Talking about...
The Place of Leisure in the Flow of Life

Retail & Social Media
Destinations: A World of Mixed Use
Travel Gets Hospitable
More Than a Game: The Fan Experience
Leisure is part of the flow—or the blur, some might say—of lives we improvise amid online prompts and the push and pull of real places and experiences.

Issue 29 looks at the boundary conditions people negotiate as they move through their days. Leisure is close at hand—self-directed, crowdsourced, impromptu, and planned ahead. Its places draw people in and bring their experiences alive.
In an age of WhatsApp, Snapchat, and Instagram, retailers are challenged to reinvent themselves and connect with customers in relevant new ways.

By MIMI ZEIGER

Today, you can buy just about anything from anywhere with a swipe on a handheld device. For some, this underscores an age of social media where retailers must fight against constant distraction. But for Gensler’s designers and thought leaders, online retail and social media offer a rich challenge to extend a brand experience and deepen strategic approaches to design. Gone are the days of pitting e-commerce against brick-and-mortar retail, a period when web activity struggled to direct consumers to a physical store—clicks-to-bricks. “The current language is clicks-and-bricks, because it’s happening as a seamless engagement to our consumers,” explains Gensler’s Jill Nickels.

Amenities that enhance

Consider rapidly changing retail trends as a lightning-fast round of improv comedy. The game: Yes, and. The “yes” affirms this fast-paced condition, which is played out in real time on the street, in the mall, and on the sofa. The “and” is all about adding to the experience— for consumers and retailers.

above: CoolMess, New York
opposite, from top: CoolMess, New York; Timbuk2, Chicago
Because consumer desires are driven by the ever-changing allure of social media, retailers are constantly challenged to reinvent and introduce novelty.

Because consumer desires are driven by the ever-changing allure of social media, retailers are constantly challenged to reinvent and introduce novelty, no matter how original their amenities, says Gensler’s Michael Gatti. “As retail designers, we strive to create wonderful, timely, and unique experiences for the customer that unfortunately at times may not be as wonderful in two months,” he says, adding that designers must create spaces that are flexible to changing tastes, interests, and seasons. “Consumers are going to react to what’s happening in style and where things are going.”

For Primark’s 80,700-square-foot store in Pennsylvania’s King of Prussia Mall, the second US location for the Irish clothing retailer, Gensler designed experiential moments into this new prototype, such as digital displays utilizing content from Primark’s #PRIMANIA and integrated Instagrammable opportunities that are sprinkled across the sales floor to engage a key consumer: digital natives/millennials. Generous fitting-room areas (an instant selfie hub where shoppers can upload photos of their “haul” or themselves sporting Primark apparel) offer respite from the bustling sales floor, and charging stations are embedded throughout the space for customer convenience. “Primark’s priority is to provide an amazing environment and customer experience that matches its emphasis on ‘amazing fashion’ for its product,” says Jordan.

With three floors of memorabilia, merchandise, and state-of-the-art retail technology, NBA’s flagship store on New York’s Fifth Avenue invites fans to truly be part of the game. A 400-square-foot video wall displays real-time game footage, news, and social media posts—all of which can be seen from the sidewalk. Interactive touchscreens provide access to NBAStore.com’s vast inventory and allow fans to shop and locate top-selling merchandise. Video-game kiosks, pop-a-shots, and player measure-ups offer a more analog interactive experience to complement the digital program.

The design for CoolMess, a new ice cream concept store in New York, reflects the joyful experience of making ice cream, with moments of “mess” expressed through vibrant colors and graphics. Photo and social media opportunities throughout the space prompt kids and tweens to post and share photos of themselves and their ice cream creations on the #CoolIsTheNewHot Instagram feed. A magnetic photo wall features customers who have posted parties in the space, and even the bathroom provides a “selfie moment,” with bold “inkblot” graphics and backwards messaging in the mirror.

An integrated experience
To deepen the retail experience, Gensler teams extend their areas of expertise from real life to the web. Design is integrated across the brand, from the digital experience to how sales staff provide service and how the store fosters community.

familiar “ands,” such as a coffee bar or DJ booth, are commonplace. These added amenities draw from hospitality and are meant to personalize the retail experience and increase how much time consumers spend in a space—the “dwell time,” according to Gensler’s Kathleen Jordan. The right amenity doesn’t compete or distract with the product being sold, but offers a complementary use and a respite that allows consumers to recharge and extend their day. Jordan suggests that the coffee bar concept has peaked—even inviting local coffee roasters to set up in retail spaces has become a cliché. Instead, she works with clients to figure out what amenities and partnerships align and support the overall brand. This could mean a juice bar, barbershop, nail salons, or even a taco stand. “It’s the experiences that you associate with the brand in a positive way and you want to go back to, because visiting the store is like visiting a whole bunch of spaces all at once,” Jordan explains, citing El Palacio de Hierro’s flagship in Polanco, Mexico City. There, Gensler curated a series of gourmet vendors serving the city’s authentic heritage cuisine, bringing street food to a luxury department store.
Gensler’s design for messenger bag company Timbuk2 in Portland, Oregon, created a natural synthesis between the brand’s association with cycling and the community’s values. The space offers a free bike repair station and is also a hub for Bike Share, a program that allows customers to borrow a bike, helmet, and Timbuk2 bag to tour the city. “It’s beyond purchasing a bag or product from them,” Nickels explains. “It’s how the brand represents their beliefs.”

