organic growth plans and ambitious plans and trajectory. She's intellectually curious, a driving force of will and has proven to be an extraordinary teammate.

"She will be an instant value add to Merlin as she brings a wealth of experience and expertise in strategy, innovation, and transformation in the retail and travel sectors which translates directly into our business and allows her to hit the ground running." ●

“

**I hope visitors take away a deeper understanding of this area's importance in Scotland's story**

**Helen Smout, CEO, Culture Perth & Kinross**



Helen Smout is CEO  
of independent charity  
Culture Perth and Kinross





IMAGE: MECANOO



pening over Easter weekend in March 2024 after a £26.5 million redevelopment project, the new Perth Museum will tell the story of Perth – Scotland's first capital.

The museum – a transformation of Perth's former city hall by Netherlands-based architects Mecanoo – will explore Perth's role in ancient and modern Scotland via exhibits including Bonnie Prince Charlie's sword, a rare Jacobite wine glass and the 3,000-year-old Carpow Logboat.

The Stone of Destiny, also known as the Stone of Scone, will be the centrepiece of the new museum. The Stone of Destiny is an ancient symbol of Scotland, used in the inauguration of Scottish monarchs and kings and queens of the UK, and was recently used at the coronation of Kings Charles III at London's Westminster Abbey. It is returning to Perthshire for the first time in more than 700 years, and will be free for the public to view.

Perth Museum has been developed through a partnership between Perth and Kinross Council and Culture Perth and Kinross and is supported by £10 million from the UK Government as part of the Tay Cities Region Deal – a £700 million regional investment programme jointly funded by the UK and Scottish governments and regional partners.

Here we speak to Culture Perth & Kinross CEO Helen Smout about preparing for the opening of this unique museum.

### What is the aim of Perth Museum?

Perth Museum will shine a light on the Recognised Collections of National Significance held in Perth – one of the oldest public collections in the UK. The museum explores Perthshire's pivotal role within Scotland, the UK and internationally through unique objects encompassing archaeology, natural history, social history and world cultures. It will feature interactive activities, immersive digital experiences, a café, and a gift shop.

The museum is a major investment for the local community, revitalising Perth's historic city centre, and will act a catalyst to drive economic impact through tourism.

### Can you talk us through a couple of highlights of the museum?

At the heart of the museum is the Stone of Destiny, also known as the Stone of Scone, which continues to play an important constitutional role as demonstrated in the recent Coronation of King Charles III and Queen Camilla. ▶

Architects Mecanoo have transformed the historic Edwardian building

IMAGE: MECANOO

“

***I'm thrilled that Bonnie Prince Charlie's sword and a rare Jacobite wine glass will go on public display for the very first time***



An 18th century Jacobite wine glass is among the artefacts on display at the museum

The rich history of this object is explored in an immersive experience which will take the visitor from that recent coronation back to its earliest role at the inauguration of Scottish kings. We've used the latest technologies and worked with a range of partners to bring to life the very human stories at the heart of our history.

The museum will also be home to a number of significant and unique objects such as the Carpow Log Boat. One of the most exciting archaeological discoveries in the area, the 9m-long boat lay buried in the banks of the River Tay, near Abernethy, for 3,000 years until it was discovered 22 years ago. It has undergone a year of specialist conservation work at the National Museums Collection Centre in Edinburgh in preparation for display.

Perthshire sits at the heart of the Jacobite story so I'm thrilled that Bonnie Prince Charlie's sword will go on public display for the very first time. This will be the first time the sword has returned to Scotland since it was made in Perth in 1739.

### **What does the opening of this museum mean for Perth and for Scotland?**

The roots of Perth Museum's collection are more than 200 years old and this is the first opportunity in all that time to tell the story of Perth and Perthshire spanning 10,000 years of history and to show their deep significance to Scotland's story.

With our internationally significant museum collection we aim to attract visitors from around the world and confirm Scotland's place as one of the most exciting, dynamic and culturally rich places to visit.

**Internationally significant  
artefacts include Bonnie  
Prince Charlie's sword**

### **What have been the biggest challenges so far with this project?**

Continuing to develop such a large and complex project during COVID-19 lockdowns was probably the most difficult aspect of the project. In many respects, the move to online for project meetings meant these could happen more efficiently, but working in isolation between these meetings was really hard for everyone and not a time we'd want to revisit.

### **What are you proudest of? And what are you most excited about?**

I'm incredibly proud of our team who have all worked with such energy and passion to deliver this project and to make the visitor experience something really special. I'm very excited to see the reactions of the visitors coming through our doors. To see the museum through their eyes will be a great privilege.

### **What do you hope visitors will take away from a visit to Perth Museum?**

I really hope that our visitors take away a deeper understanding of this area's importance in Scotland's story and how the brilliant collections we have here in Perth can bring that story to life in a new way. ●

## US

### Carmel Lewis takes top spot at BRC

Carmel Lewis has been appointed president at global experiential planning and design firm, BRC Imagination Arts, heralding a new era for the company.

Lewis has been with BRC for 23 years and previously served as executive vice president and executive producer. During her career she has been responsible for creative and design management, production, business affairs and project development. Her work has been recognised by numerous global awards for creative and technical excellence.

Notable projects of Lewis' include attractions for clients including Johnnie Walker, Las Vegas Raiders, NASA,

The Coca-Cola Company, Ford Motor Company, The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Museum, Absolut, The Grand Ole Opry, Google, Guinness, Climate Pledge Arena, and Jameson Irish Whisky.

"I am truly humbled to serve this team in this role for BRC," said Lewis. "The accomplishments we've celebrated are a testament to our collective dedication and innovative spirit."

In its 40 year history, BRC has earned more than 500 awards for its brand destinations. "Carmel is the best person to guide BRC into the exciting future ahead," said BRC founder, Bob Rogers.

More: <http://lei.sr/e7N2y>



Carmel Lewis takes the helm at BRC Imagination Arts

PHOTO: BRC IMAGINATION ARTS



PHOTO: BRC IMAGINATION ARTS

“

Carmel is the best person to guide BRC into the exciting future ahead  
*Bob Rogers, BRC founder*

## EUROPE

### Merlin teams up with the Lego Group and Hasbro



PHOTO: MERLIN ENT

“

We're really proud to bring Hasbro's Peppa Pig to life

*Scott O'Neil, CEO, Merlin*

Merlin Entertainments, the Lego Group and Hasbro have teamed up to create Peppa Pig experiences.

Timed to coincide with the 20th anniversary of the Peppa Pig pre-school brand this year, the collaboration will see the launch of Peppa Pig Park in Gunzburg, Germany later this year, as well as the launch of the Lego Duplo Peppa Pig area at Legoland Billund Resort in Denmark.

Mainland Europe's first standalone Peppa Pig theme park will be situated next to Legoland Deutschland Resort and will feature rides, interactive attractions,

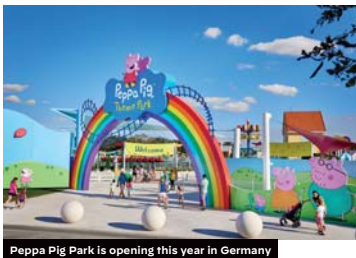
themed playscapes and shows based on the brand.

The partnership will also see Peppa Pig brought life with Lego Duplo products.

Scott O'Neil, CEO of Merlin Entertainments, said: "This is an exciting step forward for two of our iconic partners, whose purpose is to entertain and educate through creativity

and play. We've partnered with the Lego Group for over 18 years, and the power of the brand, across borders and ages, is unparalleled. We're really proud to bring Hasbro's Peppa Pig to life with the Duplo brand, beginning with our new Peppa Pig Theme Park in Gunzburg."

More: <http://lei.sr/V6e2u>



Peppa Pig Park is opening this year in Germany

PHOTO: MERLIN ENTERTAINMENTS



US

## Cedar Fair and Six Flags plan to merge this year

Theme park operators Cedar Fair and Six Flags confirmed in November 2023 that they plan to merge.

The two regional operators will combine to form a new company with a significant foothold in the North and Central American market, with 27 theme parks, 15 water parks and nine resort properties across 17 US states, Canada and Mexico.

The combined company will be valued at around US\$8 billion, based on both companies' debt and equity values as of 31 October 2023.

Once the deal has been completed, the company will operate under the

name Six Flags and will be headquartered in Charlotte, North Carolina – with significant finance and administrative operations in Sandusky, Ohio.

According to Richard Zimmerman, president and CEO of Cedar Fair, the move will result in the new company having an expanded and diversified footprint, a more robust operating model and "a strong revenue and cash flow generation profile".

"Our merger with Six Flags will bring together two of North America's iconic amusement park companies to establish a highly diversified footprint

PHOTO: JULIE HOWDEN



The company will operate under the name Six Flags

to enhance park offerings and performance," Zimmerman said.

In January 2024, Six Flags and Cedar Fair reportedly said that they had received a second request for information and

documents from the US Department of Justice, which is reviewing the merger.

Six Flags and Cedar Fairs have said that they still expect the merger to be complete within the first half of 2024.

More: <http://lei.sr/FOC8b>

GLOBAL

## Elvis Presley Live is rolling out globally

PHOTO: LAYERED REALITY



**“**  
Elvis Evolution is a next generation tribute to a music legend  
*Andrew McGuinness, CEO, Layered Reality*

Immersive entertainment specialist, Layered Reality, is creating a tribute to Elvis Presley featuring a concert experience with a life-sized digital Elvis.

The Elvis Evolution will thrill fans of the cultural icon using AI, holographic projection, augmented reality, live theatre and multi-sensory effects to create a fully immersive experience.

Authentic Brands Group, which owns Elvis Presley's estate, has given Layered Reality access to thousands of personal photos and video to create brand new AI Elvis performances.

PHOTO: ELVIS PRESLEY EMBROSSES



The show will use AI to bring Elvis 'back to life'

Music, technology and storytelling will give guests a deeper insight into Presley's life, showing his meteoric rise to fame and the cultural movement he catalysed.

There will be an after-party Elvis-themed bar and restaurant on site at the first location in London, with live music, DJs and performances.

The London attraction opens this November (2024), with other major cities to follow, including Las Vegas, Tokyo and Berlin.

"Elvis Evolution is a next generation tribute to the musical legend that is Elvis Presley," said Layered Reality CEO Andrew McGuinness.

More: <http://lei.sr/R3j2Y>

## EUROPE

### Universal eyes UK for first European resort

Universal Studios is assessing the feasibility of opening its first European resort in the UK, following the purchase of a former brickworks in Bedfordshire.

The theme park operator has confirmed it's in the "very early stages of exploring the possibility of a potential park and resort experience in Bedford."

Parent company Comcast Corporation has purchased the 480-acre site, which previously had planning permission for 1,000 homes. Universal Destinations and Experiences has also had positive conversations with various local and national stakeholders, including Bedford Borough Council



PHOTO: UNIVERSAL STUDIOS

and the Mayor of Bedford Borough. However, the company has stressed plans are still in the early stages and it is likely to be many months before a decision is made.

Universal Destinations and Experiences has cited the UK's large population, creative

industries, strong tourism industry, transportation infrastructure and close proximity to Europe as making it an attractive proposition for a resort.

The Bedfordshire site is just 45 minutes from London, within easy reach

of tourism magnets Oxford and Cambridge and has half of the UK's population – including the Leisure Media/Attractions Management HQ – within two hours. As well as being close to the A1 and M1. Luton Airport is nearby.

**More:** <http://lei.sr/k6PB8>

## SOUTH KOREA

### Therme Group confirms resort



PHOTO: THERME GROUP

Global attractions and wellbeing organisation Therme Group has announced the location of its first Asia Pacific project. The upcoming resort will open in South Korea's Incheon City as part of its Golden Harbor development.

A memorandum of agreement was signed on 20 December by Therme's senior vice president Stelian Iacob and Incheon Free Economic Zone (IFEZ) commissioner Kim Jinyong.

"Therme Group's wellbeing resort will not only attract tourists to Incheon and help drive the region's economy, but it will also boost health and wellbeing in the population as Incheon

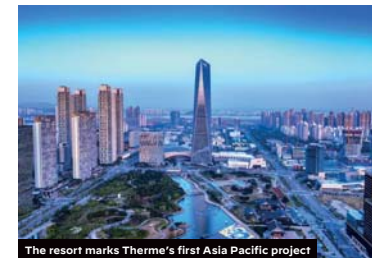


PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/TRAVEL YANE PHOTOS

The resort marks Therme's first Asia Pacific project

continues to grow as a leading global city," said Kim Jinyong, IFEZ commissioner.

Therme Group senior vice-president and COO, Stelian Iacob, added: "Our close partnership with Incheon and IFEZ will enable us to continue our global development programme, bringing the world's most

advanced wellbeing concept to iconic locations in cities worldwide." The agreement will see project plans progressing throughout 2024 and an expected lease signing in 2025. Subject to finalised plans and permissions, construction is anticipated to take two to three years.

**More:** <http://lei.sr/U4Y7c>

“  
This will enable us to  
continue our global  
development programme  
Stelian Iacob, Therme Group

UK

## Wake The Tiger reveals OUTERverse expansion

Immersive art experience Wake the Tiger has opened a 1,000sq m extension.

Dubbed 'the world's first amazement park' Wake The Tiger was created by the team behind Boomtown music festival. It launched in a former warehouse in Bristol, UK in July 2022, featuring 27 different spaces, including ice chambers, secret passageways, underwater worlds, mechanical chambers and psychedelic forests. Since its launch, it has welcomed almost 300,000 visitors.

Dubbed OUTERverse, the expansion features 15 new spaces, with visitors starting their journey in the Astral Tour Lounge, described as 'a futuristic airport lounge

that radiates a feeling of a "cosmic retrofuture".

The OUTERverse features a range of installations – created where possible from salvaged and recycled materials – including a segment from an actual plane, a cosmic kitchen and nostalgic childhood toys.

"We wanted to combine connection, memories and spirituality into a journey that will blow people's minds," said Graham MacVoy, MD of Wake The Tiger.

"Our new 'Astral Tours' offer a unique opportunity to go on a trip into the unknown to foster a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness of life."

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

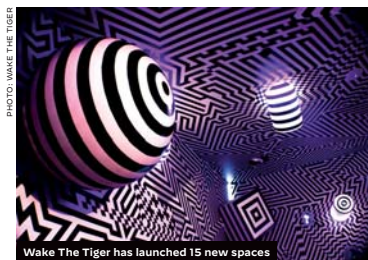


PHOTO: WAKE THE TIGER

Wake The Tiger has launched 15 new spaces



PHOTO: ALEX ALLEN

“

We wanted to create a journey that will blow people's minds

Graham MacVoy, MD, WTT

UK

## Tate Modern and Frame collaborate for yoga experience

London boutique fitness operator, Frame, teamed up with the Tate Modern in London to offer two yoga classes, following by a tour of the art gallery.

Two sessions took place earlier this year, in the Tate Modern's East Room: an inspiring place to practise and relax. Floor to ceiling windows drench the space in natural light and offer spectacular views of St Paul's Cathedral and the River Thames.

The yoga classes were followed by a guided tour of the gallery, with a focus on

mindfulness and slow looking. The two-hour experience cost £40 for members and £45 for non-members.

