

DESIGN STRATEGIES: Museum Inspired Office Design



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Curating stories is what branding design is all about. In the push for the return to the office, compelling workspaces demand a deeper brand initiative that impacts the workplace ethos.

If you own real estate it's time to elevate the user experience. Explore innovative opportunities to reposition the physical office with adjacent amenities and create engaging, interactive and enjoyable destination spaces worth the commute.

We saw this coming with the expanding hospitality design trend! By continuing next-level design experiences, workplace design specialists are gaining newfound inspiration from sophisticated museum and exhibit design. As tech immersion experiences continue to embody the entertainment sector, it was only a matter of time before it hit the workspace!

IMMERSION EXPERIENCES

Functionality and purpose now exceed the static displays of brand history and immersion. Inspiration is now derived from the multi-dimensional, immersive exhibits popping up in museums and entertainment venues around the world.

Offering a combination of physical space, lighting, sound, art, texture, technology and even scent, these high touch platforms enable users of varied backgrounds, abilities and demographics to come together and engage in a unique shared experience.

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IMMERSIVE EXHIBITS

One reason immersive exhibits are growing in popularity stems from recent societal shifts whereby people around the world are placing increased value on lived experiences as opposed to material items.



This shift has also been expedited by the continued rise and evolution of social media and advancing technologies which enable generations of users to share stories about their experiences on Instagram and other visually rich platforms. But the most compelling observation regarding the growth in this multi-sensory storytelling medium was perhaps expressed by Leng Lin, president emeritus of Pace Gallery Asia, when he attributed the popularity of immersive exhibitions to:

“The basic human need to feel wonder”

CREATING WONDER

If experiencing wonder is truly a basic human desire, why then do we create boundaries that seem to limit “wonder-full” opportunities to personal time and activities? What prevents us from bringing a sense of wonder into the workplace? Imagine all that could be achieved in an office where technology affords employees unfettered opportunities to collaborate and share in “exclusive” curated experiences that far surpass the 2-dimensionality of video calls, computer work and phone scrolling that dominate workplaces elsewhere.

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COMMUNICATION, CONNECTION & PURPOSE

Certainly, immersive applications are well-suited for communicating a company's mission, vision and history, but they can also be utilized to create uniquely branded experiences that instill (or reinforce) a sense of purpose and connectivity within employees, as individuals and as a collective group. Never before has purpose been more important, both in the context of employees believing that their work is contributory and has a positive impact in the world, as well as in the context of helping employees find a meaningful purpose for coming to the office.

FINDING YOUR FIT

Creating immersive experiences that foster purpose centers on weaving together stories and experiences, facilitating participation and inclusion, and eliciting meaningful interaction between

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an individual and the exhibit. Multi-sensory displays can be incorporated into a workplace in many forms and can be designed to accommodate varying degrees of interactivity, technological integration and cost. Companies desiring a highly technical exhibit may choose to incorporate virtual reality, augmented reality, layers of massive projections or a combination of other high touch components.

Other organizations may instead create experiences involving gamification, writable surfaces, interactive LED displays, sound

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beaming or projection mapping. Light, sound and even smell can be used to achieve desired mental, physical and emotional objectives within certain spaces – some spaces might be designed to soothe and calm, others could be intended to help stimulate and energize.



For those looking for subtler, more lo-fi experiences, a hallway might be lined with displays that change in response to user movements, or mirrors and prisms could interplay to convey the transient nature of the space.

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Regardless of which type of immersive display is best suited for a company, the end goal is the same: *to bring people together to create community and establish social bonds through active engagement and shared experiences.* All of which are beneficial to employee engagement, wellbeing and productivity.

BOLD BENEFITS

It is understandable that some organizations may be hesitant to invest in playfulness in the workplace. However, play, in any form, has been shown to boost creativity in adults. SmithGroup clients have incorporated a range of immersive and playful activities into their spaces as innovative means to enhance collaboration,

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relationship building and more. These elements have included virtual golf simulators, an interactive NASCAR experience, gaming rooms, slides, indoor bicycles, music rooms, meditation rooms and more.

Additionally, research within the emerging field of the study of neuroarts has linked active spatial engagement to transforming people's body, brain and behaviors. Beyond the arts, enriched environments contribute to promoting neuroplasticity, which is the creation of new neural pathways and growth within the brain. Immersive experiences in many shapes and forms can result in greater creativity, innovation and productivity.

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STRATEGY & IMPLEMENTATION

Incorporating immersive and experiential elements into an office doesn't have to be an extravagant, all-or-nothing deal. Multi-sensory displays can be designed to span a spectrum of sizes, applications and engagement opportunities with varying degrees of technology integration and cost. Companies can explore implementing exhibits throughout the workspace and strategically invest in areas that make the most sense. For example, digitally immersive experiences may be prioritized in public facing spaces such as entry ways, the reception area or advanced collaboration rooms. Sound and light applications may be implemented in select employee areas, while more interactive, immersive games may be better suited for social spaces.