Similarly, NYX Professional Makeup retail stores cater to the makeup community locally and online, celebrating both enthusiasts and professionals with scrolling Instagram images and touchpoints that link users to product tutorials and information. Gensler integrated digital displays—both monitors and touchscreens—into the artist loft–inspired space.

With Indian apparel retailer Raymond, Gensler embraced technology to communicate with a digitally savvy customer. “One of our primary goals in the store was to create a richer experience for the customer by leveraging technology,” Nickels says. She describes a scenario where shoppers select their size from a tablet and then garments appear in a fitting room that is loaded directly from the back of the house, leaving the sales floor minimal, almost gallery-like. “We call it ‘attentive technology,’ where technology acts as a sales associate. But there is also that human connection. The sales associate becomes more of a style expert or trusted advisor.”

Gensler’s Keisuke Kobayashi echoes the need for a “high hospitality” experience. “The level of service, in terms of the human emotional response, is traditional in Japan, so it is something people expect,” he notes, adding that retail service extends to in-store recommendations made through digital tools, such as tablets or apps. When brands use digital and live feeds in the store environment, it’s not enough just to have screens filled with compelling images, he says. “Sales staff need to be trained not just to sell or to advise customers, but to really talk about the brand history, where it comes from, and utilize all the digital tools and live streams to build customer relationships. That’s the only way to gain and win repeat customers in Japan.”

Connecting with brand ambassadors Gensler’s Lara Marrero emphasizes that retailer successes come from turning customers into brand advocates. “Right now, the strongest place to make brand advocates is through the peer-to-peer network, best seen through social media,” she explains. “An ‘influence’ could drive 28 people to go to the space to check it out and potentially generate sales for 12 of those folks.” Giving people something to talk about on social media is what Marrero calls the “gold dust” retailers are banking on, especially when brand loyalty is at an all-time low. “A personal recommendation is far more valuable to a brand than advertising.”

Design is essential to retail brands, integrating everything from the digital experience to how sales staff provide service, and how the stores themselves cultivate communities of buyers.
Mixed use is a global phenomenon.
Fluid in scale and focused on context, it works best when it draws on the intangibles, not the least of which are the people it attracts. Gensler designers talk about mixed use’s destination value—the ability, at every scale, to spark vitality and urbanity where they’re needed most.

The Gulf is a good starting point for considering how making destinations has moved to the forefront. Before Chris Johnson and his team designed The Avenues in Kuwait City, they visited the capital cities of shopping—renowned worldwide for their retail districts.

“We walked them, documented them, and brought that information back. The goal wasn’t to design a pastiche of those places, but to create a new district that locals find authentic and resonant,” Johnson says. The Grand Avenue, its largest circulation route, has the scale and feel of London’s Oxford Street, recast in a Kuwaiti context. An inflatable membrane roof covers it and other interior streets. “It’s very light, so people feel like they’re outdoors,” he explains. “It tends to move, so they can sense the weather, but they’re protected from it.”

Msheireb Downtown Doha has what Philip Gillard calls a civic scale: 95 buildings—30 designed by Gensler—on 31 hectares (76 acres). Local inspiration matters. “The client wants it to be quintessentially Qatari,” he adds. Climate is a factor: Doha gets hot, but benefits from cooling winds off the Gulf. Seaside views are popular. A C-shaped plan and buildings that step up as they move away from the sea deliver both. The housing is mixed to cater both to expats and typically large Qatari families. “It’s not only about size. The required spaces and how they’re laid out differ from the usual expat standard,” says Lukasz Platkowski.
Catering to Nigeria's urban affluent
In Lagos, Marty Barko and Bart Tucker designed an urban precinct at Eko Atlantic, a new area of the city built on land reclaimed from the sea. It reflects the city's rising middle class, on the hunt for better quarters: walkable, amenity-filled, and safe enough not to need security fences. Lagos lacks transit, so Eko Atlantic residents will have cars and drivers. Families are large, with live-in help. "There's very little market data or precedents," Barko says. "The plan allows course corrections. We can change the mix between two- and four-bedroom units depending on what's selling." Eko Atlantic "breaks with the local pattern in Lagos of developing isolated towers. Even without transit, mixed-use saves people a lot of time," Tucker explains.

In Sri Lanka, a team led by Kap Malik and Gero Balmanoukian designed ITC One Colombo 1, a hotel and residential tower lobby. A water feature flows through it to tie ITC One Colombo 1 to a new park and the ocean. "That influence is apparent in the podium, one side of which is a stepped landscape that resembles terraced tea plantations. Connected to the surrounding community, the podium mixes shops and restaurants with other uses and the hotel and residential tower lobbies. A water feature flows through it to tie ITC One Colombo 1 to a new park and the ocean. "There's no back door," Malik says. "It has great views on both sides." Each tower has shading fins that are tinted to simulate the ocean water. Balconies are accented with durable wood-grained panels that recall local timber construction. "We visited some breathtaking houses by Sri Lankan renowned Geoffrey Bawa to understand how we could bring a modern sensibility to the island's architectural traditions," Balmanoukian says. That influence is apparent in the podium, one side of which is a stepped landscape that resembles terraced tea plantations. Connected to the surrounding community, the podium mixes shops and restaurants with other uses and the hotel and residential tower lobbies. A water feature flows through it to tie ITC One Colombo 1 to a new park and the ocean. "There's no back door," Malik says. "It has great views on both sides.

Designing for East Asian cities
Four large developments in Korea and China illustrate how destinations fit into the dynamo behind a proliferation of destination-style mixed-use developments.

