



**World Experience  
Summit 2024**

# WXS 2024 Reflection

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**Part 5 of 5: The Impact of Experience**

In partnership with Google Xi and ARTECHOUSE







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# In Case You Missed It

This year's sell-out World Experience Summit in New York City was, in the words of those who came...

- “A unique annual opportunity for the experiential community to connect and share ideas that shape the future”
- “A global gathering of interdisciplinary creatives across experience design”
- “An experience design conference that turned into one of the most fun networking events ever”
- “Spectacular, a super diverse crowd from all over the world... from every corner of the industry—creatives, developers, finance gurus, and owners and operators of unique experiences”
- “Extraordinary”, “Amazing”, “An absolute blast—educational, inspiring, and way too much fun!”
- “The coolest part? The professionalism and inspiring stories, both on stage and behind the scenes, were mind-blowing”

\*These are actual comments made by our attendees.







THIS IS A brief recap of the experiences, sessions, workshops and more that took place from June 12-14 at House of Yes in New York City. Put together by a team of our Scholarship volunteers and the WXO team, this is for three people...

**For people who came to WXS 2024**, it'll give you insights on sessions you missed, and give you a chance to to reflect on the ones you went to.

**For those who didn't come**, it's a snapshot of what happened.

**For those who aren't yet a WXO Member**, it represents just a slice of what you'll get when you join us year round. [Click here to apply for membership.](#)

**Collect all five!** This is **Part 5: Impact** in our series of five reports outlining useful tools and takeaways from our speakers and performers across the Art, Science, Business, Tech & Impact of Experience.

We hope it helps you in your work, and inspires you to come to WXS 2025 from April 29-May 1 next year in London.

As so many have already told us, "I can't wait for the next Summit!"



**James Wallman, CEO, The World Experience Organization**

# The **Impact** of Experience

How might you make experiences that have more and more positive impact – on the individual, on society and community, and on the planet? **Learn how to use experience design tools to tackle some of the biggest challenges of our times, from climate crisis to isolation to political extremism.**

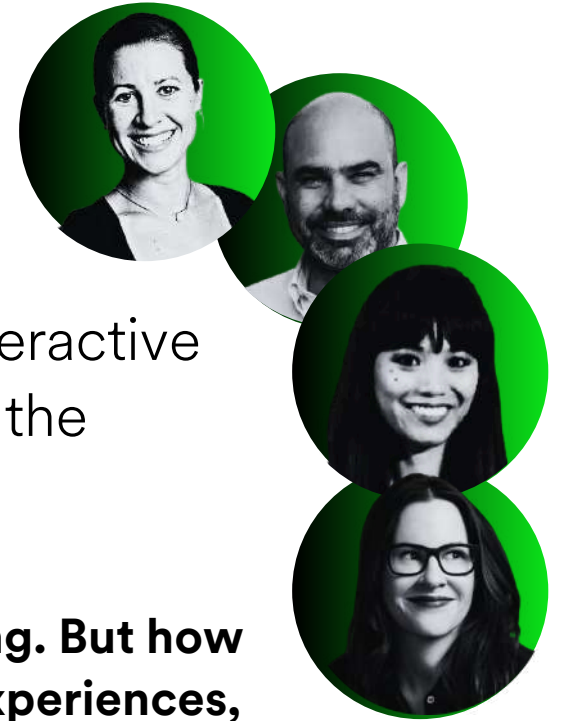
**How to read this document:** Each section begins with a brief description of the speaker(s) and session, followed by 3-4 top take-outs.







# Designing For Community



Lizzy Martin, CEO, Whistling Finch; Risa Puno, interactive artist; Aziz Isham, Executive Director, Museum of the Moving Image. Moderated by Laura Hess

**Social impact experiences are needed for social wellbeing. But how do we ensure we keep community at the centre of our experiences, and also connect to new communities through them?**

Our panel of innovators in the space explored the critical role of social impact experiences in promoting social wellbeing and discussed strategies to ensure community remains at the heart of design.