One of the UK's most prestigious galleries, Tate Modern is part of a family of four galleries, along with Tate

Britain in Westminster, Tate Liverpool and Tate St Ives.

Collaborations between health clubs and attractions can bring in new audiences for both and help foster a sense of community and added interest for members.

Cornwall-based yoga studio, Oceanflow Yoga, holds regular silent disco yoga sessions at the Eden Project.

This allows Oceanflow to charge a higher price and offer a different experience.

More: <http://lei.sr/9c3n5>



PHOTO: TATE MODERN/DAN WELLS

The Tate Modern: an iconic spot for yoga

US

## Sony Pictures launches immersive Wonderverse

Sony Pictures has launched an immersive indoor entertainment park at Oakbrook Mall in Chicago, US, featuring escape rooms, interactive exhibits, racing simulators, VR attractions and bumper cars.

Called Wonderverse, the entertainment destination occupies a 45,000sq ft retail space and features immersive experiences based on Sony brands including *Zombieland*, *Jumanji* and *Ghostbusters*.

"Wonderverse is an exciting expansion for Sony Pictures' growing location-based entertainment experiences," said Jeffrey Godsick, head of location-based entertainment at Sony Pictures. "Experiences such

as Wonderverse provide audiences the opportunity to enjoy our brands in new ways by immersing themselves in some of their favorite stories."

Highlights include two different *Ghostbusters*-themed VR experiences, *Zombieland* bumper cars, the Pacific Playland arcade – inspired by the decrepit carnival in *Zombieland* – and *Bad Boys*-inspired racing simulator games.

Visitors can get a drink in The Ghost Trap, a 'haunted' speakeasy-style bar, while a 21 *Jump Street* pop-up bar is due to open soon.

Admission to the centre is free, with attractions charged separately.

More: <http://lei.sr/b0d5X>



IMAGE COURTESY OF SONY PICTURES

The attractions are based on Sony brands



IMAGE COURTESY OF SONY PICTURES

“

Audiences can immerse themselves in their favourite stories

Jeffrey Godsick, Sony Pictures

CHINA

## ‘World’s largest’ indoor ski centre slated to open in 2025



PHOTO: 10 DESIGN

“

Our vision is to deliver an immersive experience for tourists and locals

Chin Yong Ng, 10 Design

Huafa Snow World, a 131-hectare sport and entertainment destination in Shenzhen, China, designed by architecture firm, 10 Design is slated to open in 2025.

The development is anchored by a 80,000sq m indoor ski resort, currently expected to be the largest of its kind in the world when it opens.

Huafa Snow World will have a balance of retail, entertainment, commercial, hospitality, civic and cultural elements with the aim of creating a new and vibrant destination. The development will also include a JW Marriott



IMAGE: 10 DESIGN

The 80,000sq m ski resort will open in 2025

Hotel featuring a ballroom with views of the ski slope. The design will revolve around the theme of snow, with ceramic boards and aluminium panels representing glaciers and ice crystals.

Chin Yong Ng, design principal at 10 Design said: "Our vision for the project is to deliver a fully immersive

experience, servicing not only tourists, but also local residents. The planning and design for this cultural epicentre reimagines retail development as a multi-faceted community experience, inviting discovery and encouraging guests to explore."

More: <http://lei.sr/w3N5p>



# INGENUITY THAT MOVES YOU



VIENNA  
26-28 SEPTEMBER  
BOOTH #A1609

NEW 2023 - FAMILY LAUNCH COASTER 'LIGHTNING'  
FURUVIKSPARKEN, SWEDEN



NEW 2023 - FAMILY BOOMERANG 'LUNA'  
LISEBERG, SWEDEN

## DISCOVER MORE

Our team of specialists in concept design, engineering and manufacturing can deliver the most thrilling experience for your guests!

Whether you want to create a new family coaster that appeals to children, teens, parents and grandparents, are looking for a new heart-pounding experience to delight thrill seekers or want to develop any other attraction that will make your venue a success, Vekoma will assist you to discover more.

We look forward to meeting you at **IAAPA EXPO EUROPE!**

[WWW.VEKOMA.COM](http://WWW.VEKOMA.COM)

# MAXIMUM THRILL ULTIMATE COMFORT



WILDCAT LOOPING COASTER 'FØNIX'  
FÅRUP SOMMERLAND, DENMARK



## CHINA

### Shenzhen Art Museum showcases MAD Architects

Shenzhen Museum of Contemporary Art and Urban Planning (MoCAUP) has opened a retrospective of the research and practices of MAD Architects.

Called Ma Yansong: Landscapes in Motion, the exhibition occupies more than 3,000sq m and takes visitors on a journey through 52 projects spanning almost two decades.

MAD Architects is led by Ma Yansong, Dang Qun and Yosuke Hayano.

The exhibition is MoCAUP's first solo exhibition of architecture since opening in 2016.

The exhibition touches on topics related to urban development, architecture,

daily life, the role of architects, the future and dreams.

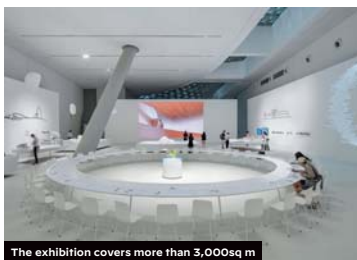
Explaining the exhibition's theme, Ma Yansong said: "Architecture and cities are real settings where life unfolds.

"They represent feelings, ambience, and time. They carry traits of living beings; thus they are full of energy, flow and uncertainty.

"The goal of this exhibition is to use architecture as a conduit to explore cultural life, allowing us to probe our inner selves while observing the dynamic, diverse and fluid cultural landscape of contemporary society."

● Read more about Ma Yansong in our profile on page 10.

More: <http://lei.sr/c9m2W>



The exhibition covers more than 3,000sq m

MAD ARCHITECTS/SHENZHEN MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART



PHOTO: GREG MEI

“

The goal is to use architecture to explore cultural life  
Ma Yansong, MAD

## GLOBAL

### Timbaland joins forces with Myndstream



PHOTO: GWAS

“

I want to create music that can help people heal and grow

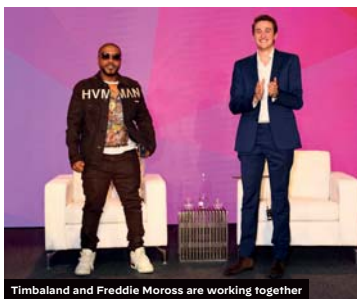
Timbaland

Timbaland, Platinum Grammy Award-winning producer, who's worked with artists such as Jay-Z, Missy Elliott, Madonna, Rihanna, Justin Timberlake and Drake and Björk, has announced a partnership with music creator, Myndstream.

The new partners will collaborate to produce an album of music to help improve the health and wellbeing of listeners, whether that be to destress, relax, unwind or focus.

They will be available for use by operators across the leisure, attractions, wellness, health and fitness and spa markets.

The tie-up was announced at the 2023 Global Wellness Summit in Miami, where



Timbaland and Freddie Moross are working together

PHOTO: GWAS

Myndstream founder Freddie Moross interviewed Timbaland live on stage.

The 51-year-old musician shared his journey about overcoming an addiction to oxycontin, a powerful opioid painkiller and how it led him to create wellness music.

"Music is a very powerful tool," Timbaland said. "It brought me out of crisis. I want to create music that can help people heal and grow."

Myndstream and Timbaland's first project is due for release this year.

More: <http://lei.sr/m6L8Y>

# Telling **Your Story** Through Technology



Audio Visual Consultancy |  
System Integration |  
Show Control |  
Installation |  
Service & Support |

[www.djwillrich.com](http://www.djwillrich.com)

Fort Edmonton Park  
Indigenous Peoples Experience  
Edmonton, Canada

## GLOBAL

### Google launches Gemini AI – its ChatGPT killer

Google has released Gemini, a new multimodal AI which is being billed as a "ChatGPT Killer".

Unlike ChatGPT, it can take inputs in text, code, audio, image and video, making it far more powerful and extending the range of applications.

Gemini comes in three sizes – Ultra, Pro and Nano – to function across a broad range of devices from smartphones to datacentres.

Google says Gemini can understand and absorb the world around us.

Google Deepmind has created an ethical framework for Gemini to ensure it's managed with safety and responsibility in all aspects, using filters and classifiers.

"Every technology shift is an opportunity to advance scientific discovery, accelerate human progress, and improve lives," said Sundar Pichai, CEO of Google. "I believe the transition we are seeing right now with AI will be the most profound in our lifetimes, far bigger than the shift to mobile or to the web before it.

"We're taking the next step on our journey with Gemini, our most capable model yet, with state-of-the-art performance across many leading benchmarks.

"This new era of models represents one of the biggest science and engineering efforts we've undertaken as a company."

More: <http://lei.sr/p6n4F>



SYNNA/SHUTTERSTOCK

It's the start of a new era at Google, says its CEO



SHUTTERSTOCK/PHOTOSENCE

“

I believe the transition with AI will be the most profound in our lifetimes  
*Sundar Pichai, CEO, Google*

## UK

### Tourism think tank explores gender equity and male allyship

At a recent think tank, the UK's Tourism Society hosted a panel to discuss the importance of male allyship in the travel and tourism industry.

In an industry hit hard by the pandemic, women make up over 50 per cent of the workforce worldwide, yet remain underrepresented when it comes to decision-making and leadership roles.

Alessandra Alonso, founder of the social enterprise Women in Travel CIC co-chaired the think tank.

Alonso made a call to action, asking men in leadership positions to share their experience and privilege with female colleagues, to amplify the voices of women, non-binary and other minority groups and create a

travel and tourism industry which is more equitable.

Alonso was joined on the panel by Jools Sampson, beneficiary of the male allyship programme and founder of Reclaim Yourself Retreats. Sampson discussed

how her work with ally and mentor Shaon Talukder – founder of Geotourist – helped her shift a mindset she believes had become stuck after 20 years running the business as a sole trader. ●

More: <http://lei.sr/D2m3a>



SHUTTERSTOCK/MANDAY

Solo female travellers are the fastest growing tourism group





UNFORGETTABLE ENJOYMENT  
- IN THEME PARKS.

# A decade of deconstruction

**Five macro trends will revolutionise the way businesses work with customers in the face of rapidly changing technology, according to a new report by Accenture. Tom Walker investigates**

**T**he rapid advance of technology in all areas of life is putting societies in flux, creating uncertainty and forcing people to reassess their plans for the future, according to a new report from consulting firm Accenture.

The Annual Life Trends report shows that half of people globally are significantly altering their life goals, prioritising job stability and retirement over marriage or getting a college degree. Another 48 per cent now only plan 12 months ahead (or less) – with some not making any plans at all.

Mark Curtis, global sustainability lead for Accenture Song, said: “We’re entering a decade of deconstruction spurred on by changing consumer values, AI’s explosive growth and the relentless speed of change.”

## A shift in mindset

According to the report this shift in mindset – brought on in part by the increasing intrusion of technology into people’s lives – is creating challenges and some degree of fragility for businesses, as people are deconstructing everything in their lives and trying to assess their place in the world.

As an example of the way the relationship between consumers and businesses is changing, the report charts how, for years, the correlation between customer experience and revenue growth has inspired organisations to hold the customer at the centre of every decision.

Now, economic considerations are forcing cuts, creating friction between customers and



Accenture Song’s Mark Curtis has asked what change means for business leaders

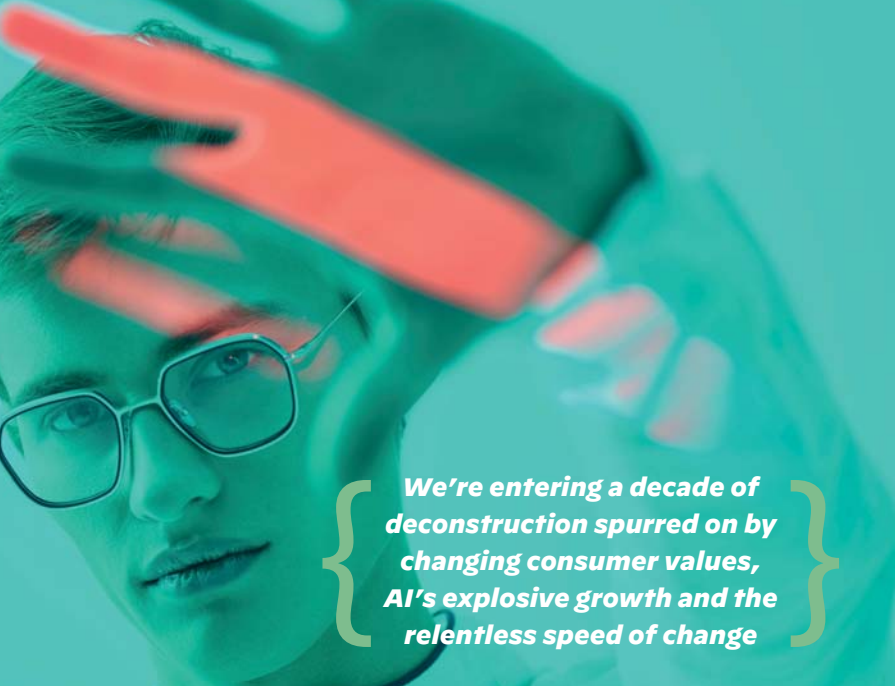
brands in the form of price increases, reduced quality, value engineering, increased and aggressive subscription-only models – which is forcing some governments to legislate to protect consumers – and poor customer service.

The reductions in quality or size (‘shrinkflation’), declines in service (‘skimpflation’), customer service shortcomings and unwelcome subscriptions are adding up to a sense that brands are quietly reversing on their promises.

## A problem of perception

At the center of this trend, the report states, is a critical perception problem – where companies see actions for survival, some customers see greed.

Liz Terry, editorial director at Leisure Media, said: “In the face of so much change and the redrawing of expectations, there are important opportunities for all leisure businesses, given how fundamental they are to people’s lives, how nimble and responsive leisure is as a sector – from spa and wellness to health and fitness, hospitality and visitor attractions – and how customer-focused we can be when the customer is made a priority.



***We're entering a decade of deconstruction spurred on by changing consumer values, AI's explosive growth and the relentless speed of change***

"Operators in all parts of the sector can commit to being a grounding influence in a time of huge upheaval for so many people and to reprioritising customer care and customer love, so we continue to deliver the experiences so many people are yearning for and value."

"Given businesses in so many parts of life are failing to deliver, this is our chance to really stand out."

#### **The trends that matter**

The changing relationship between consumer and business is one of five global macro-cultural trends which Accenture predicts will revolutionise how business leaders approach customers when working to accelerate growth.

For the report Accenture surveyed 15,227 respondents across 21 countries in August 2023 to validate the trends. The five trends in summary are:

##### **01 Where's the love?**

Necessary cuts across enterprises have shunted customer obsession down the priority list – and customers are noticing.

##### **02 The great interface shift**

Generative AI is upgrading people's experience of the internet from transactional to personal, enabling them to feel more digitally understood and relevant than ever.

##### **03 Meh-diocrity**

Creativity was once about the audience, but has become dependent on playing the tech system. Is this what creative stagnation feels like?