In Seoul's upscale Gangnam district, the largely subterranean COEX Mall—85,000 square meters (915,000 square feet) in size—was designed of light and life. With Korean partners, a Gensler team led by Duncan Paterson opened it up with a distinctive theme, "the unfolding sky." The centerpiece is a grand atrium whose ceiling reaches up to light and air. "It gives Gangnam a heart, accessible from the subway and the street," Paterson says.

A similar relationship occurs in Nanjing, China's megascale has an outsize effect on the dynamics of the city, a high-end destination within a free trade zone across the bay from Hong Kong. "China's megacities have an outsize impact," he says. "Designing for context means relating a destination to a city's larger setting, economy, and population." Paterson says.

What Gensler envisioned is a walkable, urban quarter that relates to Shanghai's canals and the bay. The development's lower levels are surrounded by water elements that reference its history as a waterfront site. Yet it also relates to Shanghai's terraced rice fields and the mountains and their valleys.

Changing stripes in Sydney
The Porter, designed by Simon Trude, shows that a successful destination needn't be big. When 1 O'Connell, an office building, lost its anchor tenant, "we learned that other tenants often hosted meetings in cafés and bars in the neighborhood," Trude says. The building


In the major cities of West Africa, South Asia, and East Asia, the rising and increasingly affluent middle class is the dynamo behind a proliferation of destination-style mixed-use developments.
Parque Arauco. “It opened as a mall in 1982,” Tom Ito explains. “People still feel an emotional connection to it.” Ito’s and Malik’s design revives the shopping component, adds new hotel and office towers, and links the project to a nearby park to create a larger destination in the heart of Santiago’s Las Condes district.

In Heredia, home of the National University of Costa Rica, Ronald Fonseca and his team are designing Plaza Andén for Grupo Aliss. “It’s a transit hub—buses and trains. We’re making a place where people can stop, shop, eat, and enjoy cultural events.” In San José, Christian Wolff is focused on an urban-scale mixed-use development that includes a sports facility and a large outdoor plaza. “The city lacks places to shop or stroll. This will provide that.” Wolff says. As in China, culture plays a role in Latin America’s mixed-use destinations. To celebrate the second year of Costa Rican fashion magazine Traffic, Gensler created a pop-up event on San José’s Plaza de la Cultura, above the Museo del Oro Precolombino. (Tienda de los Museos del Banco Central is its Gensler-designed retail space.) The event’s focal point was a striking 5-by-5-meter cube pavilion. Its gold strands reached down into the museum, connecting the two and providing a dramatic setting for fashion. The cube’s reflectivity also proved to be a selfie-taking magnet. For the final weekend, Traffic turned the plaza into a runway, hosting a public fashion show featuring local talent. The design team of Richard Hammond, Federico Montero, and Anastacia Chaves showed that quick, inexpensive interventions can draw crowds to cultural landmarks—conveying how new uses can activate such sites.

North America’s mixed-use wave

The popularity of mixed-use in US cities reflects the fact that it’s an asset that works for you 24/7, 365 days a year,” says Peter Merson. The components activate each other to add drawing power. Take Buckhead in Atlanta and River Oaks in Houston. They were desirable areas, but not yet citywide destinations. Developer Oliver McMillan and Gensler teamed up to make this happen.

Peachtree Boulevard and MARTA’s Red Line connect Buckhead to the city, but it felt internally disconnected and uninviting. The 8-acre (3.2-hectare) project gives it a real center with upscale housing, offices, a hotel, shopping, and dining. To root it in place, Paterson and his team wove in elements like covered porches, and paid close attention to the scale of the buildings and the qualities of the public spaces. “Street parking, sidewalk widths, landscape, canopies, and the spaces between the buildings—these details induce people to walk around,” Paterson says. Many of the restaurants have roof terraces that overlook the busy streets, while pedestrians enjoy the buzz from above. Paterson knew the project was a success when he took a taxi to Buckhead and the driver asked, “The Village?”

Destinations play off of everything that draws people in, whether it’s a waterfront with promenades and marinas, or a civic plaza and museum that can spark hugely popular cultural events.
That the locals had named Buckhead’s new center means they see it as a real place.

In Houston’s River Oaks, Gensler gave a spread-out commercial zone a center. The 15-acre (6.5-hectare) project crowns restaurants, a cinema, and retailers like Cartier, Dior, and Hermès with a hotel, office space, and housing. Landscaped, shaded sidewalks connect it all to create a walkable district with a downtown feel.

Entertainment is a theme of the ARK Group’s Music Factory, designed by a Gensler team led by Barry Hand. Located in Irving, a major business center in metropolitan Dallas, the goal of this public-private partnership development is to spark nights-and-weekends vitality. “Rapidly growing segments of our communities are looking to work and play in the neighborhoods where they live,” Hand says. The Music Factory’s concert venue—totaling 8,000 seats, indoors and outdoors—faces a new community-serving plaza surrounded by offices, dining and entertainment venues, and a boutique movie theater. Entertainment, sports, and conventions all draw crowds. Gensler used all three to help AEG turn L.A. LIVE into a destination that keeps fans and energy downtown after the events are over. Now John Adams, Olivier Sammelbauer, and their team are designing a Metropolis, a mixed-use center for Greenland Group on a pivotal 6-acre (2.43-hectare) site. It will open with a 38-story residential tower and a 19-story hotel along Francisco Street—recast as an easily walked route to the convention, financial, and civic areas in downtown Los Angeles.

