

The new rules for the near-future of *experiences*.

Building safe and flexible experiences for an ever-changing landscape.

If ever there was a year to keep us on our toes, then 2020 was it. From lockdown, to social bubbles, the rule of six and now the three tiers, we are constantly reassessing how we can create the experiences that engage and delight audiences, while keeping them safe and adhering to each new set of restrictions.

And while few of us have ever experienced the seismic pace of change or the uncertainty of a global pandemic, adapting to evolving situations is nothing new for experience specialists and designers of real-life campaigns. Working on projects such as Nike's Team GB athletes' parade, Battersea Power Station's interactive Christmas light installation and projection mapping for new track releases from Apple Music, means that our teams are used to the fluidity of ever-changing scenarios, regulations and designing with agility.

As we pass the eight-month mark of life with Covid, there is undoubtedly a rising need for brands to speak directly to consumers, just as consumers themselves look for opportunities to convene once

again. We need to establish the entry level for live engagement in small and secure groups that can adhere to current restrictions and that have an equally compelling virtual manifestation, should the physical event need to change. These final months of the year are usually associated with gatherings and festivities and audiences of all demographics are eager for that real world entertainment once more, but coupled with that is an overwhelming need to feel safe and to understand that in the event of ever-evolving restrictions, the much-awaited experience won't be cancelled, like so much this year.

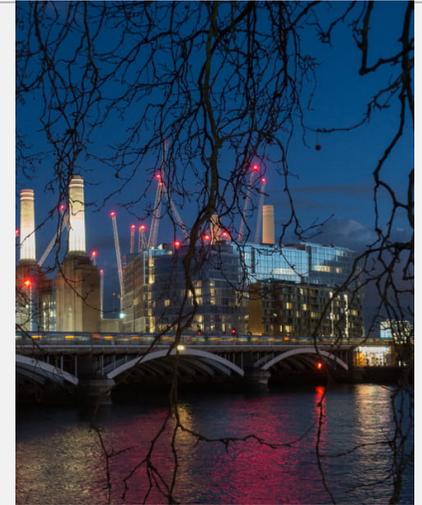
Flexible options for the new tiers

So how can brands plan ahead against the backdrop of an ever-changing live environment? We need to be sensitive to how habits have shifted during lockdown and to the increased scrutiny that brand activity will be subjected to, while taking a non-binary approach and considering what we can do with the restrictions in place.

Until a vaccine is found, social distancing is with us but that doesn't mean we can't create engaging and enjoyable experiences, so we need to be more considered in the design and look towards fluid solutions that can be implemented in the event of these sudden government changes.

We can take inspiration from some of the lessons learned in previous years, pre-Covid, of activations that had a limited physical audience, but virtual viewing figures reaching the millions. Our work for Nike Strike Night with AKQA took place in a secret underground location in London with six top goal scorers taking part in a penalty shoot-out in front of a crowd of 400, but it was watched by nearly half a million Facebook Live viewers and then a further 2.7 million fans within 24 hours. This is an experience that we could easily modify under the new regulations and it provides a format that we can follow for brands over the forthcoming months, creating a vibrant experience that has a limited physical element which can be withdrawn on demand without detriment to the overall campaign.

Similarly, with Chelsea HIIT on the Pitch, where we collaborated with Joe Wicks and Chelsea FC to create the first-ever High Intensity Interval Training session inside a



football stadium, the experience could be simply modified with a number of flexible options for the audience. Joe led two pulsating sessions on the hallowed turf at Stamford Bridge, streamed live across his Facebook and YouTube channels, as well as Chelsea FC's social. He was joined by 1200 fitness enthusiasts, who shared once-in-a-lifetime snaps on the pitch, while thousands more took part online.

