



*Case Study*

# Experiential Design Analysis

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FOR  
DESIGN FOR EXPERIENCE

OCT | 2023

“

*We seek intelligibility and meaning from our environment and are*

*repelled by environments that convey no meaning, either because they lack visual information, or*

*because the information present is unstructured.*

*-Nikos A. Salingaros, 2005*

”

*I*t comes as no surprise that the world is on the brink of a polycrisis, following the global pandemic, rise in the cost of living, climate change occurring faster than the expected rate, and shifting political landscapes. The challenges are informing the way designers and architects take an interdisciplinary approach to social, cultural, and environmental considerations.

Rapid technological advancements are bringing focus to experiential and immersive design, where they ‘allow an audience to be fully submerged in both environment and story, whether for passive or interactive media, in virtual or physical worlds’ (Lutterodt-Quarcoo, 2013). Spaces we inhabit have acquired greater importance and value as the design industry has a pivotal role in bridging the gap between human interaction, engagement and emotional resonance.

Experiential design prioritizes human-centric environments and considers how spaces can impact each of our senses to create a more meaningful experience for the end-users. Taking a scientific approach and understanding current and future needs can dictate how users feel and behave as they enter, transition through and leave a space.

What makes an experience immersive is by ‘blending the familiar with the new, bending our ideas of reality, and inviting us to become a part of a new reality’ (Beckman, 2023). Tapping into emotional impact can determine how memorable the experience of a space can be.

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## Opportunities

*technology integration*

*future-proofing*

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The post-pandemic consumerscape and infatuation with the metaverse have driven the need for experiential design through hyper-tactile interactions in order to deliver long-term engagement and emotional connection. Storytelling through design becomes the selling point as sensory sequences, escapist artworks and placemaking experiences propel powerful narratives (Storytelling WGSN, 2023). The fusion of technology and nature has led to digitally-inspired physical spaces and nature-inspired digital spaces.

In all sectors of design, the need for human interaction and multi-sensory experiences is driving creative release, as designers and architects tap into the simplistic joy of play, emotionally and physically transportive environments and handcrafted, artisanal spaces. Public space design and installation design are promoting urban resilience and community wellbeing, often in regard to climate, biodiversity and social activism (Davis WGSN, 2022). By incorporating VR and AR experiences, designers and architects create environments within environments that not only cater to immediate needs but also anticipate and shape future trends in experiential design.

## Challenges

“We have addressed the world’s problems. Now design is not about solving problems, but about a rigorous beautification of our built environments. Design is about the betterment of our lives poetically, aesthetically, experientially, sensorially, and emotionally.” - Karim Rashid, 2023

In the fast-paced nature of today’s world, ‘the desire for architectural permanence and cultural preservation with the need to adapt and evolve’ becomes a crucial topic (Gattupalli, 2023). Finding the middle ground between the creation of immersive experiences with eco-friendly practices and cultural sensitivity can become a complex task. In the digital age of accelerated trends and instant gratification, designers and architects must acknowledge the ethical implications and consider the long-term impacts on the environment and communities they serve.

Universal design principles should be adopted globally to maximize usability for individuals and communities. The approach should encompass and empower a diverse population by ‘improving human performance, health and wellness, and social participation’ (University of Buffalo, 2023). Experiential design can give way to innovative solutions to help people feel included, heard and valued, regardless of age, ability or circumstance. From aging in place and sensory sensitivities to neuro and physical abilities, design could and should speak to everyone.



*Bomonti's Doll Bar & Restaurant  
Istanbul, Türkiye  
Samir Eisazadeh Architect*



*Children's House of Ho Chi Minh City  
Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam  
Ly Hue Tu*



*One Green Mile Public Space  
Mumbai, India  
MVRDV*

# Current Market

## The Driving Force

“As an architect you design for the present, with an awareness of the past, for a future which is essentially unknown.”

-Norman Foster, 2015

The global appeal of experiential design is propelled by a combination of technological, societal and cultural factors along with expectations of consumers and businesses. Designers and architects are compelled to continuously innovate to keep up with advancements. The post-pandemic desire for new experiences has fueled the demand for multisensorial environments, transforming the way art, design and entertainment are conceived.