A new landscape of mixed use

“It’s about how a place unifies in relation to humanity and nature, and how it scales up without losing those qualities,” Borko says. Successful mixed-use destinations begin with a vision of a place and a strong initial plan. Then you have to work it, constantly rethinking the pieces and parts to align with the market and the community around it. “This is true at every scale, whether you’re talking about the heart of a city or the suburban edge,” he adds. “Great places take time.”

Penny Craswell, a Sydney-based writer, is a contributing editor of Architectural Review Asia Pacific and Mezzanine magazines. Her blog, The Design Writer, covers Australia.

Amanda Kolson Hurley, based in Washington, DC, is a contributing editor of Architect magazine and a regular columnist on architecture for Washington City Paper.
In a nod to hospitality, airport lounges are offering seamless amenities to put passengers at ease in a secure environment.

By SARAH AMELAR
The joys of flying are often eclipsed by 21st-century hassles, particularly when airport security is involved. But there’s a movement now to bring Hospitality—with a capital H—back into the air traveler’s experience.

That heightened hospitality vibe is permeating the entire arc of the traveler’s journey, from airports to destination hotels. Let’s look at how it’s playing out.

**Easing the stress of air travel**

San Francisco International Airport, or SFO, has been treating ordinary travelers to spatial sequences and amenities designed to bring back a sense of comfort, ease, and fun. Gensler has completed a series of pivotal projects, beginning with its renovation, expansion, and interiors for Terminal 2 (T2), serving American and Virgin America airlines (completed in 2011). For the richly designed to bring back a sense of comfort, ease, and fun. Gensler has completed a series of pivotal projects, beginning with its renovation, expansion, and interiors for Terminal 2 (T2), serving American and Virgin America airlines (completed in 2011). For the

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Much-the-way Korean character imbues the New Zealand hospitality culture, as well as its 21st-century modernity and progressiveness. A key question the Gensler design team tackled, recalls Matthew Johnson, was to take a collective view of the project, along with the development of a design standard for Etihad’s guest facilities in airports around the world. Inspiration came from the airline’s ‘facets of Abu Dhabi’ brand concept—drawing on that country’s architectural heritage, with geometric patterns and light-filtering screens, as well as its hospitality tradi-

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To compete for passengers, airlines are investing more in the airport side of how they meet, greet, and pamper them.

A forerunner in the development of airport cities is Denver International Airport, where Gensler has done three independent, interrelated projects: the 519-key Westin hotel and conference facility, a transit center with a rail station, and a civic plaza. (The hotel and plaza were completed in November 2015, and the transit center is slated to open in 2016.)

With rapid rail connections to downtown Denver, mountain and urban-skyline views, public art, and food and beverage venues, the complex was designed as a magnet for locals and air travelers. The grand plaza is a communal gathering space, poised to host such year-round activities as outdoor concerts, festivals, and theatrical or sports events. The complex, says Malik, provides “seamless connections—horizontally and vertically—between the hotel, transit center, civic plaza, and the existing airport.” The airport’s people mover system connecting its concourses will eventually continue through the hotel and transit center and link to a future terminal, all interfacing with the baggage, ticketing, and security systems.

Rise of the airport city

Another rising airport city occupies the manmade island of Incheon, an hour outside Seoul. It’s the site of Gensler’s Grand Hyatt Incheon hotel, a destination property designed to attract air passengers, vacationers, and locals. Though this is an international world-class hotel, it is subtly Korean in spirit. Inspired by flight, by the fluid movement of the ocean and air, the building’s form is, Malik says, “almost like a wave rippling in the play of light.” It’s also about addressing all five senses, from atmospheric lighting and water sounds to the textured limestone exterior cladding that transitions to Carrara marble on the interior, where scents are piped in.

With remarkably quiet interiors (thanks to an acoustically advanced, glazed building envelope), the Westin hotel hovers over the rail station, with views of the trains, public square, touring jets, and Rocky Mountains. Unlike old-school airport accommodations, this was designed as a destination hotel, with its own plush, resort-like offerings, including an enclosed rooftop pool. As Gensler’s Tom Ito puts it: “It’s not just about making the most of airport-adjacent property, but about offering something—a dynamism and excitement—that’s only possible at an airport. At the same time, you’re taking it in from a surprisingly tranquil setting, so it completely transforms the experience.”
Capturing and quantifying the impact that design has on the customer experience is new territory,” says Christine Barber, Gensler’s director of research. The firm launched its Workplace Performance Index (WPI) in 2005. It now drives global thinking about how work settings impact the office workforce. Developing a lifestyle-focused Experiential Design (ExD) Index poses greater challenges: “The needs of the office workforce are generally similar across different kinds of organizations,” she explains. “To quantify design’s impact in a lifestyle context, we have to look at human experience in broader terms.” With that breadth comes a lot more complexity. It also complicates the question of what measures really matter to clients.

Laying the groundwork

Faced with the need to sort this out, Gensler started small. An internal survey of relevant practice leaders found the need to engage next-gen consumers and to stand out in crowded markets. Clients had to weigh the costs and risks of doing this against their profitability. Design plays a critical role in market differentiation, says Gensler’s Tom Ito: “We address the experience in every project.” But the insights gained are hard to apply elsewhere: “We’ve got the anecdotes, but where’s the data?” Gensler hopes the ExD Index will be a critical resource for its designers and clients. Projects benefit when designers and clients can articulate their expectations for the office workforce. “We intend the ExD Index to be open-ended, not formulaic,” Ragland says. “Our goal is not to prescribe outcomes, but to unleash people’s creativity.”

