



World Experience  
Summit 2024



World Experience Summ

# WXS 2024 Reflection

Tools from the Art, Science, Business,  
Tech & 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 reporters 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.](#)

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 **Art** of Experience

How might you make experiences that are more moving, memorable and immersive? **Learn the latest tools and techniques to make stickier experiences.**

**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.





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# The Transformative Power Of **Burning Man**



Heather Gallagher, Former Head of Tech, Burning Man

**Gallagher explored the blazing question: what is it that truly makes people resonate with Burning Man?**

Is it the monumental art? The colorful people and dragons roaming about? Might it even be the chance to reconnect with nature amid all the ridiculously large and artfully created fires?

According to Gallagher, it obviously is about that – “I mean, duh!” But these aren’t necessarily the reasons why Burning Man has become such a global phenomenon, or why people repeatedly say it’s been such a monumental event. It’s because it actually changes people’s lives.

# 1

## The Struggle Is Real!

Transformation happens not through spectacle, partying, or whimsical costumes alone. Instead, it's by reserving these very magical moments only after people have gone through an odyssey of hardship, coming out with a renewed purpose or outlook on life.

# 2

## The Struggle Starts Early

It starts long before people arrive at the Black Desert. Buying tickets is an arduous process, let alone the long drive to get there, or even the journey to find your campsite once you arrive. At every point, there is struggle to be had: the heat, the exhaustion, the need to find a bathroom...

# 3

## The Rewards Are Worth It

But once you come out of that bathroom, you see that people have laid out a red carpet congratulating you on your first trip. Although not the flashiest moment, it encapsulates what makes Burning Man so transformative. Burners are constantly under trial, but they're in it together, and at every point find that the rewards are worth the struggle. There's no better example of this than the night rides: amid the dark, you find yourself biking in a sea of colors. Despite all the inconveniences, burners keep coming back because it's also a sea of miracles. They come out with stories they'll tell for the rest of their lives, and new friends to share them with. They come back because they know that "in the most wild and unimagined of places, you can still find beautiful things."





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Let me challenge you!



# Make Them **Fear You**

Michael Badelt, Owner, INTYA Creative



**Why do we love to be scared? Why do we remember moments of fear so vividly?**

Are scare attractions the original immersive experiences? And how can you use fear to design all kinds of experiences that not only entertain, but are also memorable and foster personal growth?

A brilliant Unconference session at the 2023 Summit, scare attraction designer Badelt led a workshop to help you make people scared, and how to use these techniques in your own work. Fear can serve as an unexpectedly powerful tool for crafting experiences that entertain, provoke personal growth, and leave lasting memories.





1

### **Harness Fear for Impact**

Fear, often associated with thrill and excitement, can be a powerful tool in creating memorable experiences. Badelt explores how different types of fear – instinctive versus learned – can be utilized to elicit emotional responses and enhance engagement. Whether it's through immersive theater or corporate settings, fear can provoke intense emotions that deepen connections and leave lasting impressions.

2

### **Personal Growth Through Fear**

Overcoming fear isn't just about entertainment; it's about personal growth and achievement. Badelt discusses how confronting fears can lead to a sense of accomplishment and increased resilience. This process not only challenges individuals to produce different hormones and neurotransmitters, but also fosters emotional bonding and memory formation.

3

### **Designing Emotional Impact**

Techniques like modulating tension and playing with biases and expectations are crucial in designing experiences that resonate deeply. By strategically incorporating elements that evoke fear – such as startles or immersive storytelling – designers can create immersive experiences that are not only entertaining, but also impactful.

**Find out more in Badelt's WxO Campfire, [The Joy Of Fear](#)**



# F\*\*k The Hero's Journey!

## New Story Shapes Will

# Save The World



Christopher Morrison, story iconoclast & Founder, Reality+

**You likely have a few trusted story frameworks that guide your narrative crafting: the classical Aristotelian three-act structure, Joseph Campbell's Hero's Journey, Freytag's pyramid...**

While these designs have their merits, we're no longer confined by their boundaries. Today, we inhabit a new narrative landscape where traditional rules are being rewritten. Embrace these new story shapes and discover how they can transform not only your storytelling, but also our collective understanding of the world.

Morrison, a pioneer in storytelling, invites us to liberate ourselves from the formulaic grip of the Hero's Journey and challenges us to embrace innovative story structures that resonate more deeply with contemporary audiences and have the potential to reshape our perspectives.



1

### Go Beyond Psychology

Morrison critiques traditional Western storytelling models, like the Hero's Journey, for being overly focused on psychological narratives and individual heroes. He advocates for story shapes that acknowledge the collective human experience, where "we get through life with other people giving us a hand once in a while."

2

### The Pluriverse & Joy As Revolution

Morrison introduces the concept of the pluriverse, emphasizing the recognition of multiple ways of being. He argues that stories shouldn't just revolve around conflict and trauma, but also highlight joy and diverse experiences as revolutionary acts. This shift can lead to more inclusive and emotionally resonant narratives.

3

### New Story Structures

Morrison highlights alternative narrative frameworks that move beyond Aristotle. Examples include the Wave structure, with genre switches as seen in H.P. Mendoza's "I Am a Ghost," the Wavelet structure, as seen in "Atlanta," and the Spiral structure of Wong Kar Wai's films. These innovative forms provide fresh ways to engage audiences and tell impactful stories.

Find out more in Morrison's WXO Campfire, [Why Everything You Know About Immersive Storytelling Is Now Wrong](#)



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# Let's Play With New Shapes: New Narrative Forms



Christopher Morrison, Founder, Reality+,  
Stephanie Riggs, immersive innovator,  
& Gwen Loeb, Founder, World Builders Incubator

**In this interactive follow-up to Morrison's earlier keynote, he was joined by narrative thought leaders Stephanie Riggs and Gwen Loeb.**

Together they led an innovative workshop to explore new narrative forms beyond the traditional Hero's Journey, inviting participants to shape the future of storytelling.

These novel narrative forms can revolutionize storytelling, fostering more immersive experiences that resonate deeply and contribute to shaping a more enlightened world.

1

### Solution-Focused Narratives

Loeb advocated for narratives that address pressing societal issues and challenge structures that perpetuate harm. And by reframing classic tales like Cinderella, Riggs proposed narratives that envision alternative realities, such as a world without patriarchy where Cinderella collaborates with her sisters to attend a ball organized by a TikTok celebrity shark before her stepmother returns home. This approach aims to inspire audiences with stories that not only entertain, but also provoke thought and encourage positive social change.

2

### Quantum Storytelling

Riggs passionately advocated for and offered practical insights into innovative storytelling techniques that dismantle traditional narratives through the lens of natural elements, drawing parallels with the principles of physics. This approach not only challenges conventional storytelling structures, but also provides practical methods for reconfiguring stories to adopt new narrative shapes that resonate profoundly with contemporary audiences.





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# How To Bring The Dead To Life: Making **Ancient** **Cultural Experiences Modern**



Miguel Melgarejo, Director of Strategy, &  
Alejandro Machorro, CEO, COCOLAB International

**This session explored Cocolab's innovative approach to designing cultural experiences that resonate deeply without cultural appropriation.**

Emphasizing the importance of tradition, co-creation, and challenging preconceived notions, Melgarejo & Machorro underscored the role of culture in bridging our polarized world by fostering connection and understanding.

**1**

### **The Power of Tradition**

Traditions hold universal truths and stories that everyone can relate to, such as Frida Kahlo's resilience, or the good vs. evil narrative in Lucha Libre wrestling. By recognizing and utilizing these sources of truth, we can create transformational experiences that connect deeply with people.

**2**

### **Respecting Cultural Guardians**

Cultural traditions are maintained by individuals who act as their guardians. Engaging with these guardians through a conscious and empathetic approach ensures the preservation of their true meaning. Designers must question their own beliefs, motives, and assumptions to foster genuine collaboration with the community.

**3**

### **Avoiding Exoticization**

Simplifying culture for ease of design reduces it to a mere product and ignores its true complexity. Involving diverse teams and co-creating with various stakeholders ensures an accurate and respectful representation of the culture, maintaining its richness and integrity.

**Find out more in Cocolab's WxO Campfire,  
[Inspiring Transformation Through Cultural Experience](#)**



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# Stand Up! Interact Like **A Hollywood Star**



Fiona Rene, Actor

**This engaging workshop explored the realm of interactive and immersive acting, underscoring the significance of co-creation with the audience as integral partners.**

Drawing from Rene's "Method of Being," participants were invited to immerse themselves in character roles, gaining first hand insight into the experiences and themes addressed.

The session emphasized the importance of empathy and deliberate design in crafting impactful and resonant experiences.



1

### Empathy And Co-Creation

Participants learned the significance of stepping into a character's shoes to genuinely grasp the player's experiences. This immersive approach ensures that the designed experiences resonate deeply with the audience, fostering a more authentic and impactful connection.

2

### Design For Transitions

The workshop emphasized the importance of intentionally designing moments where characters, and by extension participants, become aware, gain confidence, and transition from guided to independent experiences. Understanding the transitions between the victim, villain, and hero phases within characters is crucial: the audience is naturally drawn to these transformative moments.

3

### Get Specific

Specificity in creating experiences allows for greater relatability and impact, as audiences connect more deeply with detailed and nuanced elements. This intentionality ensures a more structured and meaningful journey for the audience.





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## We Believe In Emotional Bureaucracy



April Soetarman, Creative Director & Artist

**Soetarman explored how subverting audience expectations through fictional infrastructures and real-world installations can evoke profound emotional responses.**

She showcased projects like the Department of Emotional Labor and the Museum of Almost Realities, illustrating how the mundane language of everyday objects and institutions can be transformed to explore complex human emotions.

