

## Architecture in the Experience Economy

—B. JOSEPH PINE II

*Those who read the pages of DesignIntelligence already know what is going on in the world of business: as goods and services everywhere become commoditized, we're shifting to an economy based on experiences — memorable events that engage each person in an inherently personal way.*

**B**ut many readers may not have completely thought through the implications for architecture itself. Let us do so now.

First, we must go from architecting buildings to architecting environments. A building does not an experience make. Any edifice — whether an office, hotel, stadium, home, or other structure — merely provides the container for the experience that is staged inside (and outside) its walls. The actual experience, after all, happens within the individual who encounters the building and interacts with it and its contents (including both physical artifacts and convivial people). Therefore, to enable your clients to stage a compelling experience, we must concern ourselves not only with the building but with the entire physical and especially the social environment of everything that happens within (and without) that building. As DFC Senior Fellow, Norman Foster, said, when accepting the AIA Gold Medal, “I have always believed passionately that architecture is a social art.” We must be social architects.

Second, we must go from designing interiors to designing stage sets. While goods are manufactured and services delivered, experiences are staged. We, therefore, must use theatre as the model of design. I'm not advocating theatrical flourishes or structures that look like playhouses; it's not theater — the physical environment — but theatre — the drama enacted within that environment. Our designs, then, should not focus merely on the static image of one's initial view, but rather set the stage for the dramatic structure that lies behind every compelling experience. As David Rockwell, most famous for bringing theatre to architecture, recently said, his aim is to “make the world a stage set where magic things can happen.” Every building, not just the themed restaurants, hotels, and retail establishments in which Rockwell specializes, deserves the same opportunity for magic to happen. We must be theatre — not merely theater — designers.

And lastly, we must go from creating space to creating place. Space is amor-

phous; place is specific. Space is generic; place is personal. Space is context; place is encounter. And space is contrived; place is authentic. Concomitant with the economic shift to experiences is the personal shift to authenticity as the new consumer sensibility. People no longer want to buy the fake from the phony; they want the real from the genuine. We must therefore render our environments and our stage sets to be perceived as authentic by those who encounter them. As architecture professor Michael Benedikt wrote in *For an Architecture of Reality*, “in our media-saturated times it falls to architecture to have the direct aesthetic experience of the real at the center of its concerns.” We must be creators of authenticity.

Every year my partner, Jim Gilmore, and I hold an event called thinkAbout, which we conclude by handing out the Experience Stager of the Year award. This past September, for the first time, we gave the EXPY to an architecture firm: HOK Sport + Venue + Event. We did so precisely because they represent the best of what architects should be doing in the Experience Economy — architecting engaging environments for its sports clients, designing dramatic stage sets that enable compelling events, and creating authentic places at each of its venues. (The fact that they exemplify these principles in their very name was just a bonus.)

Whether or not you like HOK’s end results as much as we do (authenticity, after all, is personally determined), you can learn from their approach and figure out how to go beyond buildings, interiors, and space to architecting environments, designing stage sets, and creating place. to do about it?



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