##### **04 Error 429: Human request limit reached**

Technology feels like it's happening to people rather than for them. Is a shift beginning, where they regain agency over its influence on daily life?

##### **05 Decade of deconstruction**

Traditional life paths are being rerouted by new limitations, necessities and opportunities, significantly shifting demographics. ●

To read the full report go to:  
[www.accenture.com/us-en/insights/song/accenture-life-trends](http://www.accenture.com/us-en/insights/song/accenture-life-trends)

# Fons Jurgens

As fairytale-inspired Dutch park Efteling enters a new era with the construction of the Efteling Grand Hotel and major new attraction Danse Macabre, Magali Robathan speaks to its CEO

***We aim to be  
climate neutral  
by 2030 &  
climate positive  
by 2032***



Fons Jurgens was appointed CEO of Efteling in April 2014





The new Efteling Grand Hotel will be located near the park's entrance

In 1951, Mayor Van der Heijden of the Dutch municipality of Loon op Zand challenged his brother-in-law, film director and inventor Peter Reijnders, to find a way to attract more visitors to the newly established Efteling Nature Park in Kaatsheuvel, the Netherlands.

Reijnders turned to Dutch romantic artist and illustrator Anton Pieck and together with Mayor Van der Heijden, they came up with the idea of a 'three-dimensional fairytale forest with plenty of movement'. Pieck created hundreds of sketches and drawings, and Reijnders used technology to bring them to life, to create a theme park based on the magic of fairy tales, ancient myths and folklore.

When Efteling opened in 1952, it featured scenes depicting 10 fairytales – including Snow White, Sleeping Beauty and the Frog Prince – set in a Fairytale Forest. More than 70 years later, Efteling has grown into an international theme park destination attracting more than five million guests a year.

## A special place

"Efteling is really for everyone," says Fons Jurgens, CEO of Efteling. "The secret of its success lies in its long history, in the beautiful nature at the park, the cultural heritage and of course in the storytelling."

Efteling has always held a special place in Jurgens' heart – he grew up with the theme park and experienced "many beautiful memories there with my parents and later my friends." Jurgens joined Efteling as a policy officer in commercial affairs in 1995 and worked his way up, becoming chairman and CEO in April 2014.

Since then, Efteling's visitor numbers have risen, from 4.1 million in 2013 to a record 5.43 million in 2022, and a number of major new attractions have been launched. Jurgens and the management team have big ambitions for the park, with two major new additions under construction – the Efteling Grand Hotel, and Danse Macabre, a major new ride that will be the centre of a new themed area. These are part of wider expansion plans, laid out in the World of Efteling 2030 plan.

The design of Efteling Grand Hotel was inspired by the history of the park



### ► World of Efteling 2030 plan

"In 2017, we reached our long-term vision of welcoming 5 million guests, which has strengthened Efteling's position as an international short-break destination," says Jurgens. "Now that our development plan has been established, we have laid a solid foundation for the future."

Approved by the Dutch Council of State in 2021, the World of Efteling 2030 masterplan sets out plans to expand Efteling outside of its current borders by eight hectares, enlarging the eastern side of the park.

In December 2023, Jurgens placed the first stone of the new fencing around the eastern expansion area. This stone symbolised the continued ambition of the World of Efteling 2030 development plan, explains Jurgens, although these plans have been delayed due to the financial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and current regulatory challenges around tightened nitrogen measures. For at least the next few years, the park will focus on developments within its current borders, including the Danse Macabre attraction and Efteling Grand Hotel.

The development plan also sets out Efteling's sustainability goals, and its focus on protecting and enhancing the park's natural surroundings.

"Efteling wants to be climate neutral by 2030 and aims to be climate positive by 2032," says Jurgens.

"And by 2030, we aspire to be the only theme park resort in Europe scoring 9+ from visitors experiencing our enchanting natural surroundings. We'll continue to work towards this goal by offering a one-of-a-kind experience for guests and employees, with a focus on technology, cooperation and sustainability."

### Sustainability goals

"It's important that we take sustainability seriously, ensuring that Efteling is still here in 70 years' time, and we can pass on our beautiful park to future generations," says Jurgens.

"Sustainability has been part of our DNA since the establishment of the Efteling Nature Park Foundation in 1950."

With Efteling wholly owned by the Efteling Nature Park Foundation, preserving the environment is a key priority – the foundation has mandated that no more than 11 per cent of Efteling's footprint can be given over to buildings, with the remainder left for trees, shrubs and water. The park is home to a variety of animals, including rabbits, squirrels, hedgehogs, butterflies and birds.



In order to work towards the goal of being climate neutral by 2030, Efteling has invested heavily in solar power. In 2022, a carport system was installed with 12,000 solar panels – the park now has more than 25,000 solar panels. The park also generates sustainable energy through geothermal heating and cooling – this system currently provides energy for the Vogel Rok rollercoaster, the Efteling Hotel, Efteling Bosrijk holiday village and the Raveleijn office block.

This is a new geothermal system, with plans for it to power significant areas of the park.

"With this project, we'll heat and cool buildings in the Anderrijk park area without using natural gas," says Jurgens. "The Efteling Theatre, Fata Morgana and the Fata Morgana event venue, the Efteling Grand Hotel, Fabula, Frau Boltes Küche and Danse Macabre will be all be connected to this installation, as will the water show Aquanura Pond. This is an innovative, scientific project in the field of aquathermy."

### Efteling Grand Hotel

Increasing accommodation is a key part of Efteling's growth plans. Construction is underway for what will be the park's biggest hotel – the seven floor, 143-room Efteling Grand Hotel. Inspired by the rich history of the theme park,

***With our greenery and biodiversity, we make a difference***

it is located at Efteling's entrance, next to the Fairytale Forest. It will feature a swimming pool and spa, two restaurants and two gift shops.

"With the opening of Efteling Grand Hotel, Efteling will become a true short-break destination," says Jurgens. "This is a really important project for us."

Originally scheduled to open in 2024, construction issues have meant that the launch date has been pushed back, explains Jurgens. "After the bankruptcy of the supplier of prefabricated parts for the Efteling Grand Hotel in September 2023, the company was taken over and the construction schedule was adjusted – this means that the hotel won't open as planned at the end of 2024, but in 2025."

The hotel is the first on-site, and its location has been chosen carefully, explains Jurgens. "Efteling Grand Hotel is in a prominent location in the

heart of the World of Efteling – where all visits to our park start and end. The square between the main entrance and the new hotel is where guests really get into the Efteling atmosphere. We've had plans for a long time for this square, where every 10 years, something is added to complete the experience. With the Efteling Grand Hotel, we're taking another big step."

### Danse Macabre

In September 2022, Efteling closed its iconic Spookslot haunted castle attraction to make way for a new "creepy experience".

While Jurgens is excited about the new Danse Macabre attraction, he admits that closing Spookslot elicited mixed feelings, and there was a real sadness about closing "a beautiful attraction where many visitors have become acquainted with the creepy side of Efteling. It's a unique memory that often stays with them forever. It was a great pity that the haunted house couldn't be preserved." Efteling prides itself on offering long running attractions that can be enjoyed by generation after generation, he says, but Spookslot – opened in 1978 – was in "very bad shape both inside and outside," and it could no longer be preserved.

"Understanding the special connection that many Efteling visitors have with Spookslot, it was important for us to carefully evaluate all

the options [for its replacement]. That was a delicate process that took a few years."

The result of this process is Danse Macabre – an indoor attraction and new 17,000sq m themed area set to replace Spookslot when it opens in autumn 2024. Inspired by the orchestral piece with the same name by French composer Camille Saint-Saëns, the ride has been developed with Swiss ride manufacturer Intamin and is described as a "thrill ride with immersive show technology". It consists of a turntable 18m in diameter, topped by six smaller turntables, each with choir stall seating for 18 people. The large turntable will rise, tilt and fall, and 'spin like a coin' before falling flat.

"This attraction is going to be unique in the attractions industry," says Jurgens. "It hasn't yet been built anywhere in the world. It will be spectacular, creepy, exciting, thrilling, immersive and overwhelming – a haunted spectacle full of dark twists."

Visitors will enter the themed area around Danse Macabre – named Huyverwoud Forest – through a derelict abbey square, where they will find spooky catering outlets in den Swarte Kat (opened July 2023) and 't Koetshuys. They will be entertained by 'the Charlatan family and their extraordinary barrel organ Esmeralda' and will be led through a grim graveyard and creepy forest to the entrance to Danse Macabre, which will be housed in a 20m-high building.



Rides include the 1800s mine themed-Baron 1898 coaster by Bolliger & Mabillard



Danse Macabre will be connected to the park's geothermal heating system



***This new attraction will be spectacular, creepy, exciting, thrilling, immersive and overwhelming***

### Looking ahead

The focus over the next couple of years will be on the completion of the Efteling Grand Hotel and Danse Macabre, as well as a continuing push to meet Efteling's sustainability goals.

"We'll have a real emphasis on Efteling as a nature park," adds Jurgens. "Our nature has long been rated 9+ by our guests, and we are recognised to be among the world's top theme parks in terms of our landscaping.

"With our greenery and biodiversity, we make a difference. It's our distinguishing feature, and we want to give it continuous attention."

As for Jurgens, he is happy in what he considers to be the best job in the world.

"I love the fact that we see the effects of our actions every day in the park," he says. "We see happy people making the most beautiful memories. That makes me happy." ●

### Spookslot lives on in Danse Macabre

While Efteling's iconic Spookslot haunted house has now closed down, parts of the much-loved attraction will live on within the park's new spooky ride Danse Macabre.

Never-used sketches created for Spookslot by designer Ton van de Ven were used as the inspiration for Danse Macabre, and several physical elements from Spookslot will be reused.

These include the old entrance to Spookslot, which will be used as the entrance to the souvenir shop Dr Charlatan's Kwalycke Zaken, and the sinister-shaped candle holders used in the queueing area for Spookslot.

"You can already admire the large chandeliers that hung in the tunnel next to Spookslot. They're hanging from the ceiling of the hospitality venue in den Swarte Kat," says Ronald Donkers, architectural designer and member of the heritage management team at Efteling. "The main protagonist of Spookslot, the neon-coloured violin, will not return to its old form, but it will have a major role in the new show. How exactly I can't reveal yet!"

Danse Macabre will feature the same piece of music as Spookslot; a new version of the Camille Saint-Saëns score is being recorded with the largest ever Efteling orchestra, featuring up to 75 musicians.

"Despite being a very well-known piece of music, we think we have some surprises," says composer René Merkelbach. "With this unique version, we pay tribute to the original Spookslot music. Connoisseurs and fans certainly won't be disappointed."

# ONES TO WATCH

From a museum of Shakespeare to a Beijing wine museum inspired by medieval French villages, some fascinating new venues are taking shape. Magali Robathan highlights seven

An underground tunnel will link Linda Bo Bardi's building with the new extension





The building will increase the museum's exhibition capacity by 66 per cent

## Museu de Arte de São Paulo extension

São Paulo, Brazil

ESTIMATED OPENING: LATE 2024

Located in a landmark building by Lino Bo Bardi, the Museu de Arte de São Paulo (MASP) is arguably Brazil's most important modern art museum. While the modernist building is spectacular, however, physical limitations mean that the museum can only display just over one per cent of the work it owns.

This will change with the opening of a major new extension by architects Julio Neves and METRO Arquitetos Associados, set to increase the size of the museum by two thirds.

Bo Bardi's building balances 8m above the ground, supported by four bright red concrete pillars, making it difficult to build an extension. To overcome this problem, the museum has conceived an underground tunnel leading to a new \$33 million, 75,000sq foot building.

The Pietro building – named after the museum's first artistic director, Pietro Maria Bardi – will feature five exhibition galleries and two multipurpose galleries set across 14 floors. The building will also house a restaurant, ticket office, museum store, classrooms and a restoration lab.

"MASP is thus undergoing the most significant physical expansion in its history, using its own resources," said Alfredo Setubal, chairman of the board, MASP. "We're going to increase the museum's exhibition capacity by 66 per cent and integrate the two buildings. This expansion will consolidate both the museum and Avenida Paulista as a cultural hub: perhaps the most important cultural hub in Brazil, of which MASP is undoubtedly the anchor."





The museum is located in the new Heatherwick-designed Azabudai Hills district

## teamLab Borderless

### Tokyo, Japan

ESTIMATED OPENING: FEBRUARY 2024

The original teamLab Borderless Tokyo in Odaiba broke records as the world's most visited single art museum, however redevelopment work in the area meant it had to close in August 2022.

The digital art museum is set to reopen in February in its new permanent home in the recently opened Heatherwick Studio-designed Azabudai Hills district in central Tokyo.

"teamLab Borderless is based on the concept that everything exists in a borderless continuity," said a teamLab spokesperson, speaking to *Attractions Management*.

"In order to comprehend the world, people separate it into parts, creating boundaries in between. Through this exhibition, teamLab aims to create a place in which various artworks are connected with one another without boundaries, giving visitors an opportunity to rethink their perception of the world, and discover that continuity itself is beautiful.

Tokyo is also home to a second teamLab museum – teamLab Planets in Toyosu, which opened in 2018.



teamLab Borderless is set to reopen in its new home in February 2024



The inaugural exhibition  
will feature works by Ai  
Weiwei and Andy Warhol

## Hampi Arts Labs

Hampi, India

ESTIMATED OPENING DATE:  
FEBRUARY 2024

Founded by Sangita Jindal and her daughter Tarini Jindal Handa, Hampi Arts Labs is a new rural arts centre near the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Hampi in southern India.

Designed by sP+A's Sameep Padora, the centre spans an 18-acre area and features exhibition spaces, artist studios, apartments for art residencies, gardens and a café.

An initiative of the JSW Foundation – the social development arm of the Indian business company JSW Group – Hampi Arts Labs will run an education programme aiming to engage the local community and international visitors with contemporary art in all its forms. Learning activities and workshops will also be developed for schools in the area.

Its inaugural exhibition, *Right Foot First*, will feature works from the Jindal Collection spanning 1998 to 2023, featuring artists including Andy Warhol, Ai Weiwei and Atul Dodiya.

"Hampi Arts Labs will be a major contribution to arts infrastructure and production facilities in the country and a cultural destination for both local and international visitors," said founder Sangita Jindal. "I have had a great affinity for the ancient city of Hampi since I first visited it in 1983 and I'm delighted to be able to connect contemporary art with heritage and nature."

"Hampi Art Labs is an inclusive artist-first centre that encourages a cross-disciplinary approach to art-making and driving engagement with the region's heritage and artisanal legacy alongside India's contemporary art scene," said co-founder Tarini Jindal Handa. "We're delighted to have collaborated with Sameep Padora, one of India's most successful young architects [...] His poetic style of architecture reflects the spiritual energy Hampi is known for."

Hampi Art Labs education programme will offer initiatives engaging the local community and international visitors with contemporary art in all its forms. Learning activities and workshops will be developed for schools in the area.



The museum aims to teach visitors about the history of wine in a fun, interactive way



IMAGE: ATELIER ADÉLINE RISPAL

## Universal Wine Museum

Beijing, China

ESTIMATED OPENING: 2024

A joint project between China and the Cité du Vin Bordeaux, this huge new museum will tell the story of the production and history of wine-making, with a special focus on France and China.