1

### **Subvert Expectations For Emotional Impact**

Leveraging the familiar language of everyday objects and institutions can help audiences navigate and explore intricate human emotions. By repurposing conventional formats into emotionally charged experiences, such as street signs that evoke delight, she highlighted the power of the unexpected in creating memorable interactions.

2

### **Creating Safe & Delightful Experiences**

Focusing on the importance of safety and care, Soetarman explained that for audiences to be emotionally honest, they must feel secure. She underscored that alternate reality pieces should clearly distinguish themselves from real-world services and avoid making unreasonable demands on participants, ensuring a respectful and immersive experience.

3

### **Context & Audience Expectation**

You must consider context and audience expectations in your design. By using familiar formats to either subvert or reinforce anticipated experiences, Soetarman demonstrated how delight emerges at the intersection of the positive and the unexpected, encouraging designers to thoughtfully engage with the audience's preconceived notions.





# I Can Make Your Fortune: A Tarot Guide To Immersive Narrative Design



Jamie Ruddy, Co-Founder, Sideways Kitty

**Ruddy used fortune-telling techniques to explore storytelling through an immersive approach, drawing parallels with tarot card readings to understand narrative depth and emotional impact.**

Participants used tarot cards to collaborate and create stories prompted by personal questions, emphasizing storytelling as a journey of emotions rather than a structured process.

# 1 Follow Your Gut

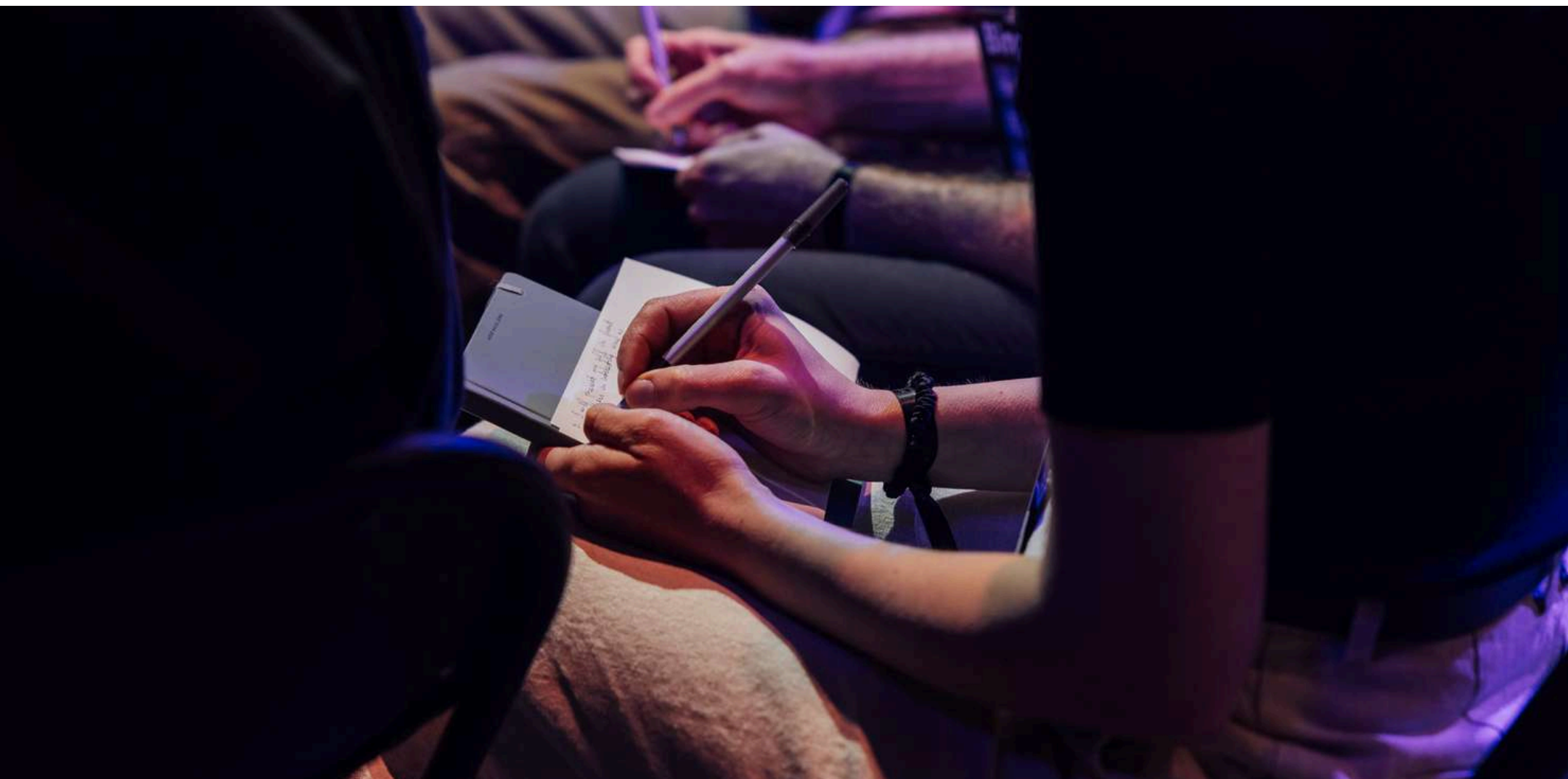
Storytelling is not paint-by-numbers, it's about how it feels. A story works when you feel something, not when you think something.

# 2 Plot Isn't Always King

Emotion, story, and character makes a story unique, not the plot.

# 3 Don't Be Afraid Of Conflict

Conflict plays a crucial role in creating engaging narratives making experiences memorable and impactful.





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# From Storytelling To Story-Doing



Brad Shelton, VP of Creative & Story, Maya Guice, Director of Strategy, & Kat Reinbold, Senior Creative Producer, BRC Imagination Arts

**This collaborative masterclass and workshop delved deep into the transformative power of storytelling, tackling our shared responsibility as storytellers: to tell stories that remind of us who we are together, as a collective whole.**

It emphasized crafting narratives that not only engage, but also drive emotional and communal experiences aimed at positive societal impact.

Teams were guided by linear and non-linear storytelling techniques, learning how BRC drops consumers directly into the story.

1

### The Building Blocks Of Story

Starting from the heart, embracing conflict, and maintaining a strong thematic thread were highlighted as essential storytelling elements. These techniques ensure a cohesive narrative that resonates emotionally and sparks communal engagement.

2

### Authenticity Through Conflict

Conflicts within stories lend authenticity and depth, which are crucial for creating impactful narratives that resonate with audiences.

3

### The Power Of Collective Awe

Communal moments of awe are important, so create three touchpoints that resonate universally in this way. These experiences are pivotal in fostering emotional connections among strangers and enhancing overall engagement.





# Graphic Novels As Creative Collisions



Anthony DeRita, Creative Producer, & Reese Patillo,  
Senior Creative Designer, Blue Telescope

**POW! BAM! WHOA! The power of an interactive graphic novel lies in the collision of art, story and motion into something unexpected and magical.**

And like any collaborative endeavor, the process can be a series of creative collisions as well. How do you work with a team to bring all perspectives, voices & visions to the table and create something cohesive and compelling?

In this collaborative workshop participants co-authored comic books, playing writer and illustrator interchangeably to experience hands-on how many voices come together to create a graphic novel.



1

### **Establishing Guidelines Wins The Race**

Whether visually or within the story pipeline/content, establishing guidelines on visuals, tone, and narrative can help speed up the creative process. It keeps the production fluid, systematized, and alleviates pressures of ambiguity between the team.

2

### **Look At The Whole Picture**

In our act of creating, off and on, we are tunnel-visioned by our passions vortexing into our next masterpiece. Taking a step back and analyzing the “ask”, story, writing and visuals can reveal where they should have breathing space. Giving this room, and finding where to push/pull an emotion or story beat, develops moments to mold the narrative and create layers for our target audience.

3

### **Being Flexible Can Snowball Into New Creative Discoveries**

Sometimes there are wrenches in the production. Learning to adapt, shift, and take on new roles can help mitigate inconsistencies and spot challenges before they occur. Understanding how each team member plays a part in the entire creative process aids in our need to adapt swiftly, and even sparks new creative and narrative threads.



# The Science of Experience

How might you leverage discoveries in science to make experiences that are more fulfilling, resonant, and better for wellbeing? **Learn how to design experiences using emerging trends in neuroscience, experience science, the body and senses, and more.**





## XQ + XD = Thriving Humans



Mat Duerden, XD Professor, BYU & co-author, *Designing Experiences*

**An acclaimed author, speaker, and professor, Duerden's work focuses on creating meaningful experiences that lead to human flourishing.**

This session provided a deep dive into his latest thinking and frameworks for leveraging XQ and XD to foster thriving individuals and communities.

Duerden introduced the concept of experience intelligence and outlined four pillars that he believes are crucial for intentional experience design and ultimately human thriving. "The nonlinear nature of our journeys enriches the field of experience design, bringing together varied perspectives and insights from different industries," he says.



1

### **Experience Ecosystem**

Drawing an analogy to natural ecosystems, Duerden explained that just as ecosystems rely on the interdependence of various elements, so do experiences. He stressed the importance of designing every aspect of an experience, from the mundane to the extraordinary, to ensure a holistic and transformative outcome.

2

### **Experience Design Process**

Duerden touched on the significance of having a structured process for designing experiences. This includes mapping out the touchpoints of an experience and considering both the 10,000-foot view and the detailed moments that make up the whole journey.

3

### **Experience Design Strategy**

Duerden highlighted the need to intentionally design experiences before, during, and after they occur. He introduced the concepts of the anticipation, participation, and reflection phases, and discussed strategies to engage people throughout these stages.