1

### Community-Centered Design

Speakers underscored the importance of crafting experiences that authentically serve and engage communities. Puno highlighted the transformative impact of public art and interactive installations that unite diverse communities, fostering collective care and social cohesion. Central to her message was the need to deeply understand community needs and design experiences that resonate profoundly from the outset.

2

### Inclusive And Accessible Experiences

Accessibility emerged as a prominent theme, with a focus on designing experiences that prioritize inclusivity from inception rather than retrofitting accessibility later. Isham discussed initiatives at the Museum of the Moving Image, such as intern-led programs and inclusive film festivals, tailored to diverse audiences including neurodiverse individuals.

3

### Empowerment and Engagement

Martin shared insights from Whistling Finch's immersive experiences for tweens, emphasizing the importance of empowering young audiences to engage with diverse cultures and perspectives. She highlighted the pivotal role of cultural institutions in fostering dialogue and raising awareness through educational programming.





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# The Nature Of Experience Design



Paul Bulencea, Co-Founder, & Philipp Jacobius, Producer & Co-Founder, College of Extraordinary Experiences & Order of the Wild, & collective, in partnership with Google Xi

**In a captivating session, participants were taken on an immersive journey that intertwined music, nature, and profound insights into the realm of experience design alongside an exploration of interconnectedness and transformation.**

More than a discourse on aesthetics, it was a call to action. Bulencea and his collaborators beckoned us to rethink our relationship with the natural world and consider how experience design can lead us towards a more harmonious and sustainable future.





1

### Reconnection With The Natural World

"We are only human in relationship with everything that is not human," Bulencea said, underscoring the interconnectedness that lies at the heart of experience design. He recounted a poignant experience with wild bison in Romania, a moment that profoundly shifted his perspective on human-nature interactions, echoing themes of rewilding and ecological balance. A fascinating concept introduced during the experience was that of super normal stimulation, a phenomenon observed in both animal behavior and human interaction with technology.

2

### Creating Liminal Spaces For Transformation

Bulencea and his collaborators illuminated the pivotal role of experience design in fostering ecological awareness and personal transformation. They highlighted the importance of sensory immersion, psychological depth, and collaborative effort in creating liminal spaces: thresholds where profound shifts in perspective and consciousness can occur.

3

### From Crisis Of Comfort To Presence

The session concluded with a poignant reflection on the modern-day "crisis of comfort," where constant stimulation and digital distractions hinder our ability to be fully present. Bulencea urged the audience to embrace discomfort as a catalyst for reconnecting with reality and fostering genuine human-nature connections.







# Darkness To Light: **Placemaking To** Redefine A Region

Josh Heuser, Co-Founder, BLINK

**BLINK, the largest immersive festival in the US, radically transforms the city of Cincinnati over the span of four days every other year. It overtakes the city with dozens of projection mapped spaces, public murals and all sorts of light installations out in the public.**

Its scale cannot be overstated, bringing in 2.2 million people over four days in the year of 2022, and generating \$126 million of revenue for the city over its course. Heuser shared the five pillars that have made BLINK such an overwhelming success with us.





1

### **Shared Experience & Understanding**

The first pillar, “human insight”, is about understanding the value of shared experience. Much like a group sitting around a fire or crowds awed by fireworks, BLINK creates moments of shared experience utilizing light and dark. For this vision to work on the scale that it has, the second pillar, “strategic alignment”, had to come into play. Understanding the why behind the project was of vital importance, so this vision was laid out in a short manifesto spread over the city.

2

### **Beacons & Breadcrumbs**

During the event, people aren’t given a set route to go on despite the incredible amount of work on display. Instead, people “create their own experience through a technique we call beacons and breadcrumbs,” Heuser says. The beacons are monumental installations, such as an 18-storey building that is projected on, visible from many blocks away. These beacons help people choose somewhere to go. On their way, they’re interrupted by all the breadcrumbs peppered around, like a small art installation, live music stage, and maybe even an alley lit up with umbrellas or a small disco party on the street. There is no beginning or end to the experience: people make their own way.

