FROM INTERACTIVE TO EDUCATIONAL

by Sophie Brookover

DEUTSCHLANDMUSEUM



Deutschlandmuseum

Berlin, Germany

Creative Studio Berlin, Bentin Projects

After a design and construction phase held at a breakneck pace, Berlin's Deutschlandmuseum went from concept to award-winning reality in eight months. Robert Rückel, the German history museum's executive director, tells Funworld that his goal was "to rethink what a museum could be, creating an environment where history is not only told, but experienced in a truly immersive way." The museum's design and execution also appeals to a broader audience than such institutions typically attract, using "techniques such as content reduction, storytelling, and innovative design … in this regard, we see ourselves as the gateway to the museum world."

Deutschlandmuseum presents a 2,000-year sweep of German history. Creative Studio Berlin Creative Director and owner Chris Lange and his "small but very experienced team" chose to divide the historical periods into 12 chapters. Rückel tells Funworld that "seven of these spaces are completely immersive," using reproduced historic spaces, including a print shop from the era of Gutenberg, where "walls, ceiling, and floor [are] all perfectly themed, with smell and background noise" rounding out the 15th century experience.

The complexity of each of the museum's 12 chapters required sophisticated technical expertise. Benedikt Koch, the project's technical supervisor at Bentin Projects, designed the installation of Deutschlandmuseum's audio, light, and video equipment choices, integrating "all crafts and challenges, such as room height, Pepper's ghost effects, and multi-angle projection mapping" to make each area come alive as vividly as possible. The technical elements work in tandem with historical artifacts and brief, engaging text. This fully integrated approach has delivered on Rückel's vision of "offering a comprehensive overview that can be absorbed in about an hour" by visitors of all ages and education levels.

deutschlandmuseum.de/en/



Islands of the Rising Sun and Nemo, Ocean Splendor

Pairi Daiza, Cambron, Belgium

EventCom, Dreamwall Media Solutions, Grand les Yeux, Hovertone

Belgium's Pairi Daiza zoo and botanical garden outdid itself in 2024 by opening its latest world, Islands of the Rising Sun. In addition, the attraction marked its 30th anniversary with a new LED lights installation titled Nemo, Ocean Splendor. The massive, conservation-focused park, built on the grounds of a former Cistercian Abbey in Cambron, Belgium, is home to more than 7,500 animals living in one of nine region-specific worlds. According to Pairi Daiza spokesperson Johan Vreys, within Islands of the Rising Sun, "Japan will be represented in the form of islands," featuring reproductions of the varied landscapes, flora, and fauna on Hokkaido, Honshu, and Kishu in Japan. Vreys also shares with Funworld that "with the exception of two monumental sculptures, nearly all of the scenery for Islands of the Rising Sun was created and built in-house."

To plan, build, and execute Nemo, Ocean Splendor, however, the landmark zoo and conservation park commissioned technological contributions from four Belgian partner companies: EventCom, Dreamwall Media Solutions, Grand les Yeux, and Hovertone. The permanent installation is a 137-meter screen illuminated by 18.9 million LEDs, all mounted on the exterior of the neoclassical castle that holds the park's aquarium.

Hovertone CEO Joëlle Tilmanne explains that the oceanic installation is "a unique immersive experience that plunges visitors into an interactive and evolving marine universe." By making the technology responsive to visitors' presences and movements, the installation transforms them into "active participants in a 'living' world, instead of [looking at] a repetitive video loop," Grand les Yeux Artistic Director Daphné Cornez explains.

Thomas Richard, director of EventCom, is particularly proud of "the perfect integration of the thousands of high-tech components on the castle's facade," further explaining that the impressively "meticulous work [is] almost unnoticed by the visitors and the thousands of fish" living in the aquarium.

pairidaiza.eu/

FROM INTERACTIVE TO EDUCATIONAL

PADDINGTON BEAR EXPERIENCE



The Paddington Bear Experience

County Hall, London, United Kingdom
Autograph Sound

Imagine walking down the street depicted above where a cast of actors guide visitors of all ages, generations, and sensory needs through locations from the classic Paddington Bear stories and film franchise. The 70-minute attraction features vivid, immersive scenes of Paddington Station, the Brown family's Windsor Gardens neighborhood, and the Peruvian jungle.

