



PRESS RELEASE

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Image resources:
[Please Touch Museum](#)
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Information Embargoed until 2:00 pm Pacific Time, November 17, 2009

Themed Entertainment Association (TEA) Announces 16th Annual Thea Award Recipients

Annual awards for the themed entertainment industry seek, gauge and celebrate excellence in the creation of compelling places and guest experiences

Las Vegas, Tuesday, Nov. 17, 2009 - "The annual Thea Awards, presented by the Themed Entertainment Association (TEA), reflect the best among the projects and people of our industry," says TEA president Steve Thorburn of Thorburn Associates. "It was a good year for museums as people vacationed closer to home, and as our Thea Awards Committee found, museums are delivering superlative new guest experiences. Other Thea Awards illuminate the growing Asian market and its steady flow of creativity and innovation. The predominant thread of this awards cycle is a maturation in the use of technology - we've mastered the seamless and transparent blend of media and technology with live performers and physical elements - all in the service of storytelling. Ours is an industry reaching for economic recovery, and we're pleased to note that TEA grew more than 30 percent over the past two years. We extend hearty congratulations to all the new Thea Award recipients and salute them for their contributions."

The prestigious Thea Awards recognize and honor excellence in the creation of outstanding visitor experiences, attractions, exhibits and places. Truly international in their recognition of outstanding productions, the Thea Awards focus international attention on innovation within the Themed Entertainment and Experience Design Industry. The awards were created in 1994 by TEA to recognize and honor excellence all up and down the chain of creative production. The Theas honor the vision and dedication of the project owner while bestowing and recording credits for the work of the designers, technicians, vendors and suppliers who realize the project.

The Thea Awards Nominating Committee (listed below) recommended the current slate of 12 Thea recipients, with final approval by the TEA International Board of Directors. The Awards will be formally presented March 6, 2010 at the 16th Annual Thea Awards Gala, to be held at Universal Studios Hollywood and sponsored by Economics at AECOM. The Awards Gala is a formal black-tie dinner event and is open to the public. Tickets/more information: www.teaconnect.org.

MORE

Thea Awards – Add 1

Recipients - 16th Annual Thea Awards

Thea Lifetime Achievement Award: Mark Fuller, WET Design

Thea Classic Award: Coal Mine, Chicago Museum of Science and Industry

Thea Awards for Outstanding Achievement (AOA)

Toy Story Midway Mania, Disney's California Adventure and Hollywood Studios at Walt Disney World (Attraction)

Dragon's Treasure Show, City of Dreams, Macau (Attraction)

Disaster! Universal Studios Orlando (Attraction Rehab)

The Museum at Bethel Woods, New York USA (Museum)

Please Touch Museum, Philadelphia USA (Museum)

America I Am: The African American Imprint (Traveling Exhibition)

Skyscraper! Achievement & Impact, Liberty Science Center, Liberty State Park, Jersey City USA (Science Center Exhibit)

McNeil Avian Center, Philadelphia Zoo (Zoo Attraction on a Limited Budget)

Tea Show @ OCT East Resort, Shenzhen, China (Live Show)

Heineken Experience, Amsterdam (Brand Experience)

Details - 16th Annual Thea Awards Recipients

THEA LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Mark Fuller, Chair and CEO, WET

Utah native and University of Utah grad Mark Fuller is the motivating force of WET, the world leader in water feature design and technology. Fuller's firm has created a new reference for the modern water fountain by changing the nature of water as a vital component in the urban landscape. Although he eventually received his Honors Bachelor of Science degree in Civil Engineering, his studies at the University of Utah also included extensive work in theater design and physics. With an eye towards a career at Disney, his education inspired and informed his desire to create dramatic visual effects using water and other elements. Fuller wrote his honors undergraduate thesis, which also merited an award from the American Institute of Architects (AIA), on "axisymmetric laminar fluid flow." The thesis described the turbulence-free behavior of liquid that results in an arch of molecules flowing so rapidly that they seem motionless. Fuller continued studies in water flow in his graduate thesis work in design at Stanford University. After graduating from Stanford with Master's Degrees in engineering and product design, he worked in the special effects department for the Walt Disney Company for approximately six years where he supervised the creation and implementation of more than 500 special effects and water projects for EPCOT Center and Walt Disney World in Orlando, Florida. Perhaps the fountain for which he is most famous is the "Leap Frog" where laminar streams of water several feet long playfully leap from planter to planter. While at Disney, his work led to the opportunity, with Disney's blessing, to execute two fountain designs for Dan Kiley and Peter Ker Walker at Fountain Place in downtown Dallas. The success of these projects led Fuller to leave Disney to launch his own firm, dedicated exclusively to the design and engineering of water features. Fuller co-founded WET in 1983 and owns more than 50 patents on water control, lighting and air compression devices, as well as "laminar" stream technology. He has led the company from its initial complement of seven people to a firm of over two hundred, including designers from many disciplines, architects, engineers, scientists, special effects experts, physicists and technicians.