Designed by Architecturestudio, the 18,000sq m site is conceived as a 'stone village' surrounded by vineyards, bringing together exhibition spaces, restaurants, an amphitheatre and a wine school. The architecture has been inspired by the French medieval city of Saint-Émilion, with the stone buildings surrounding a 'castle' and courtyard space reminiscent of a French village square.

The scenography by Ateliers Adeline Rispal is intended to be 'sensitive and playful' and will combine multi-media, multi-sensory attractions and large scale exhibits to help visitors learn about the world of wine in a fun, interactive way. Lighting design is by Les éclairieurs.

As well as the museum, the site will feature the 1,000sq m Universal Wine Cellar – a restaurant, bar and cellar that will be open to non-museum visitors as well as museum visitors.

The museum aims to attract 300,000 visitors in its first year, rising to 500,000 within five years.

"China and France share a special affection for gastronomy and the conviviality that goes with it," said Weixiang Tang, chairman of Zhong Pu Hui Wine Village. "The cultural richness of wine, comparable to that of tea, strikes a particular chord with Chinese consumers eager for knowledge and new experiences."

The Universal Wine Museum is a partnership between China and the Cité du Vin





## Stonewall National Monument Visitor Center

### New York City, US

OPENING: SUMMER 2024

In June 2016, then President Barack Obama officially designated the Stonewall National Monument in New York, making it the US's first National Monument to LGBTQ+ civil rights.

This year will see a new visitor centre opened on the site, telling the story of the 1969 police raid on Stonewall Inn – a popular gay bar – and the resulting riots that served as a watershed moment in the history of the gay and lesbian rights movement.

Due to open in the summer of 2024, the 3,700sq ft visitor centre will offer visitors an immersive experience hosting virtual tours, lectures and exhibitions exploring LGBTQ+ history and culture, and will feature art by LGBTQ+ artists.

“The opening of the Stonewall National Monument Visitor Center is a remarkable moment in the history of Stonewall,” said Ann Marie Gothard, president of the Pride Live board of directors. “We honour all those who came before us, most especially the queer people fighting for equality at the Stonewall Rebellion. The designation as a National Monument and the opening of this visitor center will memorialise their important legacy in the gay rights movement, and we hope will inspire future generations to continue fighting for LGBTQ+ equality.”

The centre will be co-managed by the US National Parks Service and Pride Live. MBB Architects will lead the design of the Stonewall National Monument Visitor Center and will work alongside LGBTQ+ historians, activists, and community leaders. Local Projects will lead the experiential and exhibit design.

## Museum of Shakespeare

London, UK

OPENING 2025

**D**ue to open in 2025 in Shoreditch, London, the Museum of Shakespeare will use AI technology to immerse visitors in the life of William Shakespeare in the theatre where several of his plays were first performed.

The museum is set on the site of the Curtain Playhouse, one of London's earliest theatres and the venue for Shakespeare's company before the Globe opened. Henry V and Romeo and Juliet are believed to have been performed at the theatre.

The remains of the Curtain Playhouse were first uncovered by an archaeological excavation that took place between 2011 and 2016.

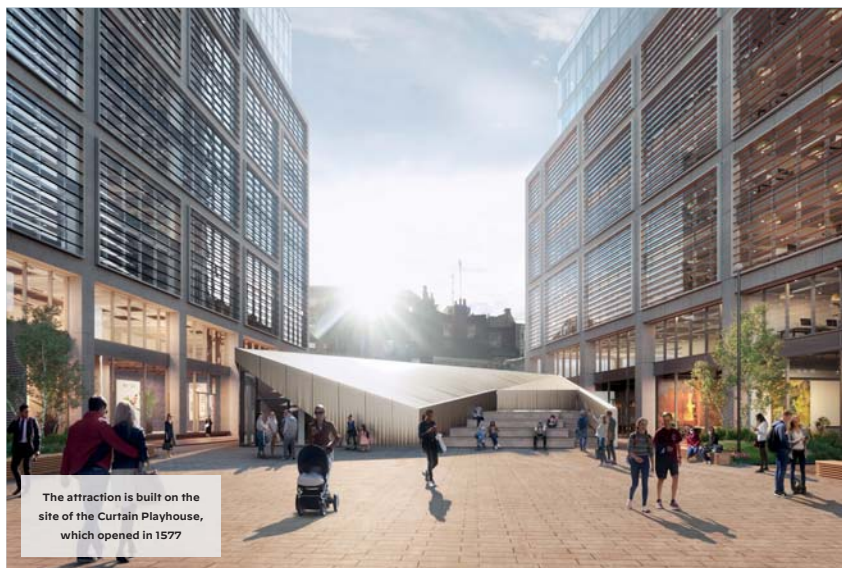
The museum – which will be located three metres underground – promises to take visitors back to the year 1598 where 'dynamic experiences and theatrical technology' will immerse them in the sights, sounds and smells of Shakespeare's time. They will also be given the chance to take part in animated performances and workshops on the stage where several of Shakespeare's plays were performed.



The museum will use AI technology to tell Shakespeare's story

The Museum of Shakespeare is being conceptualised and developed by experience design company Bompas & Parr in collaboration with Cain International, Museum of London Archaeology and Historic England. The Museum of Shakespeare will be housed within The Stage, a 2.3-acre, (one-hectare) development site, with 412 apartments and offices and shops, designed by Perkins & Will and led by Cain International.

"This will be Shakespeare as you have never experienced it before," said Harry Parr, co-founder of the project.



The attraction is built on the site of the Curtain Playhouse, which opened in 1577



IMAGE: MESTRES WÅGE ARCHITECTES/  
MENDOZA PARTIDA (MX) STUDIO



A 1930s grain silo has been transformed to create the new Nordic art museum

## Kunstilo

Kristiansand, Norway

OPENING MAY 2024

Set to open within a restored grain silo in Kristiansand, Norway in May 2024, Kunstilo will celebrate Nordic modernist art.

The new museum integrates the Southern Norway Art Museum and the Tangel Collection of Nordic art – the world's largest private collection of Nordic art – within one building, which features 3,300sq m of exhibition space.

Mestres Wåge Architectes and MX\_SI have worked together to convert the 1930s silo – originally designed by Arne Korsmo and Sverre Aasland – into an art museum and cultural centre which will host international touring exhibitions and act as a venue for lectures, concerts, dining experiences and other events.

"This new museum will offer visitors to Kristiansand an awe-inspiring venue that puts them at once close to art and the city's natural beauty. We are proud to be working closely with the Tangel Collection as custodians of one of the world's greatest Nordic art collections and putting it on view in one building for the first time," said Reidar Fuglestad, CEO of Kunstilo.



The inaugural exhibition, Passions of the North, promises a journey through 'Nordic art's dynamic evolution', showcasing more than 700 works from the Tangel Collection across 25 rooms. Inspired by conceptual themes drawn from authors including Thomas Hardy and Virginia Woolf, the exhibition explores 'the dynamics between society, community, mechanical and organic aspects, and the contrast between rural and urban life.' ●

IMAGE: MESTRES WÅGE ARCHITECTES/  
MENDOZA PARTIDA (MX) STUDIO



*This is not a typical  
brand experience*

# JOSH KIRK

As the Home of Carlsberg reopens after a major five year revamp by Event, the project design lead shares the highs and lows of this unique project

The story of Carlsberg is explored at a new Copenhagen attraction, opened on 1 December 2023. The Home of Carlsberg reopened after a five year redesign led by experience design agency Event on the original Gamle Carlsberg brewery site founded in 1847.

The experience takes place across four floors in the former grainstore, maltery, boiler room and brewhouse buildings. The journey unfolds across 'interconnected themed chapters', where visitors explore the history of Carlsberg and its founders and learn about the brewing process and the science behind beer through hands-on games and interactives. The attraction also explores the Carlsberg Foundations' roles in shaping Copenhagen's cultural identity – almost 30 percent of Carlsberg's global dividends are used to support projects in science, the arts and architecture in Denmark.

Notable features include a wall-to-wall display of more than 23,000 beer bottles, a huge interactive digital wall that showcases the work of the Carlsberg Foundations, opportunities to learn about the historic brewing equipment still in place within the brewery buildings and a chance to meet the brewery horses in the stables – up until the 1950s, Jutland horses were used to distribute Carlsberg beer across the country.

Visitors are given a Carlsberg wristband which they can use to interact with the displays, and where digital memories collected during the experience can be saved and downloaded when they get home.

Here Josh Kirk, associate director at Event, gives *Attractions Management* the lowdown on the project.

## Why did the Home of Carlsberg need to be redesigned?

The previous exhibition and visitor experience was very of its time. It was heartfelt, and had a special place in locals' hearts, but was really showing its age when we came on board five years ago. It felt dated, with a lot of very grainy films on small and low resolution screens, and so much text it was difficult to take it all in.

Above all, the incredible spaces of the brewery buildings just weren't being used as well as they could have been. Whole floors of the brewery were closed off to the public, either due to difficulties in accessing them or simply because they'd been shut when brewing operations finished and never opened again. Some still had barley grain all over the floors.





PHOTO: DANIEL RASMUSSEN

The museum tells the story of Carlsberg across four floors in a historic setting

#### What excited you about this project?

We spotted the incredible potential of the site the moment we stepped foot in the central courtyard on our first visit. Carlsberg has such a rich story to tell – from the enigmatic founders to its ground-breaking research lab and charitable foundations. Thinking about how to bring these stories to life within the heritage listed spaces was inspiring. I remember discussing the project with my colleagues over schnapps after that first site visit – our excitement was palpable.

#### How would you sum up the visitor experience now?

It's a historic site and legacy story brought to life with cutting edge technology that creates a new home for a contemporary brand in the heart of Copenhagen's most modern district.

It's authentic and generous – somewhere visitors can be welcomed that doesn't feel like a typical brand experience. It's designed to feel like you're stepping into someone's home – it's warm, friendly and intimate.

The Danes have a term for it: Hygge. Wanting to create somewhere that encapsulated the Danish sense of hygge was always at the forefront of our minds. Visitors get served a beer right at the start of their visit, and right at the end. It's our hope that the beer visitors enjoy

at the end of the tour will taste very different knowing everything that went into making it.

#### How has technology been used in innovative ways?

Meshing a contemporary visitor experience into a heritage listed building has meant tech has to be deployed in some unusual and innovative ways.

We built a two storey LED matrix totem between four columns, all of which are wonky and different distances apart – that was certainly tricky. We also designed and developed a host of digital interactives that visitors can use to collect digital memories from on their RFID-enabled wristbands.

But the pinnacle in terms of the big technology-driven innovative design moments has got to be the Carlsberg Foundations space. Here, we installed a huge 2.5m-high by 17m-long interactive media wall, consisting of 12 vertically orientated ultra-wide throw projectors, so the film picture is rendered in immense pixel density and clarity. Working with our media and software partners ISO and OhLaLa, as well as overall fabricators Hypsos and AV hardware integrators Phantavision, we created a truly unique space where visitors' movements trigger collections of films about the charitable endeavours of the Carlsberg Foundations. ▶

- Up to 12 people can interact with the wall at once, all watching different films and listening to different audio because of the overhead directional speakers. It creates a space where intimate focused moments can be had close to the wall, while by stepping back visitors can see the incredible reach of the foundations in this murmuring, frenetic visual space. At five minute intervals a seamless takeover film fills the entire length of the media wall, utilising the unique aspect ratio. It's a technical marvel that required a huge amount of very skilled experts to realise.

### What were the biggest challenges of this project?

Telling the Carlsberg story was a big challenge. Not only is Carlsberg one of the world's biggest beer brands with all the complexities of representing a mega brand in terms of sticking to strict guidelines on visual identity and tone of voice, but it's also ingrained in the fabric of Danish society. If you get parts of the story wrong, or tell it in the wrong way, you're going to have a lot of very passionate people telling you so.

Many a conversation was had with locals we met over a beer around the site on visits to the Carlsberg District. Their insights into how Carlsberg is lived as a part of Copenhagen culture was invaluable to shaping the experience.

The other big challenge was the building and site itself. A heritage listed site, the buildings are rightfully afforded very strict protections over their alteration and treatment. Mapping a visitor route through the various parts of the brewery that missed pipes jutting out at eye level ready to impale unsuspecting tourists, and wouldn't leave visitors utterly bewildered as to where they were meant to go next was a serious undertaking. Even finding suitably level floor surface locations for the beautiful custom built showcases Meyveart designed for the project was a challenge.

Multiple iterations were created – each new version finding some novel way to open up a new entry or exit point from a room or utilise a hidden stair to bring visitors in and out of a new space safely.

### Do you have a personal favourite part of the attraction?

I love the small details that perhaps only a fraction of visitors will notice, but for those that do, it's like a little reward for paying extra close attention.

Some of my favourites include the little hop leaf cut outs on the stainless steel containers that house the aroma flasks in the science lab, and the hidden symbolism in the illustrations telling the story of JC Jacobsen first establishing the brewery in the Pioneers space. In the same



The heritage listed site was full of challenges for the exhibition design team





An interactive digital wall is used to bring alive the story of the Carlsberg Foundations

PHOTO: DANIEL RASMUSSEN

room there's a gorgeous installation illustrating Carlsberg's 'Golden Words' – the founding principles of Carlsberg – via suspended golden lettering, gorgeously lit by our lighting design partners Nulty. The initials of the Event team members who worked on the project are hidden in that installation among the collection of floating letters. That one's just for us.

I also couldn't possibly cover favourite parts of the experience without mentioning the Carlsberg horse – they win everyone's hearts.

#### What's Event working on next?

We've got almost too many things in the pipeline to count at the moment. Half the team who worked on the Home of Carlsberg are building on our drinks brand experience with two potential projects in Vietnam – another brewery experience and a winery. Meanwhile the other half of the core team members from Carlsberg have moved a few miles down the road to tackle the Danish Museum of Natural History.

#### What trends are you seeing in your work?

The cross pollination of creative ideas from the museum to brand worlds and vice versa is a growing trend. Brands are looking to showcase themselves and their stories in more authentic ways by creating experiences with depth, honesty, and integrity. Museums, meanwhile, are looking to radically modernise

#### ■ Natural History Museum of Denmark

Set to be completed in 2025, the Natural History Museum of Denmark's new museum building represents one of the biggest recent museum constructions in Denmark. Costing DKK 212.5 million – funded by the AP Møller and Chastine Mc-Kinney Møller Foundation – the project combines the Zoological Museum at Østerbro and the museum building on Øster Voldgade 5-7 into a top-class museum.

Located within Copenhagen's Botanical Garden, the new building has been designed by Lundgaard & Tranberg Arkitekter, with substantial parts of the museum space located underground in order to keep the listed Botanical Gardens intact.

In July 2023, Event was selected by the Natural History Museum of Denmark to realise the designs for all of the galleries in the new building.

Event will work with two Danish companies on the project: technologists Stouenborg and sustainability engineers Steensen Varming.

"The museum's collections contain 14 million natural history objects collected worldwide over almost 400 years," said a spokesperson for the Natural History Museum of Denmark.