4

### **Experiential Competencies**

Finally, Duerden spoke about the importance of developing competencies that allow participants to extract the most meaning from their experiences. He mentioned introspection, planning, empathy, engagement, flexibility, integration, pattern recognition, and storytelling as key competencies.



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# Neuroscience To Make More Impactful Experiences



Katherine Templar-Lewis, Director, Kinda Studios

**Templar-Lewis explained the synergy between neuroscience and creative science, illustrating how they can jointly enhance human experiences.**

She emphasized the importance of applying scientific insights from the lab to real-world scenarios, bridging the gap between how creatives intuitively understand the world and how scientists study it.

This convergence, known as neuroaesthetics, allows us to design more impactful and intentional experiences. "Every single moment of your life is an immersive experience," she said.



1

### **Move Beyond Function To Intention**

Experiences have long-term benefits beyond their immediate effects. By applying neuroaesthetic principles, we can design spaces like hospitals and schools to be not only functional, but also profoundly intentional, enhancing their impact on wellbeing.

2

### **Art Actively Changes Our Brains**

Referencing Susan Magsamen's work, Templar-Lewis highlighted that artistic activities significantly influence brain development and wellbeing. Art is as essential to our health as sleep and exercise, affecting our social and executive functions.

3

### **Connectedness Is Key To Wellbeing**

A sense of connectedness is crucial for well-being. By understanding and utilizing neuroaesthetic principles, we can create experiences that foster this connectedness, thereby promoting holistic wellbeing.

Find out more in Templar-Lewis's [WXO Campfire, Neuroaesthetics: Where Neuroscience Meets Experience Design](#)



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## Bursts Of Experience Science

Brian Hill, Camilla Hodge, & Mat Duerden,  
XD Professors, BYU, & Ida Benedetto, Design Strategist



**Hill handpicked a group of researchers to share their findings in lightning-fast presentations, skipping the (important but boring) details and focusing instead on the key takeaways for experience designers.**

They stressed the importance of evidence-based design in creating meaningful experiences, emphasizing the shift from myths to scientifically-backed insights. "Using science to improve experience design is about grounding creativity in evidence," Hill said.

The group also shared experiences in enhancing social connections and wellbeing, and discussed understanding risk, magic circles, and structure in designing transformative experiences.



1

### **Evidence From The Wild**

Hill emphasized the significance of novelty, positive emotion, and personal connection in enhancing participant engagement. Drawing parallels to the hierarchy of evidence in wilderness medicine, he noted, "From randomized controlled trials to expert opinion, evidence guides us toward impactful design decisions that resonate deeply with participants."

2

### **Connection Is A Human Need**

Hodge discussed the profound impact of social connection on human wellbeing: "social connection is not just a luxury but a fundamental human need." Alarming statistics link loneliness to increased mortality risks by 53%, underscoring the urgency of designing experiences that foster meaningful interactions.

3

### **The Science Of Storytelling**

Duerden provided a neuroscientific perspective on the power of storytelling in experience design. "Storytelling creates neural coupling, fostering shared realities and emotional resonance among listeners," he said. Using advanced imaging techniques, he demonstrated how narratives stimulate brain activity, enhancing interpersonal connections.

4

### **Risk Leads To Transformation**

Benedetto shared insights from her pioneering research on transformative social experiences. She analyzed sex parties, funerals, and wilderness trips, finding they share elements of real risk, active participation, social and interpersonal nature, transformative potential, and inexhaustible experiences.





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# Body-Mind Tricks To Make Better Connections



Marissa Nielsen-Pincus, Associate Artistic Director,  
Third Rail Projects

**Participants learned how to use neuroscience-inspired techniques, specifically embodiment, to connect with their audience in a more profound way and design them into the fabric of their event.**

When something is physical and perceptible in our bodies, it takes us through a different pathway in our nervous system than we go through when we're just observing something. These shifts in our autonomic nervous system change the way that we process all the sensory information that we're receiving.

Experience designers might play with this mind-body connection, hormones and sensory stimuli to direct the way an audience feels within their experience.



1

### **Be A Mirror For Your Audience**

Mirroring is a really profound tool for connecting. In body-mind centering they use the term “meeting someone where they are”, which means matching them as a starting place – physically and somatically matching their tone. We can meet their posture, their energy, the way they greet us with their eyes, the way they’re breathing. This makes them feel heard and acknowledged.

2

### **Choreograph Space For A Somatic Response**

Leaving a moment where you’re going to pay attention to the audience and listen to their reaction – maybe they take a breath, maybe it’s a moment where you see their pupils dilate – is very simple, but can be very profound.

3

### **Build Trust & Connection**

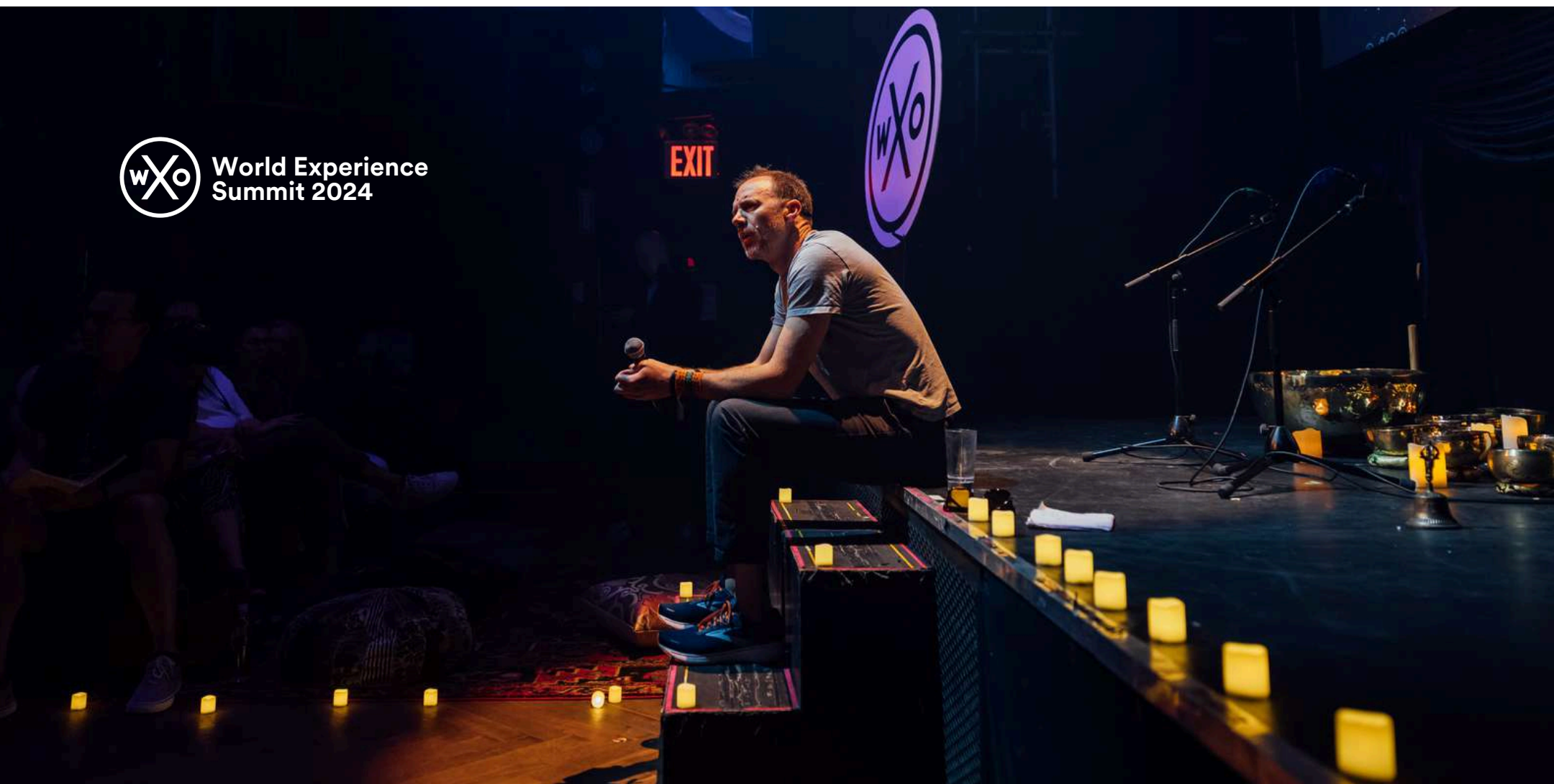
By acknowledging how much happens in our bodies and minds when people are in physical relationship to each other and paying attention to our bodies and how and what they communicate, we can create trust, intimacy and comfort and move through the awkwardness that can exist in immersive spaces.

**Find out more in Nielsen-Pincus’s [WxO Campfire, Somatic Practice For Experience Designers](#)**

# The Business of Experience

How might you pitch and sell your experience ideas better – and make them more profitable? **Learn how to create experiences that are more profitable, sustainable, measurable, and ultimately, successful.**





# The State Of The Experience Economy: The Present & Future Of Experiences 2024-2034



James Wallman, CEO, The World Experience Organization

**We all know the term “Experience Economy”: but what does it truly mean today, and where is it headed in the next decade?**

To kick off the Summit, we were treated to a compelling overview of the Experience Economy's current state and its future trajectory by the WXO's CEO,

Taking insights from a forthcoming extensive 8-month report co-created with the WXO community, it was a deep dive into how experiences are shaping our world.