3

### **Facilitate A Spirit Of Exploration**

To get people moving through the city the team added the “one block of discovery”, a streetcar that was programmed to move between beacons and breadcrumbs. We all want to be explorers – to figure something out or question why it exists. The process of unforced fascination, “the ability to explore, dialogue, and share,” sets the stage for people to start asking questions, so that they themselves can become explorers. Once they learn from their exploration, they become insiders who are inclined to share their findings with their community. It rewards people’s curiosity.





# Experience Design Hackathon **For The Planet**



Abraham Burickson, Director, Odyssey Works

**The idea of worldbuilding is usually reserved for fantastical stories told through books, movies and games. But in fact, we are all active participants in the largest worldbuilding project out there: our Planet Earth.**

How we move, speak, dress, and really everything we're engaged with contributes to our greater narrative. It's this very narrative, this collective story we have all dreamt of together, that actively informs how we will continue to exist on this planet, for better or worse. And it's quite evident that our current story is flawed.

We relentlessly extract from nature and actively harm our ecosystems. In Burickson's hackathon, we dared to rewrite this narrative. We speculated, remixed, and imagined worlds in which our ways of being are no longer in direct opposition with the vitality of our planet.





1

### **The Components Of Worldbuilding**

We split into four groups, each exploring a different component of worldbuilding from Burickson's latest book, *Experience Design: A Participatory Manifesto*. The categories were Population and Language, Myth and History, Place and Physics, and lastly, Aesthetics and Material Culture. After deliberating in our own groups, we all joined together and shared the worlds we had come up with.

2

### **Collective Myth-Making**

Communally, we had created a society whose origin was centered around the resonance of a mythic asteroid, tinkered with self-regenerative, symphonic automation, languages centered on the becoming of nature, a travel-based education system, and even a religion whose idol of worship was holy shit, literally.

3

### **Rewriting The World Around Us**

Burickson was quick to point out that all of these proposals, even the holy shit, were brilliant. That we shouldn't just discard any, and that with deeper exploration, any of our proposals could open up radically different ways of being, in turn revealing our always assumed "modus operandi". These ideas plant the seeds for alternative futures, seeds with the potential to flourish into complete new worlds.

**Find out more in Burickson's *WXO Campfire*,  
[Experience Design: A Participatory Manifesto](#)**





## Experience As **Medicine**



Ramy Elnagar, Co-Founder, WhiteMirror; Suchi Reddy, Founding Principal, REDDYMADÉ, Jennifer Crook, Artistic Director & CEO, Dreamachine; Barney Steel, Founder & Director, Marshmallow Laser Feast; Jasmin Jodry, Creative Director

**The panel explored how immersive experiences in art and entertainment can enhance social wellbeing.**

Our speakers discussed the design of transformative experiences, fostering genuine human interaction, and the strategic use of aesthetics to elicit specific emotions.

The session highlighted the therapeutic potential of these experiences in creating emotional connections and fostering a sense of community.



1

### Optimizing Everyday Moments

Transformative experiences are cultivated by optimizing everyday moments and making experiential design accessible to a wider audience. These experiences, which emphasize centering moments, enhance personal awareness and catalyze change.

2

### Building Spaces For Connection

Creating environments that promote genuine human interaction requires an understanding of spatial dynamics and the energy of human presence. Thoughtful onboarding rituals and inclusive design are key to fostering meaningful connections among participants.

3

### Amplifying Emotions Via The Senses

The strategic use of aesthetics, including space, light, and sensory elements, can amplify existing emotions and enhance the immersive experience. Collaboration between artists and scientists helps decode and enhance intuitive emotional responses, creating resonant environments.



# Credits

This report was put together by the WXO team and several of our **Summit Scholarship attendees**, who became reporters for the duration of the event and captured their top moments from each session.

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