A study reveals how ‘immersive experiences decrease the sense of exclusion’, especially for the younger generation (Robaina-Calderín, 2023). The higher the level of immersion, the greater the intention is to repeat the experience or to search for similar experiences. As users are highly receptive to how the medium translates into the message, the topics of wellbeing, sustainability concerns, changing demographics and artistic expression are explored in various compelling ways. More than just products or services, people are more inclined towards memorable and emotive experiences.

## The Future

*inclusivity*

*placemaking*

*adaptability*

*climate-adaptive*

The future for meaningful experiences envisions technology, sustainability, and well-being at the forefront while strengthening connections between communities and the environment to enhance the quality of life. Two evolving directions for the design industry- nature immersion and digitopia, are intertwined and give emergence to visionary solutions. Wellness-focused spaces will expand to offices, retail and retirement homes, educational spaces will support hybrid learning models with interactive and collaborative environments, and public spaces will further enhance social interaction and dynamic hubs of activity.

Climate-adaptive and energy-saving approaches are determining sustainability as a necessity. Fostering livability through universal design principles of accessibility and neuro-inclusivity will no longer be optional as future-proof design examines the evolving needs of all individuals, regardless of physical and cognitive abilities (Riberti, 2022). While embracing cutting-edge technology, experiential design will also enable preserving and showcasing cultural heritage to bring the past to life in an engaging manner.



*Hospice House, Hospice of Spokane  
ALSC Architects  
North Washington, WA*



*sensoryPLAYSCAPE, for children with ASD  
Sean Ahlquist  
University of Michigan*



*Umbrella School Library Sensory Design  
Savana Lazaretti Architecture  
Curitiba Brazil*

# Current Market



*Cloud Display, Photo: Zan Wimberley*

Text display with 1,600 ultrasonic atomizers, controlled by a voice recognition system. This display writes any words spoken into an intercom using pure water vapour. The artwork uses AI speech-to-text algorithms to transcribe whatever is being said, from single words to full sentences. (International, 2023)

Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, a Mexican-Canadian media artist, is renowned for his groundbreaking work in creating interactive installations that bring architecture, science, cutting-edge technology and performance art together. Hemmer describes Atmospheric Memory as ‘the most ambitious project’ of his career, curated with José Luis de Vicente. The exhibition invites existential reflection through layers of meaning, exploring our relationship with the atmosphere on both physical and philosophical levels, while bringing attention to computerized surveillance and climate change.

“I hope the project makes the atmosphere tangible so it’s no longer seen as something neutral or invisible that we take for granted. It is something complex, beautiful and irreversible.”

–Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, 2023

The exhibition is inspired by Charles Babbage, the inventor of the first computer and automatic calculator. In 1837, Babbage believed how the air we breathe is a ‘vast library’, containing every sound, motion and word ever spoken. He imagined how computers could calculate the movement of air molecules to allow ‘recreation of the voices of long-lost loved ones, vows unredeemed, promises unfulfilled and even evidence of criminal acts’. (Hemmer, 2021).

Atmospheric Memory grapples at the realisations of the turbulent nature of the medium that sustains our life, demonstrating how the atmosphere and air is the battleground of the future of our planet. Extracting sound from the atmosphere into tangible representation of memory, Hemmer asks the question, ‘we live in a digital world where everything is recorded, but is that something we want as a society?’ (International, 2019).

180 years later, Babbage’s proposal of total digital recollection is integrated into our everyday lives with cameras, GPS trackers, biometric sensors and data clouds storing all our words and actions. Simultaneously, the concentration of carbon dioxide in the air was 285 parts per million(ppm) when Babbage was alive. Higher than the 350ppm scientists consider to be safe, it was 418ppm in 2022. As of May 2023, it hit 424 ppm—a new record (NOAA’s Global Monitoring Lab, 2023).