1

### Experiential Consumer Engineering

In the 1920s consumerism surged, driven by advertising and similar strategies, marking a pivotal historical shift. The same thing is happening in today's Experience Economy, which is moving beyond traditional supply-and-demand dynamics towards a focus on immersive, resonant consumer experiences.

2

### Experientialism As Strategic Imperative

The pivot towards experientialism signifies a critical shift in business strategy. It transcends mere product or service offerings, prioritizing the creation of compelling, memorable experiences that forge enduring connections with consumers.

3

### The Seed & The Soil

Just as a seed needs fertile soil to thrive, innovative ideas require nurturing environments to flourish. This underscores the pivotal role of fostering conditions where creative ideas can prosper.





# The Dance Of The Deal



Mishawn Nolan, Co-Founder, Nolan Heimann LLP

**In this dynamic session Nolan captivated attendees with a unique perspective on negotiating deals through the metaphor of dance.**

The conversation centered around the importance of aligning values, goals, and objectives in structuring deals. Nolan emphasized the need for openness, authenticity, and personal connection between parties to achieve flow in the negotiation process.

Flexibility and compromise were also prioritized in the negotiation of a hypothetical license agreement that was portrayed through a tango. "They view it as a battle. I view it as a carefully choreographed dance," she said.

1

### **Alignment Is The Foundation Of Success**

According to Nolan, "Deal terms do not drive the deal. Deal terms flow from a well-structured alignment." This underscores the importance of aligning values and objectives as the foundation for successful business negotiations.

2

### **Remember Your Intentions**

"Know what really gets your juices flowing, or what gets you out of bed in the morning. That is your objective," Nolan says. As a "warm up" to a deal, remember your intrinsic motivation beyond just financial gain.

3

### **Find A Common Rhythm**

Using colored wristbands and music, attendees identified resonant songs to help them connect with others sharing the same wavelength. This demonstrates how shared values and rhythms can foster meaningful partnerships.





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# DATING GAME



## Experience Anchors: The Venue Dating Game



Michael Phillips, President, Jamestown; Lanné Bennett, EVP for commercial real estate; Dan Pelson, COO, AREA15; Lou Pizante, Co-Founder, The Experientialists; Heather Gallagher, Exec Unicorn

**Industry leaders shared their insights, strategies, and anecdotes about how to forge successful partnerships in this evolving landscape.**

They discussed the growing appeal of experiences in real estate, particularly in experiential retail, highlighting the shift from product-based to experience-based consumption.

Panelists shared insights on how to successfully navigate venue partnerships in the experience economy, emphasizing the importance of having a solid business plan, making a good impression, and approaching partners with a humble mindset.



1

### The Shift Towards Experiences

The panelists unanimously agreed that traditional retail is losing its luster. "Traditional retail as we know it is uninspiring, relatively boring, impractical, and not creative in any way," said Pizante. There's a clear movement towards experiential spaces that offer more than just products: creating memorable experiences is now the goal.

2

### Pick Your Collaborators Strategically

"When asked about what makes their venues attractive to experience creators, Phillips emphasized the importance of saying "yes" and "no" strategically: "Our vision and the secret sauce is that we say yes a lot and we also say no a lot." This balanced approach ensures that collaborations are fruitful and aligned with their vision.

3

### Understand Your Business Plan

As Bennett said, "It's important to make a good impression on any first date. When experience creators are exploring a venue partnership, the best time to approach us is when you're prepared with your business plan and a clear understanding of your operational model."





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# The Transformation Toolkit Workshop



Joe Pine, Author, *The Experience Economy*

**Best known for his keynotes on the Experience Economy – the term he coined in the 1999 bestselling book – Pine, now also the trailblazer of the Transformation Economy, led an interactive workshop to co-create new tools for transformation.**

He focused on how businesses can stage experiences to guide transformation and help people change in desirable ways.

The discussion revolved around building transformative businesses by understanding the progression of economic value, the importance of customization and individualization, and the various spheres of transformation.

**1**

### **The Progression Of Economic Value**

Businesses should identify their core commodity and envision the potential transformation it can bring. Services save time, experiences enrich time, and transformations invest time meaningfully. Ensuring that offerings meet customers' transformative desires is crucial.

**2**

### **Customization & Individualization**

Customization and individualization are key to creating transformative experiences. While commodities and goods are external, experiences and transformations are internal and personal. Addressing individual needs and aspirations can lead to profound and lasting transformations.

**3**

### **Spheres Of Transformation**

Transformation encompasses more than just health, wealth, and wisdom. It includes health and wellbeing, wealth and prosperity, wisdom and understanding, and purpose and meaning. These intersecting spheres contribute to human flourishing, so businesses should integrate these elements into their strategies to guide customers toward a more holistic and fulfilling life.

**Find out more in Pine's WXO Campfire, [Transformation Trailblazers](#)**



# Creative, Meet Commercial: How To Make The Work, Work



Didi Bethurum, CCO, Meow Wolf; Mikhael Tara Garver, Head of Immersive Entertainment, Culture House Media; Nick Moran, Founder, Phantom Peak; Jamie Reilly, General Manager Moment Factory Events & USA; Sandro Kereselidze, Founder & CCO, ARTECHOUSE, Prakash Nihalani, Co-Founder, OliOli

**How do successful experiences manage to stay profitable, while maintaining the artistic integrity that started it all?**

An all-star panel of people in the experience industry shared how their business not only stays afloat, but actually thrives, addressing questions around how to get customers to come back again and again, how to tailor your offering to different markets and audiences, and why FOMO is an experience's best friend.



1

### Keep Em Coming Back For More

Prakash Nihalani of OliOli believes that to achieve his 40% repeat rate, he has to ensure the experience at OliOli is open ended so that every time a visitor comes back, they have a unique time with it. Phantom Peak Co-Founder Nick Moran explained that the experience is built around seasons and trails, constantly giving fans new content and cultivating a healthy dose of FOMO. This model is also successful for collectionists, since they want to collect every reward each season.

2

### Programming For Local Markets

Didi Bethurum, CCO at Meow Wolf, shared that every location is a different market and needs a different strategy. Take Denver and Las Vegas, two completely unique locations. “It’s all about programming... in Denver, we’re trying to do a lot more to bring people in and have community events...(to) keep the locals feeling like it’s theirs and they own it,” Bethurum said.

3

### Designing For The Eighth Row

People often bring friends and family to immersive experiences who may not be the target audience. Mikhael Tara Garver designed for the “eight row” when working on the Star Wars: Galactic Star Cruiser experience, meaning that it was designed with the last row in mind. This way the entire audience feels like they belong, no matter how far back they might be. This is achieved through pluralistic storytelling: having multiple onboardings or ways to approach a situation.

Find out more in Tara Garver’s WXO Campfire, [Feature Immersive Entertainment: How To Build A Sustainable Immersive Business](#)



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# The Evolution Of Fandom

Nasya Kamrat, CXO



**In today's interconnected world, fostering vibrant fandoms goes beyond mere engagement: it's about building genuine communities that resonate deeply with participants.**

Fans crave connectivity and community more than ever. It is our job as designers to deliver holistic experiences that start far before the check-in, and extend far beyond the experience itself.

Let's prioritize community, foster meaningful engagement, and create inclusive experiences to cultivate and sustain vibrant fandoms.

1

## Make Space For Community

Kamrat emphasized the importance of community in fostering fandoms. Whether through shared experiences, like connecting with strangers at the Summit, or through branded communities, like those seen at Comic Con or centered around artists like Taylor Swift, creating spaces where fans can interact, co-create, and participate is crucial.

2

## Holistic Experiences

Designing holistic experiences means going beyond the event itself. It's about creating a sense of belonging that starts long before they arrive. This approach ensures that fans feel connected and valued throughout their journey.

3

## From Transaction To Purpose

Moving away from transactional interactions, successful fandoms provide reasons for fans to belong and engage more deeply. This can involve opportunities for interaction and co-creation, rather than simply buying or subscribing to products or services.





# Experience **Shark Tank**



Erica Boeke, Founder, XP Land; Lou Pizante, Co-Founder & Partner, The Experientialists; Tom Gabbard, President, & Bree Stallings, Director of Artistic Experiences, Blumenthal Arts; Giulia Ferrari, Group Corporate Strategy & Coordination Manager, Balich Wonder Studio

**This incredibly fun and informative session saw five people from the audience pitch their experience ideas to the panel of “sharks”.**

We heard all sorts of inventive projects, and much more genuine feedback from the sharks than you would get from the TV show.

At the very end, we had to help choose who we think is the most likely to succeed. Some were more excited than others to pass on this judgment... but we agreed that this would just be for healthy competition, and that realistically all of these ideas could succeed.





1

### **Creative, Meet Commercial (Again)**

What was special about this session was seeing how the finance could be married to the creative. The people pitching had great ideas, but often not broken down in terms of numbers. Interestingly, feedback from the panelists was often guided more towards the numbers, and between the financial and the creative, some great ideas were born on stage. A key takeaway from this was that we should all be thinking of the finances creatively. It was clear to see that when these two were in conversation, the idea could flourish all the more.

2

### **Geocloning In New Locations**

Some of the pitchers were looking to move their experiences into new locations and even new countries. To do this, the panel agreed it's essential to find a local production partner in the area you're planning to expand into. They will understand the permitting and licensing, as well as the operating, staffing, and ticketing costs.

3

### **And The Winner Is... Experiences**

So who was the winner of the first Experience Shark Tank? Luckily, we had more than one. Part of the group voted for Luis Medrano, who is working on Calaverandia, and the other part voted for Eliran Farhi, CEO of the immersive basketball company Neoja. We can't wait to see all of the ideas pitched keep flourishing and coming into fruition!



