



# Crafting immersive worlds for audiences

Insights from ONE HUNDRED





**The term ‘immersive’ has become part of our everyday language. In theatre it refers to transporting audiences into other times, places, or worlds, dismantling the traditional stage to create deeply engaging experiences. Companies like Punchdrunk, You, Me, Bum Bum Train, and Fuerza Bruta redefined how theatre could be experienced, offering groundbreaking new forms of engagement.**

Today, the term has expanded beyond theatre to encompass interpretations across forms like art, gaming, marketing, and even everyday activities like shopping or exercising. Whether it’s a fully interactive, multisensory theatrical environment or a product promising an ‘immersive experience’, the word continues to provoke curiosity and conversation. At its core, the widespread use of ‘immersive’ reflects a global fascination with how we choose to experience the world around us.

*Image: Created by ONE HUNDRED | Produced by SMG Live |  
Image photographer Yeonee. 2022 | Columbia Circle, Shanghai.  
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## Our Aims

**At ONE HUNDRED, immersive theatre is a craft that reshapes relationships—with spaces, stories, and oneself. Our work transforms the ordinary into the extraordinary, leaving those who encounter it profoundly changed. Founded by Conor Doyle and Oliver Sayer, we bring over three decades of experience in immersive theatre, beginning with Punchdrunk’s pioneering productions such as Sleep No More and The Drowned Man. Our journey spans England, America, China, and Australia, where we have explored how immersive theatre connects deeply and personally, both as performers, directors, and choreographers, and as architects of theatrical worlds.**

For us, immersive theatre is not confined to one form, space, or style. It is an evolving language of storytelling. Whether crafting theatrical productions, reimagining retail spaces for luxury brands or designing intimate exchanges between audience and performer, we always place the audience at the heart of the experience—where they become the hero of their own story. Every choice, from the beat of the music to the texture of the carpet underfoot, is meticulously orchestrated to evoke an emotional response, crafting a potent and unforgettable audience journey.



*Image: Created by ONE HUNDRED | Produced by Taikoo Hui, Guangzhou and SMG Live | Image photographer unknown. 2021  
Taikoo Hui, Guangzhou.*



*Image: Created by ONE HUNDRED | Produced by SMG Live | Image photographer Yeonee. 2022  
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## Case study:

### *The Ten Gifts*

**In celebration of Taikoo Hui's 10th anniversary in Guangzhou, China, we created The Ten Gifts, a sensory journey nestled within a bustling mall. Guests were separated from their companions and thrust into the role of The Hero, navigating a labyrinth of mercurial characters in search of reunion.**

Guests entered a seemingly ordinary gift shop only to uncover that the true hidden gift was a theatrical world waiting for discovery. Wearing headphones with binaural sound that blocked out the bustling mall, they followed an ephemeral whisper, revealing a series of fantastical landscapes. A defining moment of the show came with the use of a curtain—a simple theatrical element. In traditional theatre, the curtain opens at the beginning of the show and serves as a portal to another place, time, or world. Here it became a vivid red threshold, opening to reveal an infinity mirror reflecting the guests' own image. This pivotal transition marked the beginning of a personal odyssey. Even in an age of technological advancements, such universal symbols, like the curtain, evoke the enduring magic of theatre.

### *Narcissus*

**For SMG Live's inaugural Immersive X festival in 2022, we created Narcissus, inspired by Ovid's Metamorphoses. Set in a 1920's clubhouse with a central swimming pool, the production drew on themes of transformation, blending immersive drama, musical theatre, cabaret, and dance into a kaleidoscopic dreamscape. Audiences witnessed spectacular onstage performances while voyeuristically peering into characters' private lives through two way mirrors—a design choice that heightened intimacy and intrigue.**

Even with meticulous crafting, we sometimes stumble across elements of a show we never knew could be so palpable to the audience. One detail that left a lasting impression was the curated scent of the building. This sensory layer, nearly omitted due to time constraints, became a defining feature. Guests spoke of nostalgia and inexplicable emotions, with many carrying the scent's memory long after the performance ended. Such details underscore how crafting immersive worlds extends beyond the visual, shaping profound connections through subtle, often unexpected elements.

When creating immersive landscapes, we recognise that each audience member arrives with their own 'baggage'—perhaps a memory of a scent or a personal connection to a song. Within this baggage lies their joys, griefs, fears, and longings. Our role as creators is to gently untangle these threads, offering spaces where audiences can bring their whole selves, feel deeply, connect powerfully, and experience freely. By doing so, we harness the power of memory and emotions to create deeply resonant and uniquely personal audience experiences.

**At ONE HUNDRED our craft evolves with every project. We seek to constantly push the boundaries of immersive theatre, from exploring hybrid digital formats to expanding the scale of our physical productions.**

**Our upcoming project, Arcane: Immersive, transforms the Tencent/Netflix series into an expansive, immersive spectacle. The challenge and excitement with this project lies in the reimagining and realisation—how to turn the beautiful, dark, and strange animated world created by Riot Games and animation studio Fortiche into a tangible and explorable sensual reality.**

**The Arcane immersive show marks the first time audiences will experience a live action version of the animated series. It invites more than just spectatorship; it asks them to step into the story and experience the familiar anew. As makers we must find the perfect balance between serving story, IP, character, and innovation—and our audience, the centre of our immersive worlds.**



## Practical workshops by ONE HUNDRED

### Summary

Perhaps the term 'immersive' has found its way into our everyday lives to challenge expectations and redefine what is possible. By transforming the ordinary into the extraordinary—whether through a subtle intervention or a meticulously crafted experience—when we place the audience at the centre of the narrative and free them from constraints, every interaction becomes unique and unrepeatable. It becomes a journey to explore time and again, a testament to the transformative power of immersive worlds and their profound ability to change lives. There is so much more to explore.

ONE HUNDRED is passionate about sharing our expertise and insight into the immersive art form, nurturing the talents of those who study, teach, and work within it, and building a powerful connection with those who love and engage with it. In our masterclasses, led by our creative team, we offer deep insights and pathways to improve as immersive practitioners, enhancing performative power and unlocking our creative process. Whether you're a student, teacher, performer, director, theatre creative, or an avid enthusiast eager to learn more, our masterclasses provide a meaningful, inspiring experience designed to enrich participants at every stage of their journey.

Participants are encouraged to think like world builders, learning how to weave intricate narratives into physical spaces while considering every sensory detail. Through hands on exercises, they discover how to create performances that not only captivate but also empower audiences to shape their own experiences. By bridging theory with practice, these sessions provide an invaluable foundation for aspiring creators and performers to push the boundaries of what immersive theatre can achieve.

*For more information, please visit  
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