### *Previous Installations:*

Manchester International Festival, Manchester, United Kingdom  
July 6th - July 21st, 2019

Manchester International Festival, Chapel Hill, North Carolina, United States  
December 2nd - December 17th, 2021

# Atmospheric Memory

*Powerhouse, Sydney, August 12 to November 5 2023*



*Text Stream, Photo by Zan Wimberley*

Text Stream is a generative animation using collected texts of Charles Babbage and mathematician Ada Lovelace, creators of the Analytical Engine (the first programmable computer), to create a exploded stream of letters that occasionally forms sentences.



*Field Atmosphonia, Photo by Zan Wimberley*

Atmosphonia is an audio system with 3,000 channels and LED lights that produce cacophonies of nature, as well as manmade objects. Speakers are referred to as pixels and similar to how pixels form images, Hemmer denotes 'In this massiveness of sound, how can we become better at being able to listen?' (Woods, 2021)



*Volute | Au Clair de la Lune, Photo by Mariana Yañez*

Volute is the world's first 3D-printed speech bubble, created by scanning Édouard-Léon's 1860 first phonograph recording of 'au clair de la lune' and converting it into a 3D shape using photogrammetry before printing it in stainless steel. (Hemmer, 2023)



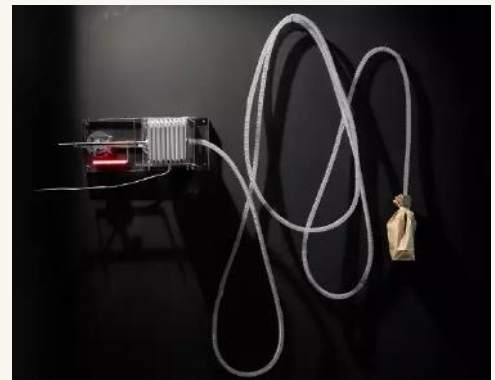
*Zoom Pavilion with Krzysztof Wodiczko, Photo by Antimodular Research*

Where the spectator becomes the spectacle, Zoom Pavilion uses 12 surveillance systems and facial recognition to detect the presence of participants and record their spatial relationship within the exhibition space.

"The exhibition is not a retreat or bubble where you forget about the problems we have but to reintroduce the problems in a way that we're not asking people to dream, we're asking them to wake up."

-Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, 2023

The exhibition transforms vibrations in the air into something visitors can see, hear, and touch. Drawing parallels from Babbage's foresight and the unsettling reality of contemporary surveillance, the idea of a utopian dream had become somewhat of a totalitarian nightmare (Fluro, 2023). The uncanny feeling continues as the exhibition needs visitors to interact and manipulate the artwork through their own words and actions, which reflects the way everything we do or say becomes a commodity in the digital age. From spectators to spectacles, contemplation to conversation, the dynamic interplay between the intangible and tangible sheds light on the complex relationship between technology, humanity and the environment.



*Last Breath, Photo by Antimodular Research*

Last Breath stores and circulates the breath of a person indefinitely. The biometric piece inflates and deflates 10,000 times a day to simulate the normal respiratory frequency for an adult at rest, including 158 sighs. This piece contains the breath of composer Pauline Oliveros who passed in 2016.

The exhibition offers Relaxed Sessions with reduced sensory, multimedia and AV elements and can be turned off for people with autism and individuals with sensory sensitivities. All ages are welcome. We accept Companion Cards and offer free lanyards for those living with hidden disabilities. Assistance animals are welcome.

-Powerhouse, Australia, 2023

# Drawing Parallels

*Complex Relationships*



Photo by Ellaslist Reviews

"The Atmospheric Memory project calls for action against the catastrophic collapse of the atmospheric conditions for planetary survival; against the concentration of all the power of the digital atmosphere into very few hands; and against the weaponisation of the sky."

-Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, 2023



The case study explores how the medium is the message and the message is the medium. The exhibition showcases how multisensory engagement can help visitors understand and retain the information being presented. Complex concepts can be realised and accessed through immersive and interactive considerations, from audiovisual and lighting to tactility and movement. The case study evokes layers of meaning and emotion for visitors and fosters a sense of connection between them and the subject matter. Storytelling through themes related to environment, history and memory helps the audience reflect on societal and cultural norms. Taking the audience on a journey through emotional connection can spark inspiration and a desire for change, making the experience memorable and rewarding.

# Medium is the Message

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