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## Cracking **The X-Stack**



Michael Jung, Creative Executive, Walt Disney Imagineering Live Entertainment; Joshua Strauss, Co-President, Retail and Entertainment, Dreamscape Companies; Talia Spera, SVP, Live Experiences, Superfly; Adam Jaffe, Managing Director, Solomon Partners; Becki Heller, Entertainment Marketing Executive; Lou Pizante, Co-Founder, & Maria Redin, COO, The Experientialists

**Say hello to the Experience Stack (or X-Stack), your new BFF for crafting mind-blowing immersive experiences. It's like the tech stack's cooler, edgier cousin.**

There's Capital: the financial lifeline. Real Estate: the stage that sets the scene. Creative / IP: gripping storylines. Operations: keeping everything running. And Marketing: the megaphone that makes sure everyone knows your experience.

Validating all layers of the X-Stack optimises performance, reduces risk, and opens doors to prime venues and funding.

1

### Repeatability & Group Engagement

Designing experiences for repeat visits is essential for long-term success, supported by lease agreements and marketing strategies that foster audience engagement and loyalty. Formats encouraging group participation and social interaction enhance repeatability, appealing to diverse demographics and promoting shared enjoyment across multiple visits.

2

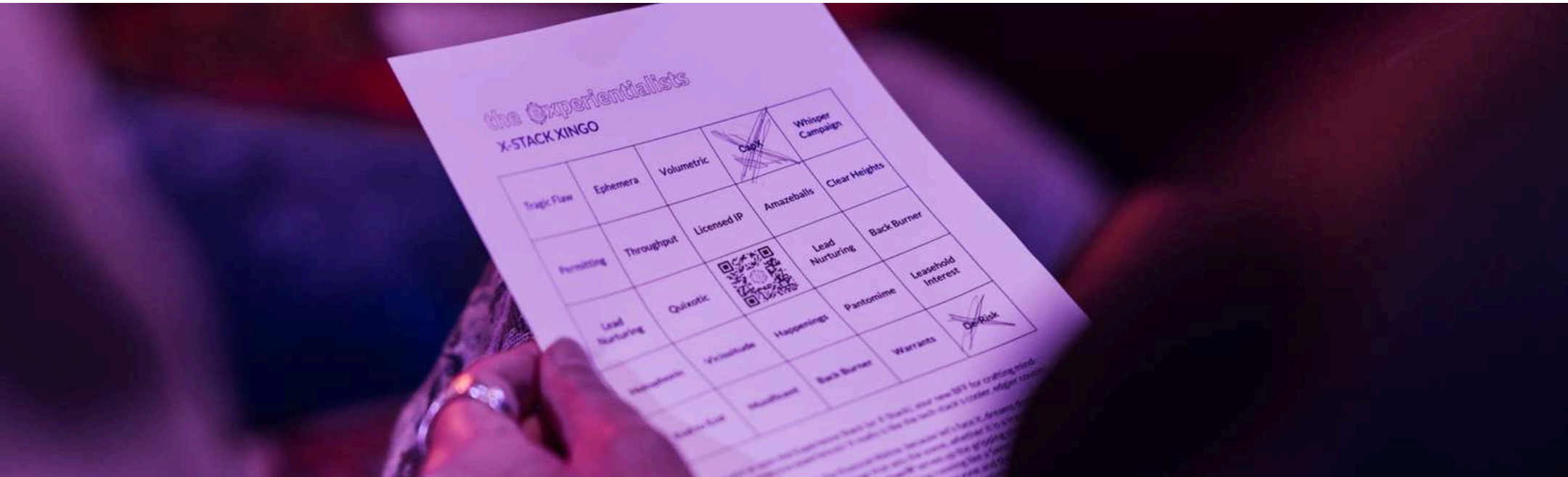
### Balancing Real Estate & Quality

Smaller companies need flexible concepts that can adapt to various spaces, while larger companies might focus more on stable real estate investments. Overcoming leasing challenges often requires finding a cooperative landlord, which has become more difficult post-Covid. Sometimes, sacrificing quality for a prime location, especially in cities like NYC, is a strategic choice.

3

### Strategic Marketing & Audience Engagement

Effective marketing goes beyond awareness – it’s about segmenting markets, leveraging analytics, and collaborating across departments to pinpoint and engage target demographics effectively. This integrated approach ensures sustained interest and repeat visits.





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# The ERY Method: 3 Simple Letters to Kickstart Creativity



Kevin Dulle, experience design guide

**Dulle's workshop on kickstarting creativity was an incredibly fun and collaborative effort to transform service businesses into experiences.**

Following the deceptively simple – but incredibly effective – ERY Method, we imagined lush sensory experiences and musical community spaces out of ordinary flower shops and record stores.

The catch? We were competing as small groups to see who could design the best experience, and the winning team would get a prize. Safe to say, we brought our best ideas into the mix.



1

### **Boil Down Your Business To A Verb**

My team was assigned the flower shop as our business to be transformed, and were given a roadmap that we followed for the duration of the workshop. First, we were to boil down the business into a single core action. Out of this verb, we selected many verbs that were related and categorized them on a quadrant. If the verb was industry-related, and only a verb, meaning it can't also be a noun, then we could move ahead with it. My team went for the verb "grow" (grow cannot be used as a noun and is definitely related to the flower industry).

2

### **ERY-ify Your Verb**

This is where the magic of the ERY method kicks in. Add "ery" at the end of the verb, and you have the foundation for your experiential business! In our case, we were working with a grow-ery. With this simple transition of wording, our ideas started flourishing.

3

### **Transform Your ERY Into An Experience**

We then took the ideas coming out of the growery and refined them into an actionable experiential business. Ours was rooted in the experience of smell, and how it connects people to flowers and to each other. It was fascinating to see how we had all turned normal businesses into unique spaces of immersion, connection, and awe.

**Find out more in Dulle's [WXO Campfire, A Very ERY Method For Shifting Services Into Experiences](#)**



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## If You Can **Make It Here...**



Gabe Liberti, Game of 1000 Boxes; Robbie Bent, OTHERSHIP, Ilana Gilovich, Emursive Productions; Alexander Patterson, Beat The Bomb; Taylor Myers, Dead Letter No 9; Justin Bolognino, META

**In the heart of New York City, where dreams are made and tested, a gathering of the city's most innovative experience creators convened to share their journeys, challenges, and insights into what it takes to thrive in one of the world's most competitive environments.**

The conversation explored resilience in the face of financial and logistical challenges, the pivotal role of community in sustaining ventures, and the iterative nature of innovation in the experiential arts.

In New York, it's not just about making it financially. It's about creating something that resonates deeply with your audience – something they can't find anywhere else. From ice baths in backyards to immersive theaters and interactive game shows, each speaker embodied this spirit of innovation.

## 1 Get With The Grit

1

Patterson shared a candid reflection on the realities of financing his venture: "We painted the walls ourselves, met developers outside Home Depot, and funded it on Craigslist. It was scrappy, but that grit defined us." Liberti highlighted the pivotal role of partnerships: "Partnering with venues allowed us to focus on the experience, not real estate costs. It was about finding creative ways to cover our production costs, like the \$50,000 we scraped together." Bent's narrative of starting in the backyard resonated deeply: "We mortgaged houses, moved in together, and faced a \$2 million error just before opening."

## 2 Growing Through Community

2

Bent emphasized community-driven growth: "Giving away free passes built our tribe. It's not just about selling a ticket; it's about fostering a community that loves your brand." Liberti walked us through his breakthrough moment of connecting with his audience through the big vision he and his partner created: "And suddenly now we have a relationship with our audience, whereas before it was a relationship with a brand".

## 3 Embrace The Unpredictable

3

Myers talked about the importance of constantly evolving your product. "Our show defied expectations, pivoting from ticketed theater to a conversational parlor. Iteration and flexibility became our strengths," he said. Gilovich left us with a poignant reflection on the unpredictability of the immersive landscape. "One of the most unexpected lessons we've learned is that the journey is never linear," she concluded.





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# How To **Win Pitches** And Influence People



Nancy Duncan, Experience Designer & Creative Consultant

**With a track record of working with the Olympics, the Royal's Voice in Saudi Arabia and RedBull, and an 80% success rate with her pitches, we were all eager to listen to Duncan's advice on how to win a pitch.**

It will come as no surprise that 30% of the success of a pitch is based on its creativity and innovation. To let these shine, you need a structured process that gives the team a clear goal and timeline, allowing them to really focus on the possibilities of the project.

Duncan's pitch structure usually starts with an assessment, followed by reviewing the brief and analyzing how to win it. This could be with a procurement exercise, case studies, or sometimes a real "wow" factor.





1

### **Say No To More Pitches**

So how can we also have an 80% success rate? Simple: Nancy tells us to say no to more pitches. “Pitches cost time, money and effort. And it’s really demoralising to lose a pitch,” she says. Before even jumping into it, Nancy first recommends us to have a strong pitch assessment, and to be more mindful and conscious of the pitches you are going for and why.

2

### **Break Down Your Budget**

It’s important to start with a budget breakdown. Not the sexiest part of the process, but a necessary one! Break down the project into percentages: for example, with an agency you generally want to take 30% of the overall budget to pay your salaries, office costs, and make some profit. If you spend 20% on the pitch, you’ve already used a great deal, so ideally keep to 3-5% unless it’s a smaller project you really care about. Doing budget breakdowns is not only important for your agency, but also helps the client understand the structure of the work you are pitching.

3

### **Turn Your Pitch Into An Experience**

What experience are you creating within your pitch? A presentation is made good by “creativity, storytelling, and a little sprinkling of magic.” Make sure your story is understandable, avoid jargon, and have a strong opener that reframes the “problem in a way that sets up the solution as a no-brainer.” And then, sprinkle in a little bit of experiential magic. Create a “pitch theater” by breaking the norms of PowerPoint and jumping into immersive storytelling. Let the client see a part of your pitch in VR, or create a mood film for it.