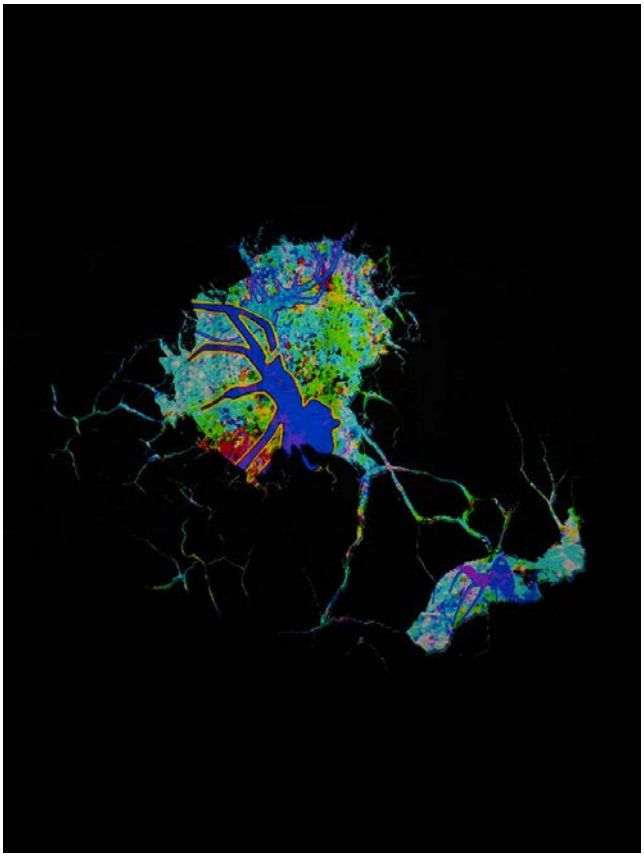
The multi-environment attraction—which culminates in a delicious-smelling marmalade festival where guests have the option to add an extra hour to their 70-minute tour—opened in 2023 at County Hall, an historic building on London's Southbank. Julia Posen of Path Entertainment Group shared that The Paddington Bear Experience was built with internal expectations "to create the greatest licensed family entertainment experience in the world and put it in one of the most iconic buildings in London, whilst always maintaining the brand ethos of ensuring everything we do is done with kindness, generosity, and understanding."

Sound design by Luke Swaffield, of Autograph, was a key ingredient in ensuring that the attraction met Path Entertainment Group's expectations, providing both an immersive experience for guests and critical cues to the actors who lead "audience members entering the experience every 7.5 minutes." To create and maintain the necessary degree of precision, The Paddington Bear Experience uses approximately 200 hidden individually driven speakers, mostly from British manufacturer Martin Audio, and Adorn ceiling/pendant loudspeakers. Swaffield credits colleagues Rebecca Brower and Ryan O'Connor with "finding ways to disguise the loudspeakers in the experience," a task made easier thanks to the "small form factor and unwise dispersion pattern" in Martin Audio's CDD (constant directivity device) range, which makes them effective even when hidden away in corners.

As a final visual flourish, Posen highlighted that borrowing original film props and set dressings from StudioCanal lent "an additional layer of detail and authenticity" to The Paddington Bear Experience.

paddingtonbearexperience.com

AMANDA CARBERRY, COLUMBUS ZOO AND AQUARIUM



Unextinct

Columbus Zoo and Aquarium, Columbus, Ohio, United States
Mangolin Creative

Columbus Zoo and Aquarium is always looking to Ohio's borders and beyond to entice more visitors to appreciate their conservation-driven mission. According to the zoo's Vice President of Water Park Operations and Guest Services Anthony Sabo, the Unextinct nighttime immersive experience immediately ticked all the zoo's boxes. The zoo set the goal to attract visitors from neighboring states and provide education to guests on the reasons animals go extinct.

The experience brought more than 70 extinct and threatened species back to life using tech-driven theatrical illusions in 15 different themed scenes, each with an original musical soundtrack. The exhibit was a production of Los Angeles-based design studio Mangolin Creative, in partnership with SSA Ventures.

Using the zoo's existing layout and existing infrastructure—including an underground tunnel, a pond, and the "meandering pathways" of its Asia Quest area—Mangolin co-founder and Creative Director Morgan Lee Richardson tells Funworld that planners were able to deploy "sophisticated projection mapping, hydro screens, show lighting, theatrical scrim, and other creative technologies," with a result that balanced inspiration, education, and entertainment.

mangolincreative.com