Another commonality is that memorable experiences often start with something recognizable and then take it in a novel direction. “As the designer Carla Diana told us in New York, leading with the familiar is one way to engage people and make them feel comfortable, then you flip that on its head—a tactic drawn from concert halls and haute cuisine,” says Gensler’s Lauren Adams. A third commonality is that quality experiences provide goods and services with unifying emotional value for consumers. “You bound the experience tightly, and then give people a lot of freedom to make it their—ideally on a continuing basis,” says Miller. A related tactic is to analyze what’s getting in the way of a great experience.

Taking the next steps

The roundtable sessions, held in Los Angeles and New York, have already yielded important insights. “The first two roundtables, held in Los Angeles and New York, have already yielded important insights,” says Gensler’s Irwin Miller. “Because the business leaders’ stories are so different, it’s hard to apply elsewhere. “We’ve got the anecdotes, but where’s the data?” Gensler hopes the ExD Index will be a critical resource for its designers and clients. Projects benefit when designers and clients share insights about what makes a great experience.

Gensler expects that once it’s launched, the ExD Index will be a critical resource for its designers and clients. Projects benefit when designers and clients share insights about what makes a great experience—how do you bound the experience lightly, and then flip it on its head—a tactic drawn from concert halls and haute cuisine,” says Gensler’s Lauren Adams. “As Diana said, just get rid of the frustrations and make people feel comfortable, then you flip that on its head—a tactic drawn from concert halls and haute cuisine,” says Gensler’s Lauren Adams. “As Diana said, just get rid of the frustrations and make people feel comfortable, then you flip that on its head—a tactic drawn from concert halls and haute cuisine,” says Gensler’s Lauren Adams. “As Diana said, just get rid of the frustrations and make people feel comfortable, then you flip that on its head—a tactic drawn from concert halls and haute cuisine,” says Gensler’s Lauren Adams. “As Diana said, just get rid of the frustrations and make people feel comfortable, then you flip that on its head—a tactic drawn from concert halls and haute cuisine,” says Gensler’s Lauren Adams. “As Diana said, just get rid of the frustrations and make people feel comfortable, then you flip that on its head—a tactic drawn from concert halls and haute cuisine,” says Gensler’s Lauren Adams. “As Diana said, just get rid of the frustrations and make people feel comfortable, then you flip that on its head—a tactic drawn from concert halls and haute cuisine,” says Gensler’s Lauren Adams. “As Diana said, just get rid of the frustrations and make people feel comfortable, then you flip that on its head—a tactic drawn from concert halls and haute cuisine,” says Gensler’s Lauren Adams. “As Diana said, just get rid of the frustrations and make people feel comfortable, then you flip that on its head—a tactic drawn from concert halls and haute cuisine,” says Gensler’s Lauren Adams. “As Diana said, just get rid of the frustrations and make people feel comfortable, then you flip that on its head—a tactic drawn from concert halls and haute cuisine,” says Gensler’s Lauren Adams. “As Diana said, just get rid of the frustrations and make people feel comfortable, then you flip that on its head—a tactic drawn from concert halls and haute cuisine,” says Gensler’s Lauren Adams. “As Diana said, just get rid of the frustrations and make people feel comfortable, then you flip that on its head—a tactic drawn from concert halls and haute cuisine,” says Gensler’s Lauren Adams. “As Diana said, just get rid of the frustrations and make people feel comfortable, then you flip that on its head—a tactic drawn from concert halls and haute cuisine,” says Gensler’s Lauren Adams. “As Diana said, just get rid of the frustrations and make people feel comfortable, then you flip that on its head—a tactic drawn from concert halls and haute cuisine,” says Gensler’s Lauren Adams. “As Diana said, just get rid of the frustrations and make people feel comfortable, then you flip that on its head—a tactic drawn from concert halls and haute cuisine,” says Gensler’s Lauren Adams. “As Diana said, just get rid of the frustrations and make people feel comfortable, then you flip that on its head—a tactic drawn from concert halls and haute cuisine,” says Gensler’s Lauren Adams. “As Diana said, just get rid of the frustrations and make people feel comfortable, then you flip that on its head—a tactic drawn from concert halls and haute cuisine,” says Gensler’s Lauren Adams. “As Diana said, just get rid of the frustrations and make people feel comfortable, then you flip that on its head—a tactic drawn from concert halls and haute cuisine,” says Gensler’s Lauren Adams. “As Diana said, just get rid of the frustrations and make people feel comfortable, then you flip that on its head—a tactic drawn from concert halls and haute cuisine,” says Gensler’s Lauren Adams. “As Diana said, just get rid of the frustrations and make people feel comfortable, then you flip that on its head—a tactic drawn from concert halls and haute cuisine,” say...
As professional teams seek to increase attendance and grow their revenues, they’re expanding and enhancing the fan experience with amenities inspired by a hospitality mindset.
By VERNON MAYS

In professional sports, the competition to win fans’ loyalty off the field can be just as intense as the action that takes place on it.

With an explosion of digital media and in-home, high-definition broadcasts clamoring for people’s attention, sports franchises are doing all they can to enrich the game-day experience with amenities inspired by the hospitality and entertainment industries.