"When the new museum building opens its doors to the public in a couple of years, it will be in a new beautiful setting, where the story of the origin and spread of life can really unfold."

their offerings in a shifting cultural zeitgeist where new generations expect personalised interactive experiences and big bold stories, so looking to leading brands seems natural.

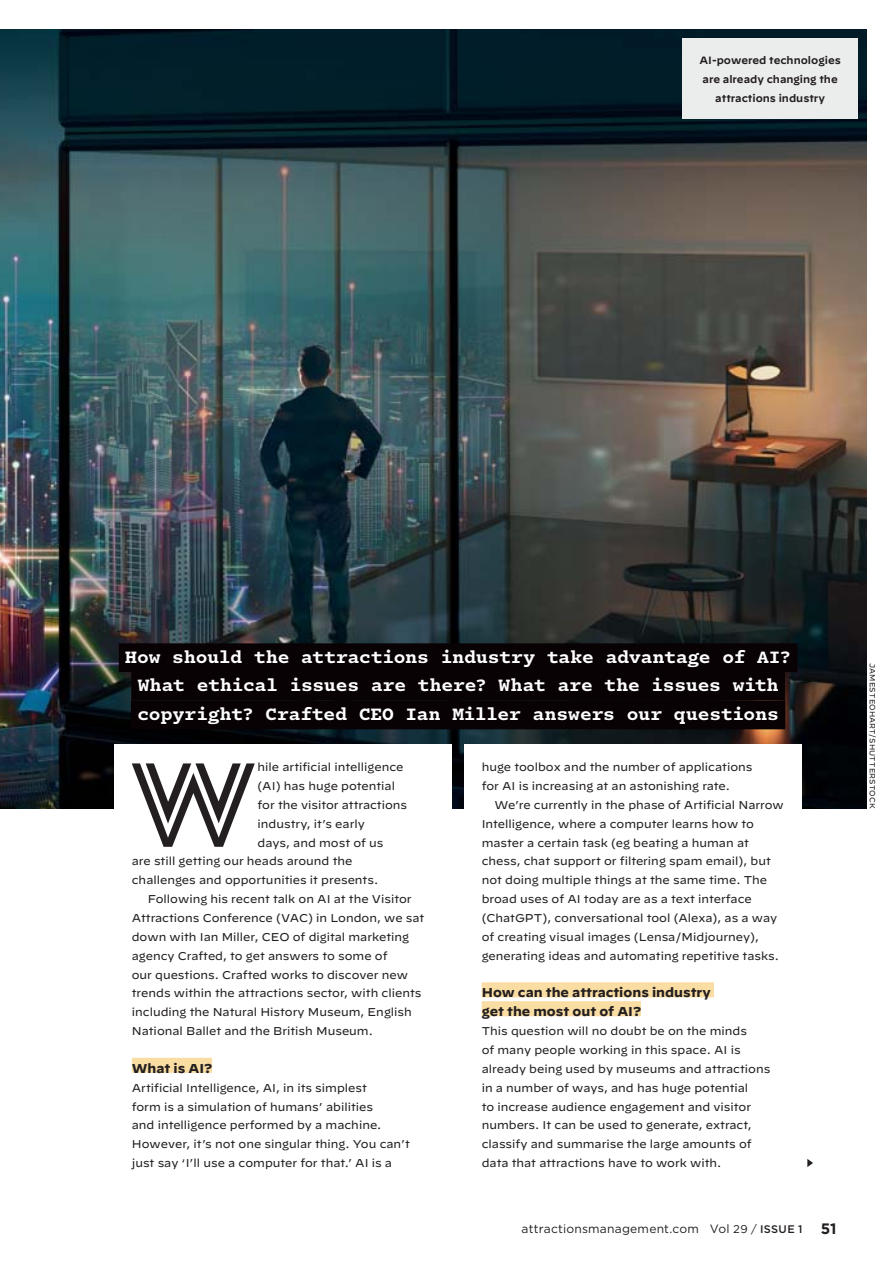
Event sits at the cross-section of this fascinating interplay, working as a cultural catalyst across both sectors. ●

# AI FRIEND OR FOE?



***AI has huge potential to  
increase audience engagement  
and visitor numbers***

Ian Miller, CEO of Crafted



## How should the attractions industry take advantage of AI? What ethical issues are there? What are the issues with copyright? Crafted CEO Ian Miller answers our questions

**W**hile artificial intelligence (AI) has huge potential for the visitor attractions industry, it's early days, and most of us are still getting our heads around the challenges and opportunities it presents.

Following his recent talk on AI at the Visitor Attractions Conference (VAC) in London, we sat down with Ian Miller, CEO of digital marketing agency Crafted, to get answers to some of our questions. Crafted works to discover new trends within the attractions sector, with clients including the Natural History Museum, English National Ballet and the British Museum.

### What is AI?

Artificial Intelligence, AI, in its simplest form is a simulation of humans' abilities and intelligence performed by a machine. However, it's not one singular thing. You can't just say 'I'll use a computer for that.' AI is a

huge toolbox and the number of applications for AI is increasing at an astonishing rate.

We're currently in the phase of Artificial Narrow Intelligence, where a computer learns how to master a certain task (eg beating a human at chess, chat support or filtering spam email), but not doing multiple things at the same time. The broad uses of AI today are as a text interface (ChatGPT), conversational tool (Alexa), as a way of creating visual images (Lensa/Midjourney), generating ideas and automating repetitive tasks.

### How can the attractions industry get the most out of AI?

This question will no doubt be on the minds of many people working in this space. AI is already being used by museums and attractions in a number of ways, and has huge potential to increase audience engagement and visitor numbers. It can be used to generate, extract, classify and summarise the large amounts of data that attractions have to work with.



Data generated from the way customers interact with attractions (eg peak hours for visiting, how people move through an attraction and heat maps showing the length of time spent at each exhibit or room) can be used to improve the user experience. This data can help refine 'plan your visit' itineraries published on official websites or apps, for example, and crowd management strategies.

People will hopefully always be better curators than machines – but that's not to say that AI can't make the visitor experience more personalised or memorable. Exhibit descriptions and interpretation could be tailored to an individual's age, language or interests, translating information and creating child-friendly explanations on the spot as visitors move through an attraction.

#### **What are the ethical issues and challenges of using AI?**

This is an area that can often be overlooked when thinking of AI. What we would say to attractions is to use AI for tasks, but not to

hand over all responsibility to it. Organisations need to be aware of data security and what they are giving away to machines.

There will always be an inherent bias in the results produced by AI, because it has been trained on a certain data set with human bias fed into it. It's also important to note that not all AI uses live data, so be aware of the accuracy. The text an AI outputs currently lacks the human element that a living, breathing writer or curator would be able to produce from the same information, even though AI may be able to ape a certain tone of voice or style prompt.

#### **And what about data set usage and copyright issues?**

Content created by AI is not owned by anyone, even if it is based on copyrighted data (such as images).

Copyright law is gradually coming to terms with AI, and we would expect to see changes, but it remains something of a grey area. Recently, there has been a rise in people using AI to replicate real brands and characters. With IP licensing being such an integral commercial element in the attractions industry, this is where I'd exercise caution with the use of AI.

AI can be used to improve the visitor experience and drive attendance





### How is AI likely to evolve over the coming years?

The pace of development in AI is startling, and at the moment it seems like everything is everywhere all at once. The difference AI will make to our daily lives is likely to be on a flatter curve. Bill Gates said that “we always overestimate the change that will occur in the next two years and underestimate the change that will occur in the next 10”, and I would expect to see something similar with AI.

It's important to remember that AI will be built into everything. Microsoft recently launched Copilot, their own AI tool, and has since embedded the product in its Office 365 packages. ChatGPT-like conversational searches will transform the search landscape when they go live globally on Google.

### So, is AI a friend or foe?

That really depends on the expectations you set for it. As a data wrangling, task automation, idea generation tool, AI is definitely a positive development for visitor attractions. Its power can be harnessed to improve business performance and meet customer expectations about choice, interactivity and personalisation.

But AI is not perfect. Use it to focus on the needs of customers, and keep your people's creativity at the centre of everything you do. ●

The Hague's Mauritshuis has faced criticism for showing an AI generated image inspired by Vermeer

**Content created  
by AI is not  
owned by anyone,  
even if it's based on  
copyrighted data**

# FUTURE SHOCK



Lesley Morisetti

From predicting attendance to bringing Elvis back to life, how are attractions using AI in practice? Lesley Morisetti takes the pulse of the industry



London's National Gallery has used AI to predict exhibition attendance

**T**he subject of AI, or machine learning, is consistently in the news. Most recently from the perspective of visitor attractions, the announcement that immersive entertainment company Layered Reality is using AI technology to bring Elvis Presley 'back to life' later this year, in a new immersive experience.

I was already interested in how AI might help me in my work helping guide the development of location-based experiences, and decided to find out how the attractions industry is approaching AI. I've spoken to a number of people involved in the development and running of visitor attractions, with the aim of finding out how widely AI is currently being used. Assessing this has been a bit challenging, not least because there are many different interpretations of what AI is, plus ownership of AI doesn't neatly fit into any one discipline within an organisation.

First reactions have tended to be 'It's on our radar but not something that we're actively using yet'. There's definitely an appetite to know more about AI and, as shown by the following examples, some organisations are further ahead.

PHOTOS: ELVIS PRESLEY ENTERPRISES



A new immersive experience will see AI used to bring Elvis 'back to life'

## National Gallery

London, UK

**T**he National Gallery was an early adopter of AI tools. Back in 2018 their in-house data analyst developed an AI-based model to predict attendance to the Gallery's temporary exhibitions, using XGBoost. The Gallery's considerable database of attendance to past exhibitions was input to the model and, together with data on other factors influencing attendance, used to predict attendance to future exhibitions. The iterative nature of the process then ensured that actual admissions data could be added when the exhibition opened, allowing the model to learn from the latest data and update its predictions as the exhibition progressed. The model proved particularly successful at predicting attendance for exhibitions based on higher profile artists.

However, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on visitor numbers and profile, and variances in the speed with which individual audiences have recovered, has led to the model being put on hold in recent years, and shows the challenges of using machine learning from historic data at a time of cataclysmic change. Now that performance is starting to return to a more normal pattern, the Gallery is considering whether to update the model and start using it again.



PHOTO: © THE NATIONAL GALLERY, LONDON

AI can be used to measure visitor sentiment

Having resource is key to this, and the National Gallery has just recruited a new data analyst with machine learning programming skills to support this work. Going forward, generative AI is seen to be useful for activities such as measuring visitor sentiment, enabling thousands of visitor feedback comments to be quickly categorised, giving the Gallery invaluable understanding of how their visitors view the customer experience and helping identify trends and areas for improvement. Overall, AI is seen as a great opportunity to support, but not replace, human input to creating human experiences. ▶

## Mandai Wildlife Group Singapore

Mandai Wildlife Group is the steward of the Mandai Wildlife Reserve, a unique wildlife and nature destination in Singapore that is home to world-renowned wildlife parks including Singapore Zoo, Night Safari, Bird Paradise and River Wonders. As part of the Group's digital transformation towards smart, integrated wildlife park experiences and operations at the Mandai Wildlife Reserve, a dedicated department - the Transformation Office - was set up three years ago. To realise this vision, they receive support from the Singapore government through grants which actively encourage organisations to innovate, test, and collaboratively share insights on the implementation of new technology.

I spoke to Edmas Neo, vice president of the Transformation Office, and his managers Khairulnizam Zulkifle and Moh Ai Wei. AI was initially incorporated into wildlife care such as monitoring habitat perimeters and assessing the body condition of animals in the Group's care.

More recently, the Transformation Office has adopted generative AI to enhance the guest's experience. Using Chat GPT via the Microsoft Azure package (which provides an added



Edmas Neo

PHOTO: MANDAI WILDLIFE GROUP

layer of protection for confidential customer and organisation data) enables them to sift through and categorise thousands of visitor comments in a matter of minutes, a task which previously took days and was open to variances in human interpretation. The categorised comments are then automatically routed to the respective departments for their necessary follow up and action. The increased speed allows them to provide prompt responses to visitors and provides a more nuanced interpretation of the comments, helping better inform future operations decisions.

A key responsibility of the Transformation Team is holding workshops and training sessions for the Group's workforce to encourage the use of new technology and demonstrate how to get the best out of AI tools. Acknowledging the impracticality of banning the use of generative AI tools, the team has written a policy paper outlining guidelines on how to use such tools responsibly and teaches staff how to disable permissions to share data publicly.

For the future, AI is seen as an important tool to improve the operation of the visitor sites, enabling the Group to drive operational efficiencies.



The Mandai Wildlife Group has used AI to monitor the health of its animals



## Key lessons when approaching AI

- Keep an open mind
- Invest in training staff – as with any other new technology, AI requires new skill sets
- Provide organisation-wide guidelines for the use of AI
- Focus initially on how existing AI tools can improve efficiency of tasks, supporting staff and enabling them to work faster
- Watch and learn from the organisations with deeper R&D budgets to see how they use AI (Disney is an interesting one to follow on this and it's likely that a number of your suppliers are already using AI in the services that they provide to you)
- Machine learning can support the delivery of excellent visitor experiences, but we still need people

The National Trust is exploring the possibilities of creating tailored AI solutions

## National Trust

### UK

Like other larger organisations, the National Trust has a dedicated head of innovation and digital, Katherine Woollard. Woollard is excited about the potential for AI to support the National Trust, and is actively investigating ways in which this might happen. Possible areas of interest include adding AI tools to the National Trust's intranet, testing the use of AI to create guest itineraries, and outcome-focused big data analysis to support operational processes. Some of this is likely to involve creating tailored AI solutions, subject to the potential scale of opportunity being seen as warranting the investment, due to the expense of implementing custom-made systems. Ensuring that this is done in a manner consistent with the National Trust's values will be key and will require an ethical framework to be defined.

Woollard also sees challenges in using the free, open AI tools available; as a result, the National Trust recommends, and has issued staff with guidelines for the use of, the recently launched Microsoft CoPilot in Bing (previously Bing Chat Enterprise). They're also exploring the use of CoPilot in Microsoft 365. This is



Katherine Woollard

the 'AI assistant' which Microsoft has been building into its products and which ensures that confidential data remains part of an organisation's Microsoft ecosystem and does not become publicly visible. National Trust staff are asked to check with the digital team before using any other form of public AI tool.

Overall, the concerns are seen to be surmountable and exceeded by the scale of potential benefits for the Trust. ●

PHOTO: KATHERINE WOOLLARD

Music is one of the most powerful tools of unification

PHOTO COURTESY OF JACQUELINE SPRINGER



London's V&A East Museum's inaugural exhibition will celebrate Black British Music. Its curator tells us more

# Jacqueline Springer

The V&A East Museum – a new outpost of the Victoria & Albert Museum set to open in Stratford, London in 2025 – has announced its first major exhibition, *The Music Is Black: A British Story*.

Spanning 125 years of Black British music including reggae, jazz, 2 tone, drum & bass, trip hop, grime and UK garage, the exhibition will feature immersive AV, large-scale installations and equipment and musical instruments and personal belongings from some of the musicians featured.