# The Tech of Experience

How might you use tech to elevate and scale your experiences? **Learn how emerging technology is being used to leverage the impact of experiences, from AI to AR, VR and the metaverse.**





## Adventures In AI

Tristan Hupe-Guimarães, Head of New Projects,  
and Pim Schachtschabel, Design Director, Tellart



**Hupe-Guimarães and Schachtschabel started in the escape room industry in the Netherlands over a decade ago, “pioneering an industry that didn't exist at the time”.**

Now at design studio Tellart, they craft immersive experiences that “change the way people think and act by telling the stories that matter most to our collective future.”

The duo shared their journey in the realm of AI experimentation, delving into their pioneering work intersecting technology, culture, and storytelling. “AI's unpredictability thrills and challenges us. It highlights the need for meaningful interaction in our projects,” they said.

1

### Redefining Sustainability Through AI

Tellart designed an immersive dining experience at the UAE Climate Conference, Dinner in 2050, addressing food resilience for the future by asking guests to imagine their favorite food transforming into 2050 thanks to a salty, warm environment.. "We used AI to envision future food scenarios specific to the UAE's challenges. It sparked conversations about sustainable food sources."

2

### Exploring Human-AI Relationships

Tellart created an interactive experience at NEXT Museum in Amsterdam where visitors engaged with an AI entity named Sam. "We wanted to provoke introspection about our evolving relationship with technology." The experience encouraged audiences to share personal reflections to co-create a film, using ChatGPT for script-writing, prompt writing and to generate the voiceover.

3

### Storytelling With Purpose

AI experimentation isn't only about technological innovation, but also a deep commitment to storytelling with purpose. As Tellart continues to explore new frontiers in AI and design, their work stands as a testament to the transformative power of narrative in shaping our understanding of the future.





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# How To Use Gaming Tech For Live Immersive Experiences



James Gwertzman, Lead Artist, Moonlight Collective

**Drawing from the success strategies of billion-dollar online games, Gwertzman explores how LiveOps techniques can revolutionize immersive experiences, offering practical insights and tools to implement these strategies in your own projects.**

By leveraging gaming technology and LiveOps strategies, you can elevate your immersive experiences to new heights, engaging audiences worldwide with dynamic and evolving content.



1

### **Adopting LiveOps Techniques**

Inspired by the success of live-service games like Fortnite, Gwertzman introduces the concept of LiveOps for immersive experiences. This approach involves continuous updates and enhancements based on player feedback, creating a dynamic feedback loop that enhances repeatability and engagement.

2

### **Think Like A Nightclub**

Moving beyond traditional game design, Gwertzman encourages a shift towards experience management akin to nightclub operations. This involves "plussing up" experiences, drawing inspiration from Walt Disney's philosophy of continual improvement.

3

### **Elevating Global Player Engagement**

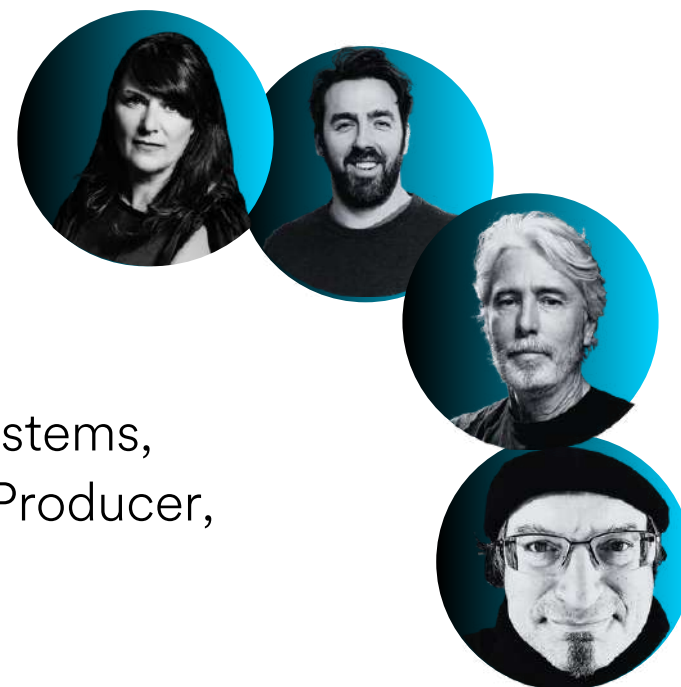
Advancements in gaming technology are paving the way for immersive experiences that deeply engage players worldwide. Drawing inspiration from global phenomena like Minecraft and Fortnite, this strategy involves continually introducing new objects, diverse locations, seasonal events, in-game concerts, and personalized messaging, among other proven strategies. These innovations not only enrich player interaction and retention, but also foster vibrant community engagement that transcends geographical boundaries.



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## New Media, New Ways Of Telling Stories



Leigh Sachwitz, Founder and Creative Director, flora&faunavisions; Alex Luthwaite, SVP Show Systems, Sphere Studios; Mark Miller, Executive Creative Producer, ILM; Louis Alfieri, Founder, Raven Sun Creative

**A deep dive into the intersection of storytelling and technology from experts at the cutting edge of immersive experiences, exploring technological advancements and celebrating storytelling's enduring power.**

The panel shared their experiences using various tools and platforms, such as Unreal, to create live environments for storytelling. They also highlighted the potential of VR to evoke empathy and tell stories, while stressing the importance of innovation and experimentation in the industry.

1

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# Make Your Audience The Main Character With RFID



Brett Bagenstose, Baron of Pixels, NeoPangea

**At NeoPangea, the Emmy-nominated creative studio making unique exhibitions and digital experiences, they like to have fun. He shared playful and innovative ways to make your audience the main character, using a technology called RFID.**

RFID is a device that can read information contained in “tags” (e.g. a hotel key card) wirelessly, without even needing a line of sight. NeoPangea has utilized this technology extensively in various ways to create customized interactive experiences for the visitors: it can be used with equal success with small or large budgets, and applied in an enormous variety of ways.

Bagenstose explained how to use it for play, storytelling, accessibility, and even to gather data that can improve upon the experience.

## 1 Personalizing An Individual's Experience

1

INeoPangea used RFID to craft unique experiences for visitors of Harry Potter: The Exhibition. You began your journey by signing in and receiving an RFID bracelet, which has a unique ID that tracks your progress. It was used for an AR experience, where you're sorted into one of the Harry Potter houses. This information was saved and linked to your bracelet so that throughout your experience you will be recognized as belonging to the house you were assigned to. At another point, you walk up to a crystal ball and are given a unique prophecy based on your account.

## 2 Improving Accessibility

2

When someone enters an experience and signs in to receive their RFID, they could be asked if they have low vision, hearing impairment, or other disabilities that might affect their experience. This could be used so that when this visitor walks up to a certain screen, its content could be adapted to their needs, adding live captioning for those with hearing impairment or a voiceover for those with low vision. It could even be used to change the language of the content on the fly, allowing for a more international audience to join.

## 3 Tracking Success

3

Based on RFID data, it's much easier to track whether a certain interaction is getting traction or not, helping designers decide on how to improve the experience. A museum using RFID could realize that you may have spent a lot of time in front of a Van Gogh, and could send you information about upcoming Van Gogh exhibits if you have signed up for updates.