A year-round destination

An area better to amplify the entertainment than in Los Angeles? There, a stadium for Major League Soccer’s latest expansion team, the Los Angeles Football Club, is breaking new ground by incorporating amenities for in-game, in-home, high-definition broadcasts that extend to live or playing field. An overhanging canopy will contain the crowd noise and provide shade, and a reserved section at one end zone will house the newly fan clubs—passionate supporters who have been included in design presentations and focus groups. In addition to the stadium level, the facility will feature lounges and clubs that are distinctly themed to reflect LA’s diversity—from the artsy, gritty East Side of town to the more refined tastes of Beverly Hills. “That’s been our springboard for the design,” says Gensler’s Elizabeth Pettijohn. In addition to their use on game days, some of the clubs will double as revenue-generating special event spaces, while others will operate daily as restaurants and bars.

For the Los Angeles Football Center, meeting rooms, retail, a large food hall, a stand-alone restaurant—and possibly a world football museum. “The owners want this stadium to be active for as much of the year as possible, rather than for only 22 games per year,” says Gensler’s Ron Turner. “It’s a big investment, so they want to get the maximum use out of it. But they also think it’s important for the stadium to activate Exposition Park and be a catalyst for development on the South Figueroa corridor.” The stadium design will have a European style, with steep seating decks that extend close to the pitch, or playing field. An overhanging canopy will contain the crowd noise and provide shade. And a reserved section at one end zone will house the newly fan clubs—passionate supporters who have been included in design presentations and focus groups. In addition to the stadium level, the facility will feature lounges and clubs that are distinctly themed to reflect LA’s diversity—from the artsy, gritty East Side of town to the more refined tastes of Beverly Hills. “That’s been our springboard for the design,” says Gensler’s Elizabeth Pettijohn. In addition to their use on game days, some of the clubs will double as revenue-generating special event spaces, while others will operate daily as restaurants and bars.

Reinventing the rules

No professional franchise has been so intent on leveraging the entertainment value of its brand as the Dallas Cowboys, a $4 billion enterprise ranked by Forbes as the NFL’s most valuable team. So it comes as little surprise that the Cowboys are reinventing the rules with their new practice facility in Frisco, Texas. The 95-acre multi-use development, named The Star, transforms what is typically a stand-alone training center into the anchor of a new planned urban district: “That’s the beauty of this facility,” says Gensler’s Jonathan Emmett. “It creates a completely unique sports-anchored district.”

The cornerstone of the complex is The Ford Center at The Star, an enclosed, 12,000-seat multipurpose events center and training facility. It will be joined by the Cowboys’ new headquarters and a 500-room Omni Hotel, all designed by Gensler. The project is the result of a partnership among the Cowboys, the City of Frisco, and the Frisco Independent School District. “Part of the agreement is that the Cowboys’ indoor practice facility will be used as the football venue for all eight of Frisco’s high schools,” Emmett says.

The facility will host other community activities, as well as concerts, corporate events, and weddings. “It’s like an entertainment campus, as opposed to a stadium,” says Gensler’s Stacy Bisek. “The menu is expanded, and there is more flexibility with the spaces. The Designers’ Club, is a cozy lounge repurposed from the old groundskeeper’s space. “The drive behind the club is it gives ticket holders a backstage pass,” says Pritchett. “The members feel like VIPs—as though they’re rubbing elbows with the team as they rush onto the field.”

Owners want stadium clubs and lounges to be easily converted for events, parties, and receptions for business or pleasure.

From tired to energized

Upgraded amenities and a more engaging fan experience were key goals in the renovation of FirstEnergy Stadium, home of the Cleveland Browns. Begun in 1997 before Cleveland officially had a team to land it an identity, the stadium always had a generic quality and already felt very old and tired, says Emmett. “It was important to the owners, Jimmy and Dee Haslam, to imbue the stadium with both the team’s brand and the personality of Cleveland.”

The revitalization was staged over two years. Renovations in the first phase included a 40-by-192-foot HD video board that is nearly triple the size of the original one. Other improvements included ribbon-board displays, communal viewing decks, improved circulation, and an enhanced sound system. While overall seating capacity was reduced, about 1,000 new seats were added to the lower tier to provide premium seats closer to the action.

An extensive interiors renovation and branding upgrade were completed in phase two. The seating overviews were brightened with new LED lights and enlivened with large graphics, including murals of downtown Cleveland and a “future of football” that will include the Cleveland Browns. Begun in 1997 before Cleveland officially had a team to land it an identity, the stadium always had a generic quality and already felt very old and tired, says Emmett. “It was important to the owners, Jimmy and Dee Haslam, to imbue the stadium with both the team’s brand and the personality of Cleveland.”

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In addition, the three new clubs were designed to be adaptable for non-game day events, says Pritchett. “They can easily be converted for corporate events or receptions. That’s an important requirement now for a lot of our stadium projects.”

above: The Star, Frisco, TX below: FirstEnergy Stadium, Cleveland, OH
Staying competitive

Other recent stadium renovations have addressed similar demands from team owners, who are often competing with other local pro teams for audiences and corporate sponsorship dollars. At Lincoln Financial Field, where the Philadelphia Eagles play, Gensler added 1,600 seats, new HD video boards, refreshed club, suite, and marketplace spaces, and a new Touchdown Club. At Staples Center in Los Angeles—home to NBA, WNBA, and NHL teams—the firm renovated underused space with luxury banquettes and 1,000 square feet of programmable lighting.