Approximately 18,500 tuned in live across the two sessions, 9 million watched the live video post-event and generated 17.8 million impressions of all campaign content, taking Chelsea FC well beyond its traditional football audience. Under the latest regulations, Joe would still be able to lead those sessions from the pitch – we'd just have to take a flexible approach to how the fitness enthusiasts worked out alongside him – whether it was in distanced time slots or in a hybrid environment, with

all the branded items sent to them along with a special access to a virtual Stamford Bridge stadium and bespoke messaging from Joe.

Introducing Connector

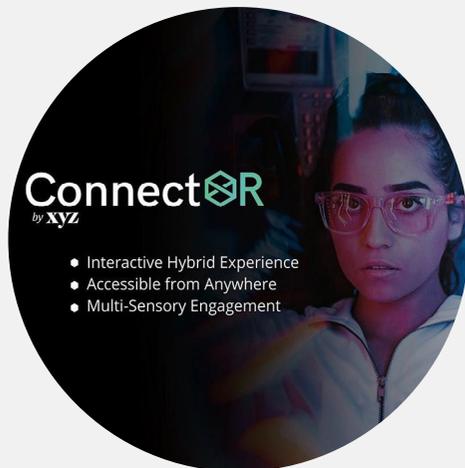
We've been exploring these flexible hybrid solutions that harness the very best technology alongside real locations and deliver with more humanity in the approach – that has been the guiding principle behind our work to bring our new platform, Connector, to life.

We knew we wanted to use a physical environment to have all of the detail of IRL rather than CGI surrounds. Connector allows the IRL feel, offering a physical live location that can be experienced virtually. By creating a live location, as we would for a live experience, we can create blended options of a virtual world combined with a real physical space and add in a layered sensory element.

By using technology that can leverage the sense of connection, audiences can enjoy the sense of shared experience, the sense of truly being interactive and being

a participant, rather than a viewer. There is also the opportunity for live, two-way communication in the form of voice or text. It means the physical element of an event can be withdrawn if restrictions occur suddenly, such as a region shifting up a tier, but brands can still deliver on both the experience and their campaign.

In terms of the physical build, this is a cost-effective solution as you don't need to build on the same scale as before. You can consider which spaces you need: an interview room, a presentation stage - it is like designing spaces of a metaphysical venue. If a brand wants to invest in its architecture then they can reuse it for each experience without having to rebuild each time, resulting in a far more sustainable solution overall. Additionally, existing venues relating to the brand can be used, from a showroom in London, to a concept store in Paris or a flagship space in China. In a venue like Printworks, a 360 explorable experience could be run and made accessible for anyone around the world with live experience at the heart of it but available to all audiences despite different locations and restrictions.



Reimagining experiences for 2021

It is easy to reimagine some of our recent experiences through the lens of Connector. The interactive LEGO GROUP House of Dots experience that we built in London's Coal Drops Yard for the global launch of the new LEGO Dots range could be repurposed as a festive, family experience, with household groups booking to experience it. Crucially though, Connector could deliver a truly global launch to all markets, using the house as a base, that some experience in person and everyone can access irrespective of location. The product could be sent out to press, trade and key influencers in key markets, inviting them to experience a virtual House of Dots, where they could all decorate a tile in one of the spaces.

And that democratisation of access that virtual experiences afford is something that is not going to vanish the moment we can return to live entertainment en masse. Those walls have now come down, consumers expect a certain ease of access when it comes to virtual experiences and brands that opened the doors to all during lockdown will need to consider hybrid options for 2021 and beyond.

But while virtual and hybrid solutions will continue to enjoy exponential growth as long as social distancing remains a part of our society, the appetite for experiences and interaction will remain. Ultimately, people will value and cherish physical



interaction more as a result of 2020's enforced months without it. There will be a hunger for physical events and shared live experiences but without a vaccine we need to understand our limitations and plan accordingly. So, we need to embrace the new platforms that can connect brands and consumers and create flexible and fluid solutions that can be experienced both live and remotely. The audience is there and after a challenging 2020, they are eager to be entertained.

If you would like to see a demo of Connector, please contact:

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