The exhibition will explore the contributions of musicians from early pioneers such as Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, Winifred Atwell and Emile Ford to more recent performers including Joan Armatrading, Soul II Soul, Fabio & Grooverider, Goldie, Massive Attack and Tricky. Current musicians including Little Simz, Jorja Smith and Ezra Collective will also be featured.

"Music is the soundtrack to our lives, and one of the most powerful tools of unification," says Jacqueline Springer, curator of *The Music Is Black: A British Story* and curator of Africa and Diaspora Performance at the V&A.

"Set against a backdrop of British colonialism and evolving social, political, and cultural landscapes, we will celebrate the richness

and versatility of Black British music as an instrument of protest, affirmation, and creativity, and reveal the untold stories behind some of the world's most popular music of all time."

Here Springer gives *Attractions Management* an insight into what to expect from this ground-breaking exhibition.

## Why was *The Music Is Black: A British Story* chosen as the V&A East's launch exhibition?

Music is an intoxicating and relentlessly interesting art form and subject. What better way to demonstrate its power than to trace how music has responded to the political, steered the social and also tapped into memories in exhibition form?

It is fitting because as part of the V&A's family of sites, V&A East is committed to platforming diverse, global stories, and championing the pioneering and radical visionaries of the past and present. The scale of the contribution Black British music has made to British culture, and around the world, is a story which has often been overlooked, and its impact not given the respect it deserves. *The Music Is Black: A British Story* will seek to redress this, inviting visitors to immerse themselves in 125 years of Black British music, and engage with the long-overdue

PHOTO © DENNIS MORRIS, COURTESY V&A MUSEUM LONDON



PHOTO © NORMAN, COURTESY V&A MUSEUM LONDON

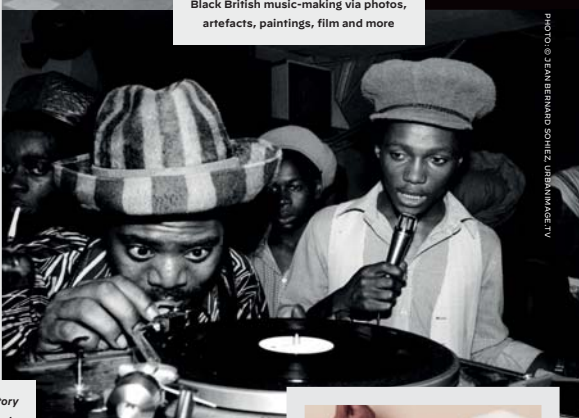


The exhibition will explore 125 years of Black British music-making via photos, artefacts, paintings, film and more

PHOTO © JENNIE BAPTISTE, COURTESY V&A MUSEUM LONDON



PHOTO © JEAN BEAUFORT, COURTESY URBANIMAGE.TV



*The Music is Black: A British Story* will launch when the V&A East opens in Stratford in spring 2025

PHOTO © SAM WHITE



PHOTO © JENNIE BAPTISTE, COURTESY V&A MUSEUM LONDON







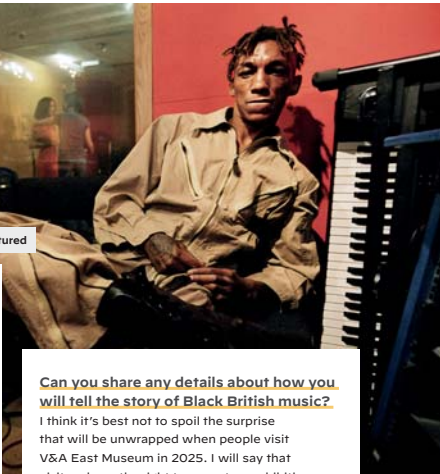


'Little Simz performs at The BRIT Awards 2022 at The O2 Arena on February 08, 2022 in London, England



PHOTO © ADRIAN BOOT, URBANIMAGETV

Tricky will be one of the musicians featured



national and international stories of how Black music-making in Britain has continued to shape British history and culture across decades.

A key element of the exhibition will be spotlighting the creativity and impact of east London on Black British music across time. East London, of course, held an important place within the industrial framework of the country.

### Why is it important to tell the story of Black British music and its contribution to British culture?

Black music, within the West, underpins all contemporary popular music forms. So to tell the story of Black British music is to tell the story of popular music – to see the Black British contribution. What you have are multiple stories, helmed by the talents of Black British-born musicians, producers, singers, rappers and non-Black artists who made/make music within the umbrella of African diasporic styles.

Within this framework, visitors will 'see' themselves, within the 125 year timeline. They will also 'see' their parents and the music they socialised to, their parents' parents and possibly their great-grandparents. As such, *The Music is Black: A British Story* is an all-age exhibition, and by that I mean it's an exhibition that speaks to all of our ages. When music was *it*, when it orchestrated mood, social activity, dress, friends, romance and heartbreak. When living for the weekend was framed by melody and lyricism.

This is also an exhibition of our maturation, exploring when songs accompanied the more sober journeys of our lives. Music has always been a companion. How better to celebrate that than to see these journeys illustrated against national and international histories?

### What are the biggest challenges of putting together this exhibition?

The biggest challenge was recognising the responsibility – to not be swayed by subjectivities, to create and collaborate on an exhibition that provides comprehension of content but also informs, thrills and moves.

### Can you share any details about how you will tell the story of Black British music?

I think it's best not to spoil the surprise that will be unwrapped when people visit V&A East Museum in 2025. I will say that visitors have the right to expect an exhibition on a par with the V&A's name – one of acute standards of excellence. Historically accurate, detail rich, visually splendid and teeming with educational, moving content.

I hope that visitors to the exhibition will leave with a renewed appreciation of Black British music-makers. It will be a delight for visitors to see objects and interact with material related to their home cities, to learn about music that forms their personal musical soundtrack, presented to them within the exhibition's narrative in a way that makes them squeal, nod or beam with pleasure while opening their minds further to what music-makers give to us and leave to history.

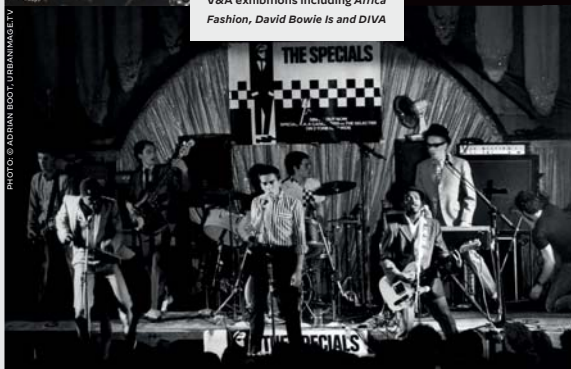
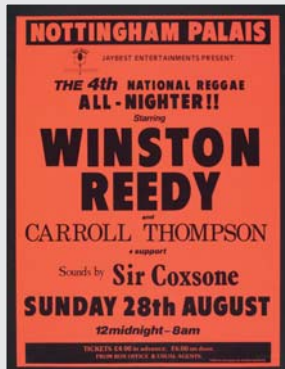
### Have you been inspired by any other exhibitions?

V&A South Kensington's *David Bowie Is* and current hit exhibition *DIVA* have been landmark through their narrative embrace of subject and for enlivening the memory of their respective subjects through sound and visual technology. Both exhibitions, through the inclusion of stage costume, performance footage and memorabilia, provided visitors with more than they expected from a music-centred exhibition.

The V&A's recent *Africa Fashion* exhibition addressed the challenge of telling large, cross-continental, and global stories centered on Black identity with exquisite emotional and sartorial elegance, while the ICA's *War Inna Babylon* tackled compelling topics about state relations in Britain in an emotionally humanising way. ●



Springer was inspired by recent V&A exhibitions including *Africa Fashion*, *David Bowie Is* and *DIVA*



The exhibition will celebrate and explore the impact of east London on the evolution of Black British music





IMAGE © O'DONNELL + TUOMEY, NINETEEN/90, 2018

Architects O'Donnell and Tuomey designed the V&amp;A East Museum

# Look to the East

**The V&A is creating two ground-breaking institutions in east London's new cultural district, with the aim of attracting new audiences and transforming the museum experience**



With the announcement of V&A East Museum's first major exhibition – *The Music is Black: A British Story* – the V&A's new east London

outpost is beginning to feel a lot more real.

Together with the V&A East Storehouse, the V&A East Museum represents one of the UK's biggest museum development projects for decades. Both are set to open in 2025, part of the Mayor of London's £1.1 billion East Bank project to create a new cultural and education district on the site of the former Olympic Park. The site will also include a new Sadler's Wells dance theatre, BBC studios and UAL's London College of Fashion.

The design of the V&A East Museum was inspired by the form of a Balenciaga dress



“

*My early museum memories were of distance and barriers. We want to change that by building an environment in which we can expose young people to truly exceptional things*

Gus Casely-Hayford



Casely-Hayford was formerly director of the US' National Museum of African Art





Casely-Hayford is committed to ensuring the V&A East Museum feels welcoming for all

### ► V&A East Museum

V&A East Museum is set on the waterfront, in a five-storey building designed by architects O'Donnell + Tuomey inspired by a Balenciaga dress.

With a mission to make the arts accessible for all, the museum will host major exhibitions, festivals, commissions, installations, live performances, pop ups and late-night events.

With galleries designed around a central core, the building will feature two public entrances, a publicly accessible roof terrace and a cafe. The main exhibition hall will present the museum's shows by leading artists, designers and performers, while two collection galleries will feature new acquisitions, commissions and live shows alongside collection displays. An installation and events space on the top floor will act as the focal point for V&A East's global partnerships programme, hosting interdisciplinary collaborations, new commissions and events.

Gus Casely-Hayford, director of the V&A East, has set out plans to ensure the new museum is welcoming to those who might have previously felt excluded from museum spaces, and to reflect the diversity of the surrounding boroughs.

"We have devised a tour where we take museum objects out into schools and colleges for a series of workshops, assembly talks and handling sessions," said Casely-Hayford, writing for the Museums Association. "We feel that this is giving these world-class objects back to the communities for which they are, ultimately, held in trust. We hope this will give local young people the chance to experience museum objects up close, learn about the stories behind them and about the careers and skills available to them in the museum sector – to inspire the next generation and future workforce."

"My early museum memories were of distance and barriers. We want to change that by building an environment in which we





IMAGE © DILLER SCOFIDIO + RENFRO

The V&amp;A East Storehouse has been designed by Liz Diller of Diller Scofidio + Renfro

IMAGE © DILLER SCOFIDIO + RENFRO

► can expose young people to truly exceptional things, giving them the knowledge and skills to learn about context, tradition and technique, wherever possible, through hands-on contact. We want to build connections across geography and time, and perhaps inspire them in their own practice to use this vast open sourcebook as a catalyst for their dreams."

### V&A East Storehouse

A 10 minute walk across the park from the V&A East Museum, the huge glass and brick V&A East Storehouse promises to be a new kind of museum collections facility.

When the government announced plans to sell Blythe House, which housed collections and archives for the Victoria and Albert Museum, as well as the British Museum and the Science Museum, the V&A saw an opportunity to bring its collections to new audiences.

When the V&A East Storehouse opens, it will display 250,000 objects, 1,000 archives and 350,000 books in a 16,000sq m building designed by Liz Diller of Diller Scofidio + Renfro. The collection will be stored across four floors and in a cavernous central hall, while further spaces will host pop-up displays,

workshops, performances and screenings.

Unusually for a museum storage facility, much of the building will be open access, meaning that the public can come in freely and view the collection. The building has been designed so that visitors will feel as though they are at the centre of the collection.

"With its open central space, and glass balustrades and floor, you will feel as if you have literally been immersed into the collection," said Casely-Hayford. "We would like it to be a space that is loved by the academic and museum communities, but we also want the people of east London, particularly the young, to feel that this is a place that they can use and be comfortable in."

"This space will revolutionise access to our collections by providing an unprecedented platform from which to tell new stories of theatre, performance, art and design."

Objects on display will range from a pair of ancient Egyptian woven shoes and beautiful buttons made by 20th century studio potter Lucie Rie to a 1930s Frank Lloyd Wright-designed office – the only complete Frank Lloyd Wright interior outside of the US.

The building was completed in May 2023 and is due to open to the public in spring 2025. ●

IMAGE © DILLER SCOFIDIO + RENFRO



The new building will allow the public to view artefacts from the V&A's collection



The V&A Storehouse will feature an open central space surrounded by artefacts

# Rodolphe Bouin

As French future-themed attraction Futuroscope prepares to open a new waterpark as part of its €300m development plans, its CEO speaks to Magali Robathan

“

***We're creating a waterpark that's unlike anything that's been done before in Europe***

Bouin succeeded Dominique Hummel as president of Futuroscope in 2018





Futuroscope launched the Chasseurs de Tornades attraction in 2022

IMAGE: FUTUROSCOPE

Just over three years ago, in October 2020, Futuroscope revealed its development plans for the coming decade. With the aim of moving from a day trip theme park to a short break resort destination, the planned €300m investment included a new waterpark, three major new attractions and a hotel complex comprised of two themed hotel offerings.

The first new attraction in the plan opened in 2022 in the shape of the €21m Chasseurs de Tornades, a tornado-themed dynamic motion theatre by Dynamic Attractions.

The same year saw the launch of the €19m, 76 room space-themed Station Cosmos hotel – a key part of the plan to attract visitors from further afield and encourage them to stay longer – as well as the Space Loop restaurant, which delivers guests' food via a clever rail system.

IMAGE: FUTUROSCOPE



The themed Station Cosmos Hotel opened in 2022



“  
**The new  
waterpark  
will offer  
highly original  
aqua digital  
experiences**

The summer of 2023 saw the launch of Hotel Ecolodgee, Futuroscope's second themed hotel offering. Located near the entrance to the park, this offering comprises 120 wooden lodges on stilts spread across a 3.8 hectare landscaped park.

This year will see the opening of Aquascope, a new waterpark with a maximum capacity of 1,500 people offering 'aqua digital experiences' that will allow guests to swim through and play with images projected onto the water. The park will feature four different zones – a 'sensations' area with eight waterslides, an immersion zone featuring the aqua digital offering, a play area aimed at younger children and an outdoor space with an open air pool and beach.

The 10 year plan  
committed €300m to  
Futuroscope's expansion



IMAGE: FUTUROSCOPE

*Here CEO Rodolphe Bouin sets out the details of the plans for the park*

### How was 2023 for Futuroscope?

We expect to have broken the two million visitor barrier in 2023, and the €130 million barrier in terms of turnover, thanks to an increase in visitor spending that's been confirmed over the last two years. We're where we promised our shareholders we'd be, despite the unfortunate episode of the COVID-19 pandemic.

### What's the secret of Futuroscope's success?

Futuroscope has always been an unusual park. It was built five years before Disney arrived in France, at a time when the leisure park market didn't exist in this country. Its creator René Monory was a local politician who anticipated the advent of the leisure industry. His aim was to develop employment in this predominantly rural region.

Monory carried out all the work and succeeded in convincing people of his innovative project.

Futuroscope is now part of Compagnie des Alpes, but we've kept our DNA. Innovation and creativity are at the heart of what we do. This year we're creating a waterpark unlike anything that's been done before in Europe.