Unexpected opportunities to brand can be curated into compelling stories that make your office memorable across the board, for both clients and employees. Finding these moments and staging stories that resonate is the core value of exhibit design.



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Be prepared! Once employees get a taste of an office outfitted with immersive exhibits, they will want more. Implementation strategies should include plans to refresh exhibits (in some form) at regular intervals.

Updates can be as simple as varying content shared via displays, changing colors and sounds or reconfiguring physical objects like moveable walls, furniture, kiosks, displays throughout the year. Changing the experience over time will continually build (or sustain) curiosity and excitement about what is next.

Companies that value and invest in opportunities to experience wonder, creativity and engagement within the workplace will capture the attention of current and prospective employees and clients by thoughtfully incorporate experiential opportunities will see success well into the future.



“EXHIBITING” ENTHUSIASM IN THE OFFICE

For decades, museums have applied immersive techniques to create multi-sensory exhibitions that enable visitors to “step into” an era or experience a phenomenon. Now, as designers, it is time to apply this approach to the creation of next-generation office environments that prompt interpersonal interactions and create positive, memorable workplace experiences.

Companies that value and invest in opportunities to experience wonder, creativity and engagement within the workplace will capture the attention of current and prospective employees and clients. Organizations that thoughtfully incorporate experiential opportunities into their workplace today will see the success well into the future.

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THE MUSEUM AESTHETIC

Museums curate stories in a unique way. They often showcase collections together, but sometimes they categorize by theme, color, event or genre. How this translates to your brand aesthetic should be a unique experience curated to educate and excite through your teams and clients through:

- Lobby based brand history or milestones journey interaction
- Digital self-guided training modules
- Integrative lobby experiences
- Hands-on graphic identity journeys
- Digital wall art that creates a moving wall of color to intrigue

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CONNECTING PEOPLE TO PLACE

Exhibit design owns the distinct functionality of connecting people to places. It is a unique opportunity to examine how your teams function and interact with not only each other, but your brand as it is interpreted by your staff as well as your clients.

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Finding ways to deepen and expand upon that connection allows technology to merge with exhibit design in a hands-on opportunity for connections:

INTERACTIVE GLASS WALLS: An interactive glass system is composed of a computer that manages the data, a video projector, a special touch screen film and a holographic or LCD film inserted into the glass.

INTERACTIVE ARTWORK: Experiential artworks are inherently engaging, whether they respond to movement, sound, touch, weather, time, or a combination of these factors. Part of the appeal of big-budget art-entertainment experiences is that they make art accessible to a wider audience.

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VIRTUAL EXHIBITS: Greater relevance is fueled by a greater audience, whether in-person or online. Many venues discovered that virtual spaces were another pandemic pivot that grew their visitor base beyond the usual boundaries. Now, cultural pillars like the Louvre are erasing geographic limits by opening their entire collections to anyone with an Internet connection.

DIVERSE AUDIENCES DEMAND AGILE CULTURAL SPACES that accommodate different groups of people. Plans for cultural experiences to connect fundamental values into the design.

TAP INTO THE POWER of public buildings to connect communities by shaping dynamic, inclusive, and environmentally conscious environments. Provide thought provoking artwork in private

spaces

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spaces that will engage the visitor and create dialogue about your connection to the brand.

TAKE AWAYS

If your office is located in a vibrant creative city like Austin, connecting to that ethos can be a game changer for not only your staff but your interaction with the neighboring community. This trend has been steadily growing among property developers since the siloed era of the pandemic disconnected people from place.

*Explore contemporary analogue
antidotes, challenges and restrictive
historical cycles among your community
of artists to devise a spirit of rebellion and
resilience for your business trajectory into
the present and the future of work.*



Our team of designers has been keeping their fingers on the pulse of these changes and what they can mean for local businesses seeking to expand their brand outreach. We encourage you to explore the local gallery scene, mine for ideas that leave an impression and bring them to the table for a thoughtful discussion about creating a dynamic workspace upgrade that uniquely pivots your brand into the future of work. Food for thought:

[Visual Arts Center, Austin](#)

[Leslie Kell Fine Arts](#)

[MuseWork](#)

[Wonderspaces](#)

Original content merged with content by Kerri McShea & Gensler.



Creating environments that truly foster memorable experiences for collaboration and connection deepen creative commitment EVERYWHERE. It is this level of brand immersion that allows us to embrace the diversity of work and the contribution it makes to not only the immediate environment, but to the community at large.