In San Diego, Gensler was brought in by Delaware North to overhaul the food and beverage concessions at Petco Park, home of Major League Baseball's Padres. “Our goal was to capture the San Diego culture and vibe to make the ballpark a local destination,” says Gensler's Kirstie Acevedo. Five major concessions were introduced, including a brewery, an organic market, and a barbecue joint. “We reinforced the concept of ‘home’ with communal tables and living room–type furniture,” she notes.

Fans also gather in Park at the Park, a grassy area that encourages people to enjoy conversation and linger awhile. The concessions play off the idea of food-as-theater, where fans see their meat being carved or salsa being made—creating a more personal experience.

Brand matters

In all these projects, brand plays an important role, not only for the team identities, but also as owners look to boost sponsorship revenues. Currently in the works are nearly a dozen brand–focused retail spaces or sponsored viewing decks for Anheuser-Busch, mostly in sports venues. All are built on creative concepts first developed for Anheuser-Busch at Beer Park, a rooftop bar and grill on the Las Vegas Strip. “Here the ballpark concept was applied to a non-stadium venue,” says Gensler’s Derek Sola. “The components that make for an exhilarating sports experience are being reinvented in projects that aren’t even within a ballpark.” This is giving brands like Anheuser-Busch greater visibility by bringing the stadium experience to their customers.

“Brands are actually the brands with the most loyal customers,” says Gensler’s Deanna Siller. “Like all brands today, they are looking for ways to have greater engagement with their fans. And all touchpoints matter, so they are asking their retailers to heighten the brand experience too.” That’s the common ground in sports venues today. While the athletes in action may change from place to place, the emphasis on the spectator keeps blurring the lines between the arenas of sports, hospitality, entertainment, and retail. “It’s a trend we’ve seen developing throughout the industry,” says Emmett. “And it’s only going to continue in every project we do.”

Sports teams value their loyal fans. They’re always looking for new ways to deepen the relationship. Every touchpoint with their fans is an opportunity for engagement.
As people embrace their i-Humanity, categories like luxury come into question. Not everyone’s ready to exchange old for new, but the new is not being denied. As brands, makers, and consumers try to finesse this transition, they’re asking: Where is lifestyle headed next?

KEVIN ROCHE

Roche is senior vice president, global design and construction, of DFS Group, an LVMH company and leading luxury travel retailer, headquartered in Hong Kong.

What does luxury mean today?

Kevin Roche: Luxury is a state of mind. It is very individual and personal, which makes it so elusive. Its complexity and diversity reflect the accessibility of information, how technology has influenced that accessibility, and how marketing communications has made more things accessible to more people, more readily. They’re better informed, and more visually intelligent.

How do you plan for a common thread of visual intelligence, for a luxury that is both global and also deeply personal?

KR: The common thread is that it has to be authentic, well designed, and executed without compromise. Real luxury comes from those authentic roots and ways of making. It’s the opposite of toxic, creeping, all-time-sameussen.

How does conscientious consumption impact the luxury market?

KR: Luxury has gone beyond the consumption of high-design products or experiences. It’s very personal. There’s a whole industry of taking care of yourself emotionally, mentally, and spiritually that has tapped this luxury way of thinking. Having a place where you have peace, where you have solitude, is a luxury, whether it’s going to spas and retreats where you talk about diet, fitness, and well being, or spiritual development and enhancement. As generations of consumers become better educated, their access to knowledge creates a bigger market for luxury—leading in turn to more products, more places, and more services. That has fueled luxury. I think health and wellness are part of this, as people become more aware. Being fit is a smart thing, and it requires a certain amount of awareness, even education, a certain amount of resources. That puts health and wellness into the luxury category.

Some consider luxury to be frivolous, even irresponsible. What’s your view?

KR: You must keep it in perspective and understand that luxury is a privilege. The luxury industry creates jobs, contributes to social enhancement, helps families send kids to school, provides healthcare, and takes care of aging parents and grandparents. In Siem Reap, Cambodia, we are building a new Galleria that will send kids to school, provides healthcare, and helps families by creating 400 good jobs in a place where most people earn the equivalent of a few dollars a week—a place where most families are just subsisting and education is hard to obtain. We’ll pay our employees more in a month than some might earn in a year. That will build heavens, educate the youth, and pay for healthcare. We’re also doing this in Vietnam, with a focus on cultural destinations, and in other new markets around the world.

If you could give luxury to everybody, would it still be luxury?

KR: The fact that it’s not accessible is often what makes luxury feel like luxury, but part of its elusiveness is that it’s also about having access to something desirable. Consider how Steve Jobs revolutionized the music industry, for example. Being able to hear my playlist anywhere, anytime, through the cloud has improved the quality of my life. It makes me feel better, makes me happy.

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IN FACT, THE WHOLE NOTION OF CONVENIENCE DOESN'T HAVE MUCH RELEVANCE ANYMORE. WHAT’S RELEVANT IS FLOW.

TATJANA DZAMBAZOVA

Dzambarova is a “technology whisperer” at Autodesk in San Francisco, helping to democratize reality capture and digital fabrication technology.

Your title suggests an untamed beast in need of gentle handling. Can you elaborate?

Tatjana Dzambarova: One of the biggest impediments to technology adoption is the fear of change. There are two ways to make technology or software. The first is that you have a known group of people or an industry with a certain problem, and you find the solution. Whipping is needed in such cases, when you’re offering new ways of doing old things. You have to be empathetic about their fears and, at the same time, excite them about the opportunities these new ways offer.