## Futuroscope has always been an unusual park

### What can you tell us about the new waterpark?

We're opening Aquascope in the summer of 2024. It will be an indoor waterpark open whenever Futuroscope is open – around 285 days a year. The park will offer highly original aqua-digital experiences based on mapping projected on the water.

The waterpark will feature four different areas: A sensations area, with eight slides of different levels; an immersion zone, with a unique experience that will give the impression of swimming inside an image; a children's area with games and slides suitable for children aged three and over; and a summer outdoor area with a beautiful swimming pool and beach. For each zone we're working with a different service provider specialising in that specific field.

The waterpark will have its own ticket office and will be able to accommodate a maximum of 1,500 people at any one time.

Étincelle: the Curse of the Black Opal was launched in 2023

### What are your plans for 2024? And what about the longer term plans for the next five to ten years?

The aim of our 2020-2030 €30 million investment plan is to position Futuroscope as a destination for short-term stays – not just a theme park – and to attract more visitors from further afield, including neighbouring countries – mainly Spain, Switzerland and Belgium.

In order to do this, we've divided the investment between the historic park (around €200 million) and the new area at the gateway of the park (around €100 million), with the new area featuring our two themed hotels, the Space Loop experiential restaurant, the new Aquascope waterpark and a plaza to link them all together.

The growth in visitor numbers between 2017 and 2019 required us to build new attractions with a greater capacity than in the past (1,000/hour compared with 700/hour) and therefore to invest more in these new rides. We invested €20 million in 2020 in our first coaster, Objectif Mars, and €21 million in 2022 in our tornado-themed simulator ride Chasseurs de Tornades. This compares to a €14 million investment in the Extraordinaire Voyage flying theatre attraction in 2017, which was our biggest ever investment at the time.

### What are the biggest challenges and biggest opportunities for Futuroscope?

The biggest challenge is constantly coming up with new ideas to renew and develop the park. At Futuroscope we never do the same attraction twice and we feature attractions that are different from those that can be found elsewhere in France, so we're constantly innovating.

As well as being our biggest challenge, this is also our biggest opportunity, because we offer something that you can't find anywhere else. ●



IMAGE: FUTUROSCOPE

#### ABOUT FUTUROSCOPE

Futuroscope is the brainchild of French politician René Monory, who wanted to create jobs and interest in the Poitiers region and had the idea for a leisure and science park focused on technology, science and discovery.

Initially conceived as an educational attraction, the facility opened in 1987 as a theme park and edutainment venue, featuring Kinémax, the Pavillon du Futuroscope and a play zone.

Located 6 miles from Poitiers in western France, the futuristic-themed park features 40 different attractions based on multimedia, cinematographic, and audiovisual technology. Highlights include 3D and 4D cinemas, a

rollercoaster, and live shows. Rides include the Gyrotour, which offers guests 360° panoramic views of the park from 150ft in the air, the new Chasseurs de Tornades Tornado-themed flying theatre and the Destination Mars rollercoaster.

In 2019, Futuroscope launched Futuropolis, a children's theme park that allows young visitors to play at being drivers, sports stars, gardeners, archaeologists, firefighters, and inventors. Rides in this area include a waterpark with floating trampolines, an electric car track and Rescue Academy, where children learn to pilot their own rescue boat.

In 2024, Futuroscope is launching its new waterpark, Aquascope.

# WHAT VISITORS WANT

**How are today's visitors reshaping the attractions industry? New research by IAAPA and LaneTerraLever throws up some intriguing findings, say Nick Dan-Bergman and Lauren Hillery**



What are today's visitors really looking for when it comes to location-based attractions and experiences? What makes

them return, and what keeps them away?

In order to better understand what drives visitors, IAAPA partnered with marketing and digital experience agency LaneTerraLever to carry out a national research study in the US.

The team carried out a study of 1,497 US participants ages 18 to 70 (split equally between local attractions visitors and destination attractions visitors) and interviewed key industry executives to get a picture of the market. So what did they find?

## **What were the top-line consumer findings from this report?**

Consumer sentiment/outlook in 2024 is still strong. The research showed that a huge 93 per cent of visitors plan to visit attractions the same amount or more in 2024 compared to 2023. Fifty per cent of Gen Z and affluent visitors plan to visit attractions more in 2024, compared to 2023.


People are drawn to unique entertainment offerings, with 67 per cent of Millennials willing to pay incrementally for unique experiences, compared to 36 per cent of Boomers and 49 per cent of Gen X.

We also found that visitors' digital experience is a key catalyst for visits, and it's vital to get this right – 50 per cent of destination visitors surveyed said they won't attend a particular attraction because of perceived difficulties navigating the digital experience. YouTube emerged as a critical marketing medium to reach affluent and Millennial visitors.

Finally, we found that the vast majority of visitors will pay more for less time in line – 75 per cent of destination visitors are willing to pay more to spend less time queueing, and 4 out of 5 of the top words used to describe 'skip-the-line passes' had a positive sentiment. ▶







*The number of young people and the affluent willing to pay incrementally to save time and experience something unique blew us away*

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/ELIZAVETA SAUTICA.AIA

Young families value experiences with an educational component

#### Four main customer groups were revealed in the research:

##### ● The Attraction Affluent

This group has the spending power to visit both local and destination attractions. With household incomes >\$100K, they should be encouraged to incorporate attractions into their travel planning and be incentivised with unique experiences.

##### ● The Raving Fans

Although they cut across all age segments, these consumers include Gen Z and Millennials seeking unique experiences and quickly sharing their recommendations across social media. Tapping into this market can help grow your visitor base and positive word-of-mouth.

##### ● The Smart & Sustainable Seekers

Young families value edutainment (experiences that contain an educational component). As awareness of planet-friendly practices grows, these visitors are also doing research into the waste reducing practices of attractions and may factor that into their decision-making.

##### ● The Socialisers

These visitors seek out experiences to be enjoyed with friends. While this segment cuts across all genders and ages, it is primarily comprised of Gen Z women who have the time and interest in exploring fun moments. Group packages can help draw them in.

### What are the main trends impacting visitor behaviours and expectations?

Anything that expedites the guest experience is of significant value to visitors of all ages, affluence, and ethnicities.

Interactive and pop-up/traveling experiences captivate the attention and share of wallet of attraction visitors, which tells us the fear of missing out makes them more willing to prioritise their budget on fleeting experiences.

The infusion of sustainability and 'edutainment' into the positioning and messaging of attractions and entertainment brands opens the doors for long-lasting guest relationships and starts a loyalty conversation with visitors from the first interaction with the brand.

### What are the main areas of good news for attractions operators in the report?

People plan to visit more in the coming year than they did in the past. In addition, the spending power of older generations on entertainment, in particular, makes this visitor group an often-overlooked target for attractions and entertainment brands. However, younger generations, particularly younger Millennials, frequent attractions and entertainment venues as much as 3x more than Boomers.

### And what are the biggest challenges?

Staffing will continue to be challenging for attractions and entertainment brands. These challenges affect the quality of experience your team members are able to deliver, which matters significantly for guest satisfaction and loyalty. The report found that 87 per cent of all visitors are willing to give an attraction one chance to make things right after an undesirable experience with your brand. However, only 30 per cent of Boomers will give you multiple chances to make up for a bad guest experience.

### Four main customer groups were identified in the research. How should operators cater to each group?

**The Attraction Affluent:** Provide unique and convenient experiences in packages for which this group is likely to pay a premium.

**The Raving Fans:** Incentivise them to recommend their experience to drive loyalty.

**The Smart & Sustainable Seekers:** Ensure your values come through in your brand marketing, particularly when targeting younger generations.

**The Socialisers:** Make it easy for them to plan and experience your offerings in groups and highlight the aspects of your attraction that are social in nature.

It's important for operators to focus their messaging on the value of their offer

Visitors plan to visit attractions more in 2024 than they have previously

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK/ABWITZPK089



*50 per cent of visitors said they won't attend an attraction because of perceived difficulties navigating the digital experience*

**Are there any pitfalls to watch out for when targeting particular groups?**

Attractions and entertainment marketing over-invests in showing young people, however, the largest share of wallet is the older generations. Older generations need to see themselves in marketing to be comfortable with the experience of your offering.

**What are the main elements of an attraction that could deter visitors?**

The main deterrent to visiting an attraction is still cost. Although memberships and subscriptions are still highly relevant, focusing messaging on the value will help convert the largest segment of the visiting population – the budget shopper.

**What were the most significant findings in relation to sustainability?**

Eight per cent of visitors say they're more likely to be loyal to an attraction brand whose purpose or mission is aligned with their values. It's important to note that it's most often seen as a contributing factor in why someone selects a particular brand but is still not the key driver like the price might be.

**Were there any other significant findings?**

The number of young people and the affluent who are willing to pay incrementally to save time and experience something unique blew us away. 67 per cent of Millennials are willing to pay incrementally for unique experiences, and 65 per cent of affluent Americans are willing to pay at least 10 per cent or more for expedited entry.

African-American visitation overindexes by 50 per cent at destination attractions when compared to all other attractions visitors – the only demographic that showed such a huge increase in attendance.

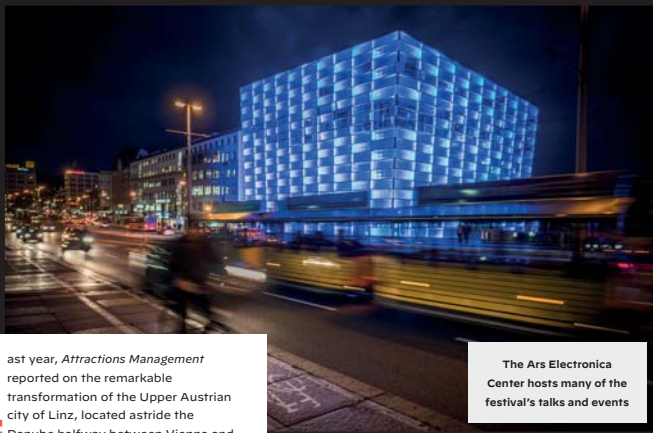
It's hard to know exactly why, but this presents an opportunity for operators to invest in marketing that feels authentic and speaks to the diversity within that audience. ●

# IMAGINING the future

Each September, artists, thinkers, scientists and digital pioneers gather in Linz, Austria to help shape the future. Terry Stevens went along to experience this unique event



Writer Thomas Melle had an animatronic double made of himself for *Uncanny Valley*



The Ars Electronica Center hosts many of the festival's talks and events

Last year, Attractions Management reported on the remarkable transformation of the Upper Austrian city of Linz, located astride the Danube halfway between Vienna and Salzburg. From being known as 'Linz stinks': this was a city of heavy industry and connections to the Third Reich. For 10 years, at the end of the second world war, it was a divided city with a Soviet-occupied northern zone and a US-occupied zone south of the Danube.

After 20 years of concerted effort built around a clear vision and strong civic leadership the city is synonymous with progress, vitality founded upon new media, culture, and progressive, sustainable, urban development. Central to this metamorphosis is Ars Electronica GmbH, the city's unique, not-for-profit, hybrid cultural, educational, and applied science organisation dedicated to being a catalyst for change in this city with such an unenviable past.

Today, the company has multiple, integrated, divisions (Ars Electronica FutureLab and Ars Electronica Solutions) that inspire one another by putting futuristic ideas to the test, finding solutions, and sharing the processes and the outcomes with the public at the Ars Electronica Center and at the festival.

## Exploring art, technology & society

Conceived by four Linz citizens (a journalist, a physicist, a music producer, and a musician), the first step taken by the embryonic Ars Electronica Institute was to organise a festival in 1979 exploring the confluence of art, technology, and society. The Ars Electronica Festival soon became an annual event, held in early September, adopting the title as The Festival of Art, Technology and Society.

It is a crucible for new talent to confront contemporary themes by exploring and testing the potential solutions in experimental, interdisciplinary settings working with artists, musicians, gamers, coders, and investors from all over the world. In recent years the themes have included Radical Atoms (2016), AI (2017), ERROR – the art of Imperfection (2018), A New Digital Deal (2021) Welcome to Planet B (2022), and this year the highly prescient and provocative theme was Who owns the truth?

The pure statistics of this year's festival are impressive: 88,000 unique visitors; over 1,500 artists, scientists, designers, and activists from 88 countries presenting their ideas and inventions at 650 exhibits and 575 events; 338 sponsors and partners; and almost 500 employees. This only tells part of the story of this extraordinary few days in Linz where all dimensions of the theme Who Owns the Truth? were exposed and analysed.



Around 88,000 people visited in 2023





Experimental performances blend technology, music, science and creativity

## Radical thinking

The rallying call of the festival organisers was that, “the world is on the cusp of a rare opportunity to dramatically shift our systems and ways of thinking, planning, and acting as a mood is emerging to make this possible. Solutions are in the air. We need to harness our collective imagination to rethink relationships. Creative and cultural sectors blending with scientific, technological, and artistic knowledge can be catalytic drivers to imagine a new future and make it happen.”

Participants and visitors were able to experience first-hand how new technologies are changing our lives through machine learning, VR, robotics, and biotech to contribute to socially and ecologically sustainable progress. Lectures, conferences, and debates provoked discussion about rights and obligations for digital citizens. A fixed point in the program of every Ars Electronica is the unique mix of concerts, performances, and DJ sets.

A particular highlight, since 1987, is the Prix Ars Electronica media art competition. A selection of the best submissions are on show at Ars Electronica at the Animation Festival held at Ars Electronica Center's Deep Space 8K 3D theatre. The Prix Ars Electronica's equivalent of the Oscars is the Golden Nica's awards presented at a gala event – this year's Golden Nica award went to Ayoung Kim from Korea for Delivery Dancer Sphere.

## Expect the unexpected

As the organisers state very clearly: “When you visit be prepared. This is not like a conventional festival in any way. Why would it be? You wouldn't expect the city of Linz and the team at Ars Electronica to be conventional.”

Elements of the festival can be quite gritty, there is an air of rebellion, it challenges perceptions at every level. It addresses head-on uncomfortable questions affecting society then provides a platform for creating innovative, radical, solutions to these issues.

Even the main venue is a revelation. This is POSTCITY, the region's former post distribution centre, with 80,000sq m of usable space spread over several levels, a 4,000m-long parcel distribution facility, a storage unit for 10,000 packages, an entire battery of 12m-high spiral chutes, and a rail track hall that is around 240m-long made for both incoming and outgoing railways. This enormous post-industrial icon of the city was abandoned in



***The world is on the cusp of a rare opportunity to dramatically shift our systems and ways of thinking, planning, and acting***

2014 but offers almost limitless opportunities for artistic stagings. Festival events are staged across the city – public buildings, parks, old factories and in the most unusual of settings such as the Mariendom cathedral.