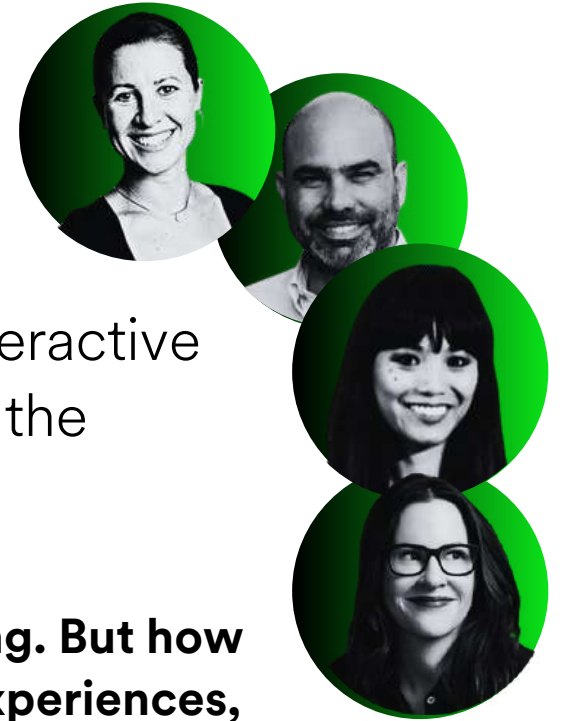
# The **Impact** of Experience

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.**





# 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.



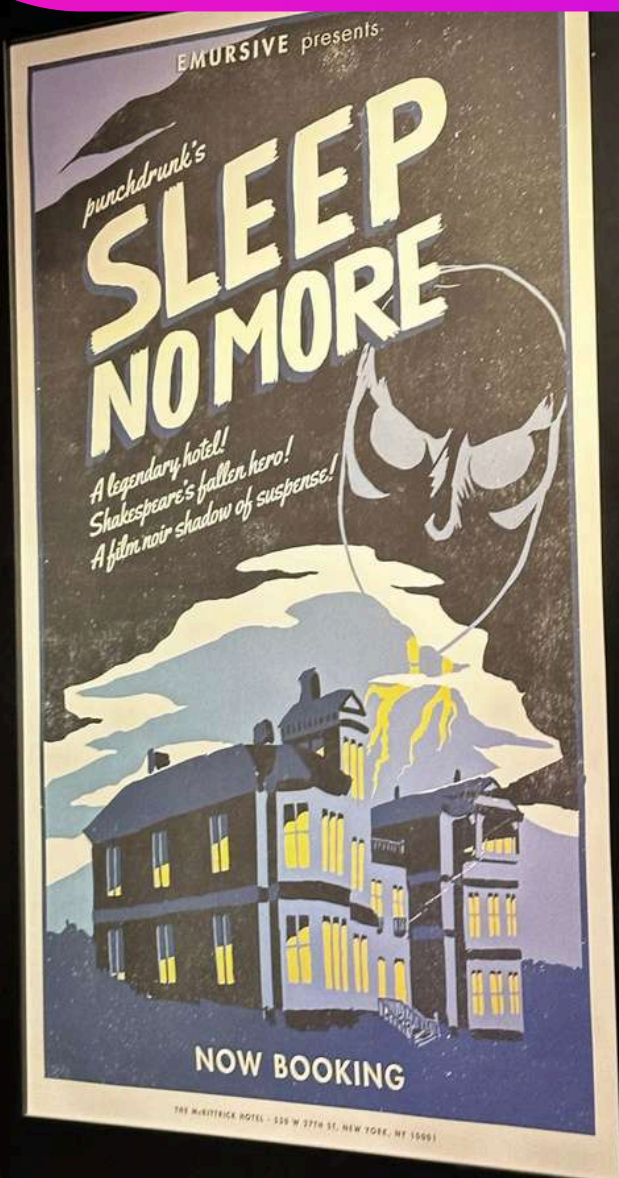
# Experience Safari NYC

We sent our experience innovators out into New York City to test out some of the Big Apple's most interesting experiences for themselves (full list [here](#)), before sharing their feedback – good and bad! – in a live Campfire the next day, to help us all build better experiences. Here are a few takeaways we learned...



## 1 Show People How To Get Lost

It's possible for people to feel in control of their experience while subtly guiding them through it, as Executive Director Alec Dalton saw at Punchdrunk's long-running immersive theatre production, **Sleep No More**. "Given the performers and guests are completely silent, and that the showrooms are dimly lit, it is impressive how well-controlled the experience is...yet between the full immersion in a nostalgic world and the constant drama projected by the performers, it is easy to get lost, both mentally and emotionally," he said.





## Childlike Joy Brings People Together

At competitive socializing venue **Beat The Bomb**, teams work their way through “missions” and rooms together to collect time that they use in their final mission/room. By combining gaming mechanics with 80s video game nostalgia (and gunge...), participants are transported back to childhood and create strong bonds. As CEO Eliran Farhi says, “I arrived with people I’d never met before, and within 5 minutes of game play I felt like I’d known them for 10 years!”

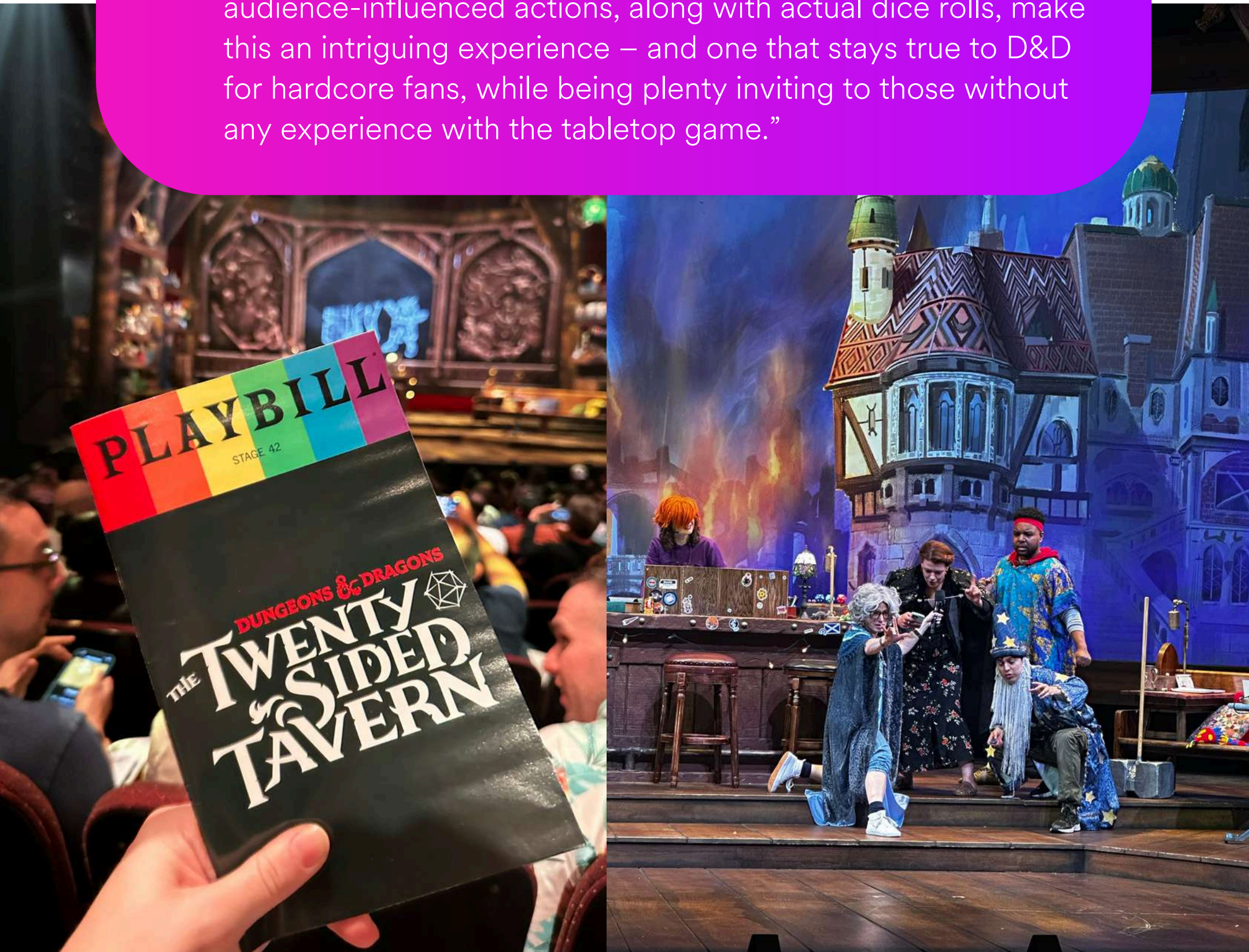
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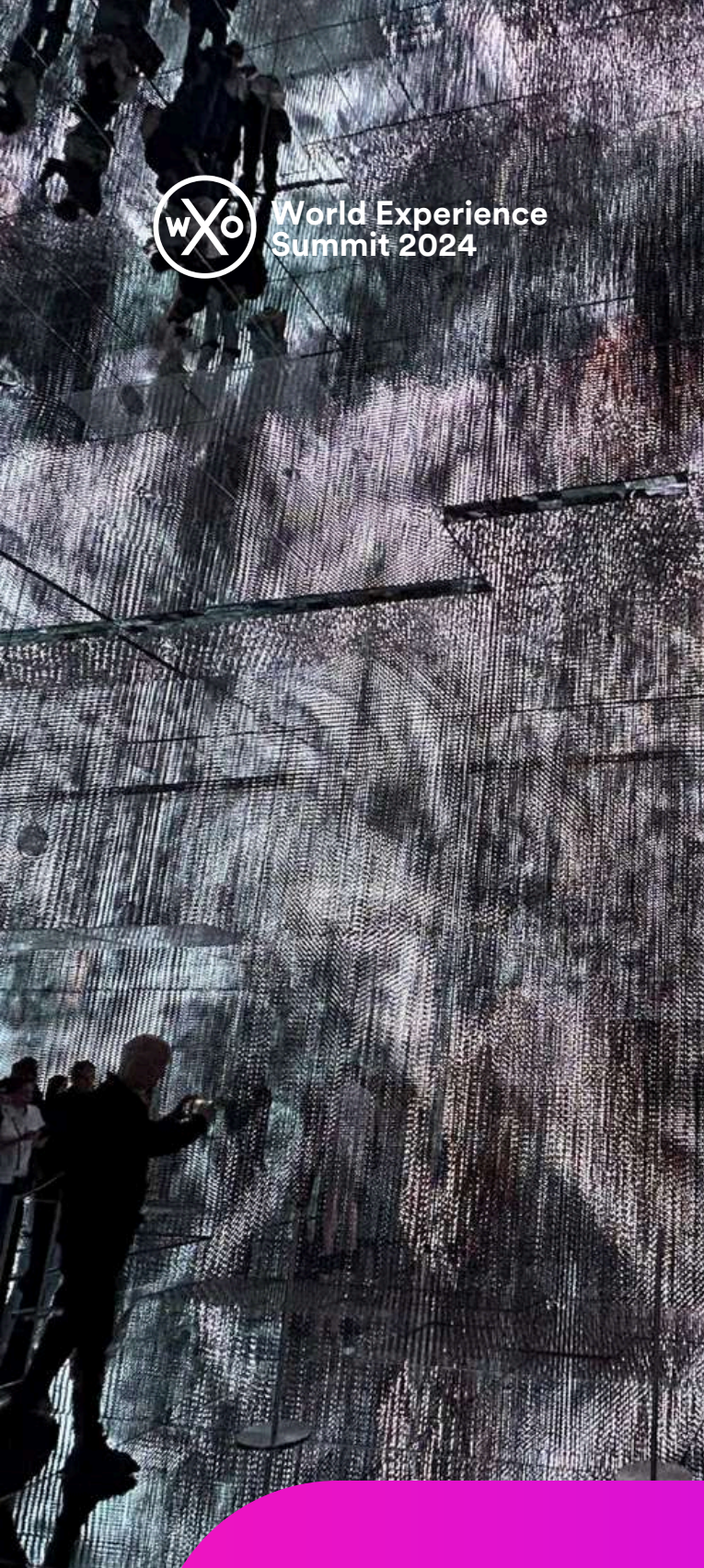
## Co-Creation At Scale Is Possible

At **Twenty Sided Tavern**, the part-improv comedy, part-immersive theatre, Dungeons & Dragons-themed production, the audience makes decisions for the heroes via an app, shaping the story. Evil Mastermind Steve Tiseo says, “The nearly endless possibilities of characters, storylines and audience-influenced actions, along with actual dice rolls, make this an intriguing experience – and one that stays true to D&D for hardcore fans, while being plenty inviting to those without any experience with the tabletop game.”