The second approach is that you see scientific or technological advancements, you connect the dots, and you come up with a new idea for something that people never did before. Did they have a problem? Not necessarily. Instead, you’re creating a need. You make people lose it. Do I have the space? Time.

I’m often asked if smart devices are good or bad for kids. Is a knife a good tool or a bad tool? If the hands of a cook, a knife can make a great meal. An artist can use it to carve a beautiful sculpture. But a murderer can kill someone with it, right? Technology is just a tool. What we make with it is up to us—it reflects our values and our humanity.

You’re working on Memento, a product that makes 3D models of almost anything from 2D photos. What prompted its development?

TD: Behind Memento are two new concepts. One is “Rip, Fix, Burn”: you rip the original, fix it, and then re-burn it back into the analog world using 3D printing or computer numerical control—CNC—machines. The other is “Rip, Mix, Learn”: you rip the original, fix it, mix it, and then use it pedagogically so people can learn from it.

My team and I have been working on democratizing the process of digitizing the analog world. We are applying Memento to the digital archiving of anything that is in museums, of any scientific artifacts. You can make 3D-printed or CNC-machined replicas that allow you to touch it in a much more tactile way. An example is the paleontologist Dr. Louise Leaky, who is digitizing the entire fossil collection of three generations of her family’s discoveries in Kenya and Tanzania. This will make it possible not only to learn about our ancestors and our origins online with the digitized fossils, but also to download and 3D-print skulls and other fossils for use in classrooms and in hands-on learning. And we have a huge opportunity to preserve our natural heritage. For example, we can capture coral reefs and document their change over time. We are also creating replicas of rare tortoises to distract the ravens that threaten them with extinction.

Will this satiate our desire to see or own the original? What happens to exclusivity?

TD: The exclusivity we associate with luxury items is increasingly about their uniqueness, their being made from rare or precious materials, and the artist’s or designer’s involvement in the making of the object. Nothing replaces the originals, but people love them and sometimes destroy them. Mementos and the digitization projects enable us our collective backup drive.

When the Smithsonian set out to digitize its collections, 98 percent of them were not on display because there isn’t enough space. By digitizing them and putting them online, the Smithsonian makes the collections available in their entirety both to visitors and to the many, many more who want to learn from them, whether they visit or not. Having a digital replica of an original doesn’t satiate your desire to see the real thing, but you can learn from it. And the digital replicas can be augmented with information. It’s not just a cursor or droning talk. You can access video and cross-referencing to get the whole story of where the real thing came from, and how it was made, and where it fits in human history.

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“We did nothing but put distraction into the design,” jokes Joseph Algrant, principal of Dwight-Englewood’s Upper School. But the new STEM Center’s transparency fulfills its intended purpose of giving students and faculty a greater awareness of what is happening across the space. It reinforces a sense that everyone is working together, with the flexibility to experiment. “The natural and organic communica-
tion that occurs is the biggest difference the new building makes,” says Jessica Leiken, Dwight-Englewood’s Science Department chair.

That integrated and collaborative mindset is essential to STEM. Getting the balance right is hard, but the STEM Center does it. The school understands that STEM is an evolving curriculum that will be influenced by the ways that faculty and students approach it. Their collaboration will change to support the students’ futures. “We’re the first generation of adults who don’t quite know what our children will be doing,” says Dr. Rodney de Jarnett, Dwight-Englewood’s head of school. Many of its graduates will be in jobs that don’t exist today, he notes. The skills they’ll need most are the integrative ones like creativity, curiosity, and entrepreneurship.

Creating better learners

While the STEM Center was in design and construction, “we talked a lot about pedagogy and how to create better learners,” Leiken says. “We focused on how students learn, not just on what we’re trying to teach them.” Research shows that students forget as much as 90 percent of what they learn in school. STEM programs are changing that. Their hands-on, just-in-time approach focuses on students learning what they need to solve problems. Experiential relevance makes knowledge stick to long-term memory and makes that knowledge available for creative application in other contexts. For this shift to happen, the space really matters, Algrant explains. “When you have a STEM curriculum, you put all the academic fiber into one building, one common space, to increase the possibility to connect all of it and pull resources from all those disciplines.”
The new classrooms are designed to allow learning to happen in new ways. The rooms and tables are large, giving a calm to what the students are doing and letting them use the space more freely. Teachers can easily walk around and see what every student is working on and where they are in their assignments, enabling the kind of one-on-one interactions they value.

Students are also encouraged to explore assignments outside of the classrooms—for instance, using the writable glass walls on the second floor to sketch out problems and stories. Physics students might go to the hall to measure wave harmonics or to the stairway to measure fluctuating energy levels in an electric field. And when they are in an assignment, enabling the kind of one-on-one interactions they value.

The excitement around STEM has grown enormously this year. And a “Sign that student engagement is thriving. It points to the broader view of education that brings learning alive. Over time, Algrant ventures, the distinction between schoolwork and extracurricular activities will give way to a more fruitful level of visibility and conversation prompts people to look at things differently.” Algrant says.

Bringing learning alive

The Center is used intensively for both academic and social activities. Every Friday, a student-led robotics group—revived by freshmen after a long lapse—meets in the common area. It’s a sign that student engagement is thriving. And it points to the broader view of education that brings learning alive. Over time, Algrant ventures, the distinction between schoolwork and extracurricular activities will give way to a more fruitful level of visibility and conversation prompts people to look at things differently.” Algrant says.

Elizabeth Snowden is a writer/editor at Gensler Communications, based in Oakland.