So how would you describe the Ars Festival? It's eclectic, it's full-on, it's full of serendipity. It always inspires. At times the

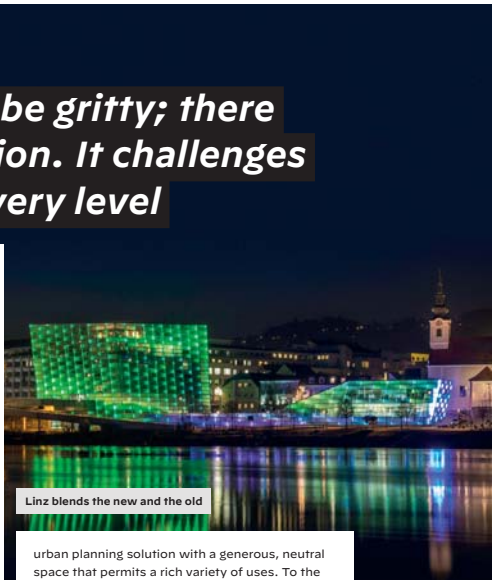
range of activities is simply overwhelming. You need to be well-organised and selective to get the most out of it. It's an edgy version of Glastonbury meets POP Brixton or Borough Market, meets the Lake Como Design Festival meets Creamfields, meets the Sundance Film Festival meets the Adams Project, meets George Orwell's 1984, meets Tomorrow's World.

# *This festival can be gritty; there is an air of rebellion. It challenges perceptions at every level*

## ► Taking over the city

Just as the Ars Electronica Festival takes over the city for four days filling the beer gardens of Gasthaus Tramway and Stiegel-Klosterhof with animated debate, so the spirit of Ars Electronica permeates many aspects of the city – the Mural Gallery at the old Harbour, the Voestalpine Stahlweitz (steelworks visitor centre), Donaupark and the Bruckner Haus Concert Hall, the LENTOS Contemporary Art Centre and Tabakfabrik, a converted 340-year-old former tobacco factory into a centre for creative industry.

Capturing the wave of edgy creativity now sweeping through Linz, is the re-imagining of the Domplatz Square – the public space in front of the neo-gothic Mariendom cathedral. Planning of the square originally commenced in 1855, with the so-called 'New Cathedral' consecrated in 1924. However, Domplatz Square itself was always regarded as unfinished until a bold scheme was agreed to create a new



Linz blends the new and the old

urban planning solution with a generous, neutral space that permits a rich variety of uses. To the southwest of the square a cluster of existing baroque heritage buildings was enlarged to create an ensemble of mini-squares and alleys anchored by the Hotel Domplatz, which opened in 2009.

## HIGHLIGHTS

The highlights for this non-technical but interested observer were undoubtedly:

- Yen-Tzu Cheng's dance performance in the Mariendom Cathedral
- Ars Electronica Center's pop-up exhibition for children by MISSIMO and designed by Ars Electronica's FutureLab in the main city square
- The Circus of Knowledge at Johannes Kepler University
- The Future of Tourism led by Austrian Tourism
- The Breaking Clouds Kinetic Sculpture
- Venice Revealed by Fondazione Musei Civici di Venezia
- The Last Supper Interactive by Franz Fischbacher
- The European Space Agency 'Earth From Space' project
- The European Union Prize for Citizen Science Exhibition

## A hotel with a difference

The Hotel Domplatz was developed by a young tourism enterprise called Severin Holding GmbH who, mirroring the ethos of the Linz and of Ars Electronica, saw the opportunity to create a hotel that "was not business as usual". Their approach was to envisage the hotel as 'Kunst am Bau' – architectural art. Unique artworks flow through the entire hotel: its public areas, the spa, the toilets, and the bedrooms.

It is within the bedrooms that spirit of the age is revealed. In every room is a wooden casket in which you will find a gift – look into the casket and be surprised what the previous guest left for you. Guests are invited to accept this gift and leave something for the next person.

According to the hotel management, the purpose of this activity is to encourage, "mutual perception through giving and taking, through active participation in an artistic event."

Next year's Ars Electronica Festival takes place 4-8 September. Register your interest now and prepare for days of enlightenment, wonderment and encounters that will shift the way you think about the world of tomorrow. ●



ARS ELECTRONICA / MARKUS SCHNEIDERBERGER



ARS ELECTRONICA / TOM MESSIC

Ars Electronica Festival takes over the city of Linz for four days each September



ARS ELECTRONICA / VOG PHOTO



ARS ELECTRONICA / VOG PHOTO

## ARS ELECTRONICA FESTIVAL 2024 – WHAT TO EXPECT

### Commissioned projects

Throughout the year, Ars Electronica collaborates with partners worldwide to promote artists, launches Open Calls, curates exhibitions and conferences, and more. These commissioned activities culminate in the presentation of their outcomes at the Ars Electronica Festival in September.

### Concerts and performances

Over the five days of the festival, Ars Electronica features a unique mix of concerts, performances and DJ sets.

### Screenings

Visitors can watch a selection of the world's best computer animations at the curated Animation Festival. Ars Electronica Center's theatre showcases 8K-resolution visual worlds by international artists via 16m-by-9m projections on the walls and floor.

### Conferences

Ars Electronica offers range of talks, lectures and conferences, including a two-day symposium on the festival's annual theme, which brings together experts and pioneers from the fields of science, art, design and technology.

### Exhibitions

Exhibitions celebrate the best of the international media art scene as well as up and coming young artists. The Prix Ars Electronica Exhibition showcases the winners of the world's longest-running media art competition.

### Open labs and workshops

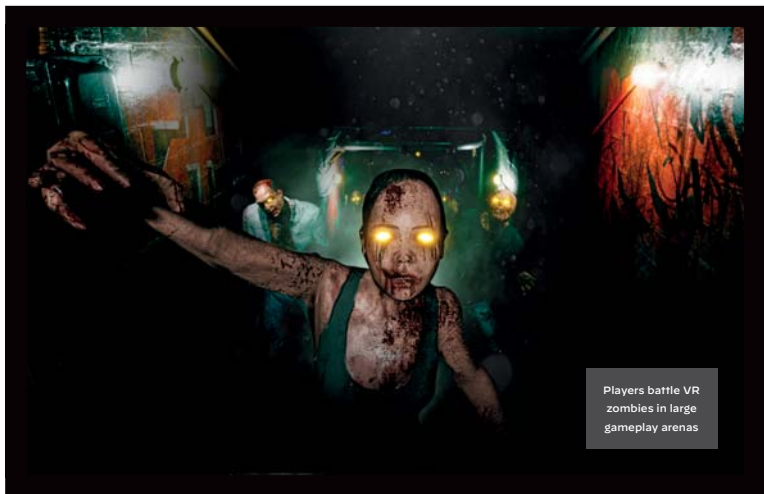
The festival is very hands on – open labs and workshops offer visitors the chance to watch artificial intelligence 'think', train self-driving cars, program robots, 3D print, edit their own DNA with genetic scissors and more.

Source: <https://ars.electronica.art/festival/en/>

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



Players battle VR zombies in large gameplay arenas

PHOTO: ZERO LATENCY

## Zero Latency reveals free-roam VR zombie experience

VR technology company Zero Latency has launched its immersive free-roam VR zombie game Outbreak.

Described by its creators as 'a thrilling zombie shooter adventure on a truly gigantic scale,' the game features 'ultra-realistic zombies' developed from motion capture of live actors. Up to eight players battle through hordes of the undead and race against time to save humanity in large gameplay arenas with more than 2,000sq m to explore.

Outbreak is now available at any of the 80+ Zero Latency locations across the world, with players receiving a personalised



Tim Ruse

video of their Outbreak experience after they play.

"Outbreak is our most epic adventure yet, and we can't wait for everybody to play through this terrifying, exciting

game that is unlike any other on the market," said Tim Ruse, CEO at Zero Latency.

"Building on our learnings from over 3 million games played across seven experiences, we understand deeply what makes a great immersive adventure that treads the line between fear and exhilaration. This game is going to really blow people's socks off."

Zero Latency offers gamers a range of immersive free-roam VR experiences in physical large scale spaces without wires, cables, or other constraints.

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

**Zero Latency**





Spike Waterfight is the latest concept from Maurer Rides

## Maurer Rides introduces Spike Waterfight

Rollercoaster and ride designer and manufacturer Maurer Rides has announced its latest concept, the Spike Waterfight, which allows spectators and rollercoaster riders to soak one another with water cannons.

Spectators will aim at riders from multi-platforms, while

pilots can shoot back from two water cannons built into the vehicles on the right and left, together with their water tanks.

The tightly curved rollercoaster layout rises up out of the water offering riders great views – which they could enjoy if they weren't being soaked by 'troublemakers' wielding water cannons.

For those not keen on coasters, a waterslide can be connected to the platform entrance, and waterpark operators can decide the number of platforms they connect to and which type of waterslide: from freefall to family slides. The 30m-high rollercoaster tower is scalable and can be scaled to any height.

The ride also allows pilots to control their own speed, meaning that it can be ridden as a high octane or more laid back family-style attraction.

[attractions-kit keyword](#)

**Maurer Rides**



Spectators can soak rollercoaster riders with water cannons



The display wall welcomes visitors to MSG Sphere

## HYPERVSN holographic display launches at MSG Sphere

Technology company HYPERVSN has created its largest ever holographic display for music and entertainment venue MSG Sphere Las Vegas.

Now open to the public, the entrance atrium area showcases HYPERVSN's largest-ever 30ft by 50ft holographic display wall alongside real-life humanoid robots that greet you on arrival, a 360-degree avatar capture and a beam-forming sound display.

"We believe this is the world's largest holographic technology project to date. Experiences of this size won't just stop attendees in their tracks, but lead to unforgettable moments from the first interaction", said HYPERVSN's CEO, Kiryl Chykeyuk.

The ambitious 50ft-high installation project included



Kiryl Chykeyuk

420 individual SmartV HYPERVSN displays fixed to a secure rack that hangs from the atrium wall. These displays are then connected and synchronised with the HYPERVSN SmartV system to form one cohesive 2D or 3D HD holographic visual image in immaculate detail.

"Expectations among the Las Vegas crowd are immense, with the race to impress with bigger

and better spectacles down the strip. The HYPERVSN SmartV Wall at the MSG Sphere is a beautiful piece of a larger puzzle, creating immersive, unforgettable experiences that have never been done before," said Chykeyuk.

"We set out to redefine the traditional entrance experience in an entertainment centre, with the core aim to impress. The attendees can interact with our memorable immersive experience that can be replicated across the broader events, music and entertainment industry. The technology is also highly scalable. There is flexibility to expand interactive holographic images to this impressive size or deploy just one or two displays. It's all in the hands of the customer." ●

attractions-kit keyword

HYPERVSN



# WATER. JUST ANOTHER WAY TO SAY FUN

ADVANCED WATER PLAY SOLUTIONS WITH CUSTOMIZED DESIGN: WHEREVER THERE IS WATER MYRTHA CAN MAKE THE DIFFERENCE.

[www.myrthapools.com](http://www.myrthapools.com)

 **Myrtha  
Pools**  
WATER. VISION. CREATION.

# Attractions MANAGEMENT

# DIRECTORY

To book your space call: +44 (0)1462 431385

## MULTIMEDIA & AV



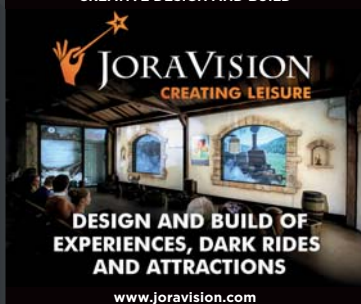
**KRAFTWERK**  
LIVING TECHNOLOGIES

**WE ARE YOUR AV SPECIALIST  
FOR HIGH-QUALITY  
MEDIA-BASED ATTRACTIONS!**

[www.kraftwerk.at](http://www.kraftwerk.at) | +43 7242 69269-0 | [info@kraftwerk.at](mailto:info@kraftwerk.at)

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

## CREATIVE DESIGN AND BUILD



**JORA VISION**  
CREATING LEISURE

**DESIGN AND BUILD OF  
EXPERIENCES, DARK RIDES  
AND ATTRACTIONS**

[www.joravision.com](http://www.joravision.com)

## CGI CONTENT PRODUCTION



**REDRAION®**

**The CGI studio specialized in  
media based attractions**

[www.redraion.com](http://www.redraion.com)

## IMMERSIVE RIDES & ATTRACTIONS



INTRODUCING:  
**Extended Experiences™**

WHERE EVERYTHING IS POSSIBLE

[www.holovis.com](http://www.holovis.com)

# Attractions MANAGEMENT

To book your annual advert call the  
sales team on **+44 (0)1462 431385**





# Attractions MANAGEMENT

Sign up for free digital issues  
[www.attractionsmanagement.com/signup](http://www.attractionsmanagement.com/signup)



Attractions Management is the magazine  
 and online community for decision-makers  
 in the global attractions industry

## Advertise

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

Promote your business and market your  
 brands to leading fitness operators

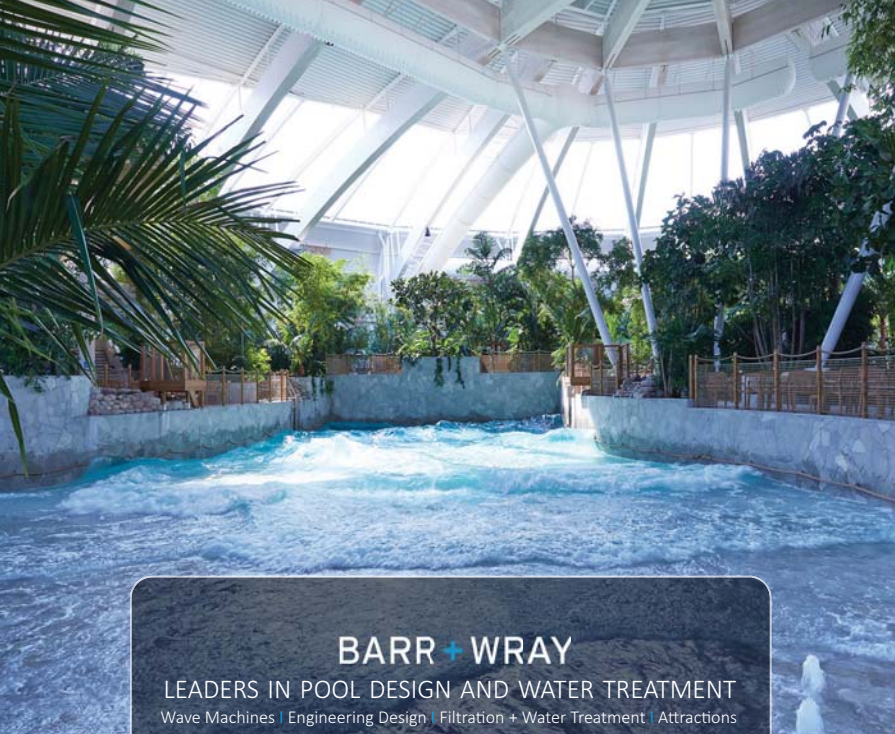


SCAN QR CODE OR VISIT WEBSITE TO SIGN UP FREE

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







## BARR + WRAY

LEADERS IN POOL DESIGN AND WATER TREATMENT

Wave Machines | Engineering Design | Filtration + Water Treatment | Attractions



Middle East + Asia

Barr + Wray Dubai

T: + 971 4 320 6440

E: [sales@barrandwray.com](mailto:sales@barrandwray.com)

UK + Europe

Barr + Wray

T: + 44 141 882 9991

E: [sales@barrandwray.com](mailto:sales@barrandwray.com)

[www.barrandwray.com](http://www.barrandwray.com)