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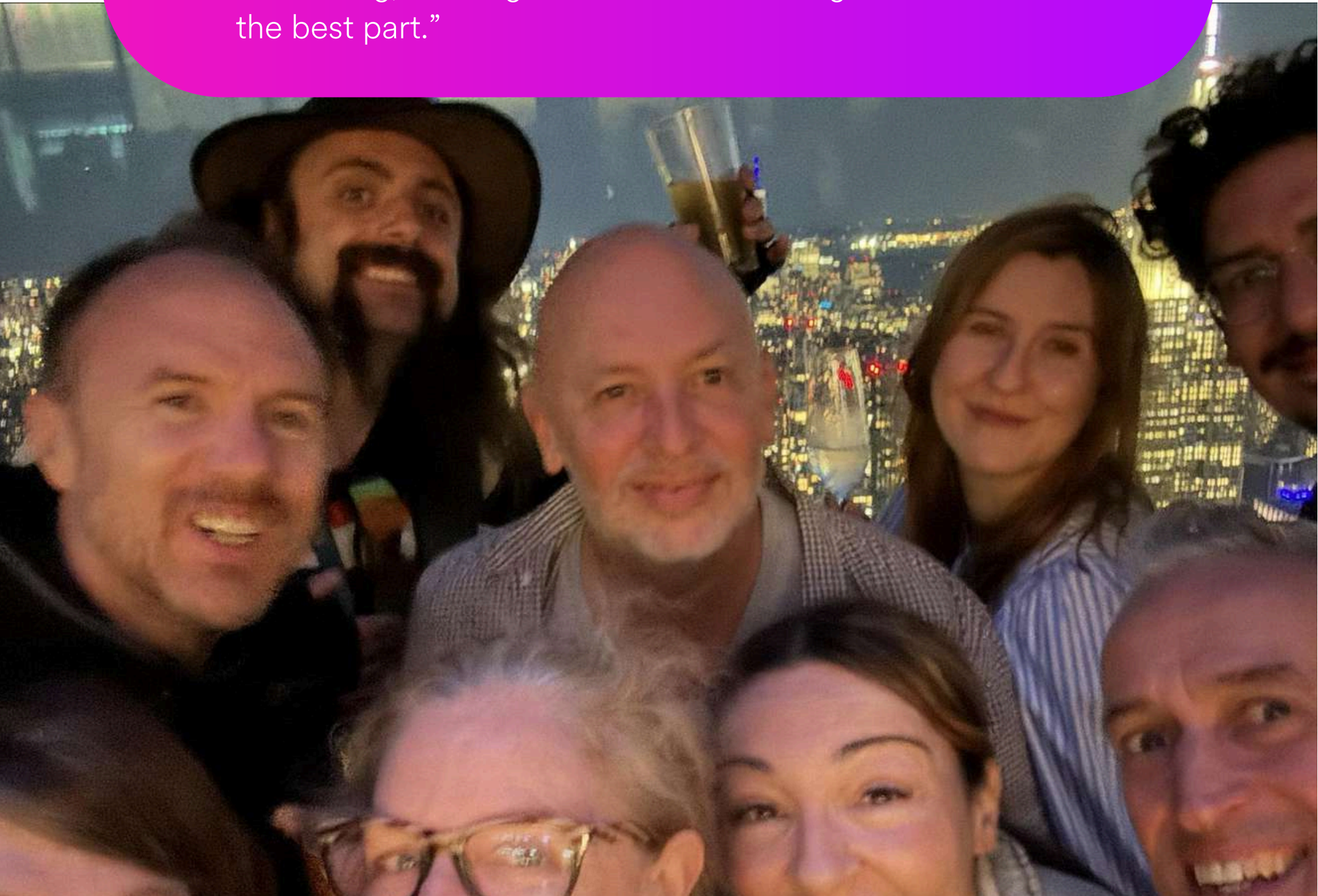
## It Takes More Than Just Tech

The importance of prioritising story alongside technology was a recurring theme throughout the Summit – and was something artist Jerry Lee found lacking at new immersive museum **Mercer Labs**. “I didn’t understand the purpose of the pieces from one to another. I was told the purpose of some, while others were open-ended,” he said. “Lots of technology and big budget spent mostly on things that have been done before. I did not see anything that was truly original, just many ideas that were redone.”

# 5

## Nothing Beats Human Connection

Sometimes, we can get lost in the details of an experience – but if you can get people to feel connected, part of a group, and in awe together, you’re guaranteed to be making memories. At modern viewing platform **SUMMIT One Vanderbilt**, the WXO’s James Wallman found that “the best bit was hanging out with awesome people with a ridiculously memorable backdrop. I had wonderful moments alone, wondering, thinking... but the human hang out with a view was the best part.”



# 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.

## WXO Team



**James Wallman**  
CEO



**Olivia Squire**  
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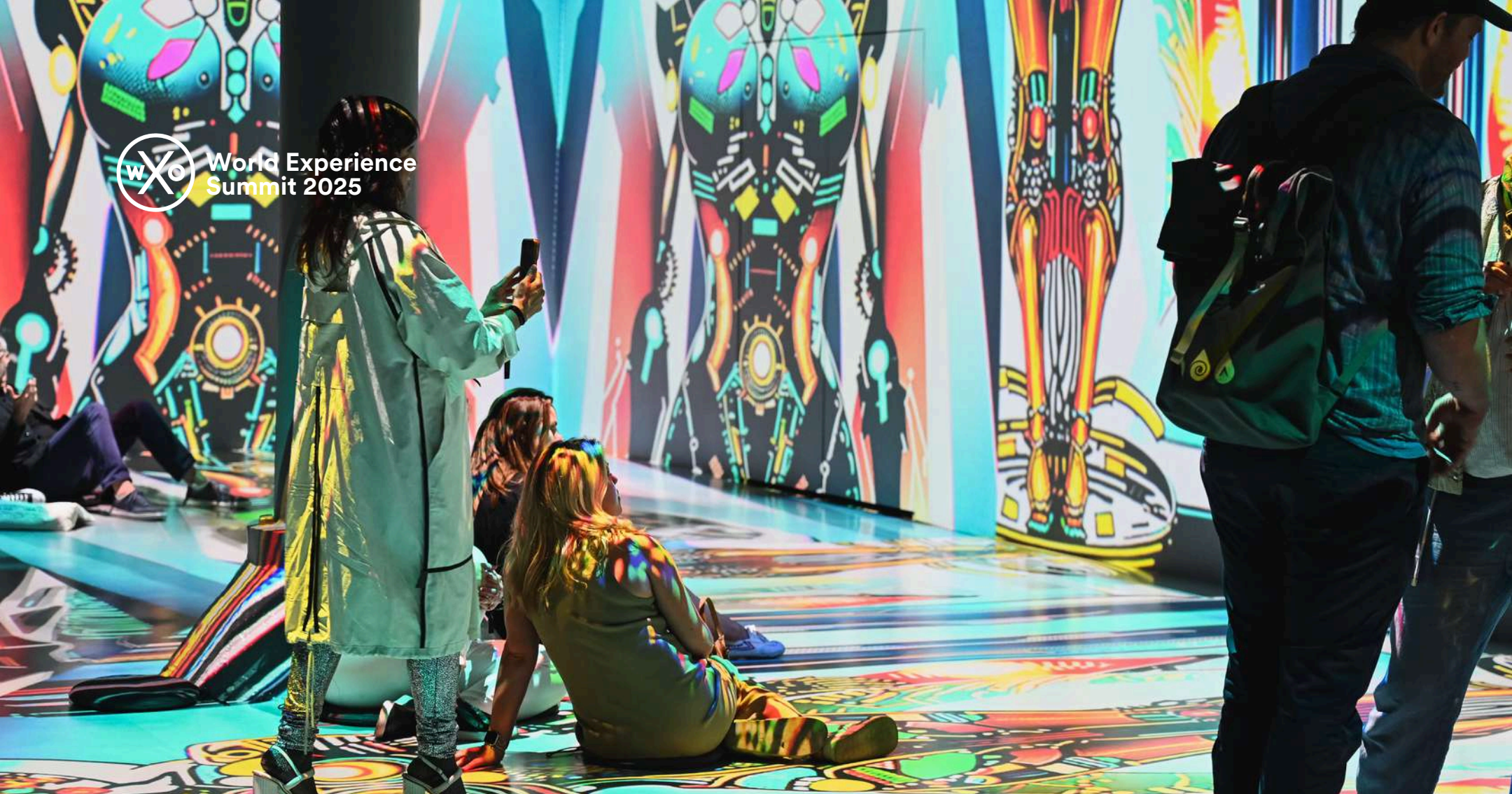
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