WET has received numerous design awards, including the AIA “Allied Professions Honor Award”, the Images of Universal Design Excellence Project award, co-sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts. Business awards include the World Trade Week Export Achievement Award, the LA Business Journal Genesis Award, and the California Trade and Commerce Agency’s Certificate of Excellence.
Thea Awards – Add 2

THEA CLASSIC AWARD

Coal Mine, Chicago Museum of Science and Industry, Chicago USA

Now in its 76th year of operation, The Coal Mine is a beloved favorite of visitors to the Museum of Science and Industry. Truly the grandfather of all operational interactive experiences, The Coal Mine has been taking visitors on a simulated excursion 600 ft. below the earth’s surface, daily since July 1933. While the State of Illinois does have its share of actual coal mining operations, this simulation version exists right in the heart of an urban museum. Defying all rules for a typical exhibit, this unique attraction presents no sense of artifice and uses few museum style presentational techniques to tell its story. For all practical purposes it is a real mine complete with claustrophobic effects that are heaped upon the visitors. The Thea Awards Committee noted that the attraction’s ability to completely immerse the visitor has sustained it through the grand industrial age in which it was created, the promise of the atomic era that followed, and continues to amaze even today’s virtual reality-hip visitors, making it worthy of Classic status. This themed ride anticipated similar theme park adventures by some 20 years, giving an overview of the difficulties miners encounter creating a labyrinth of passageways deep beneath the surface. An updated post show brings visitors to the computer control rooms, where every facet of modern mining is monitored by today’s technologies.

THEA AWARDS FOR OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT (AOA)

ATTRACTION

Toy Story Midway Mania,

Disney's California Adventure and Hollywood Studios at Walt Disney World, USA

Toy Story Midway Mania engages and entertains a much broader audience, and has a higher guest throughput, than generally achieved by a ride-through shooting game. The attraction was found by the Thea Awards Committee to be consistently innovative, excellently executed and reflects next-generation guest care on every detail. There is a very good visual match between the shooters and the 3-D video of projectiles, and a different type of projectile in each scene. The practice teaching round is very effective and the game is intuitively easy to learn yet with plenty of hidden discoveries to hold the interest of advanced players. Guests use shooters (sans triggers) and their targets are balloons, breaking plates, rocket ships, toys, tin cut-outs, (as opposed to aiming guns at people, animals or creatures). Tactile special effects – bursts of air, squirts of water, etc. – are triggered when guests hit specific targets. In terms of accessibility, the adjustable lap bar/shooter mount is easily able to accommodate guests whether they weigh 40 or 400 lbs and every vehicle has closed captioning. Theming hides emergency exits everywhere in plain sight, but immediately reveals exits in an emergency. It is a suite of many technical and creative innovations.

ATTRACTION

Dragon’s Treasure Show, City of Dreams Casino, Macau

Dragon's Treasure exemplifies the merger of storytelling and technology at the highest standard. Five hundred guests grip their handrails in the domed standup theater as they descend to the undersea world of the Jade Palace – a world populated by dolphins, mermaids, sea fairies, and 300-foot dragons battling for the Dragon Pearl. The audience journeys with the four Dragon Kings to their respective aquatic kingdoms in this 10-minute adventure story incorporating Eastern philosophy and Chinese mythology, and completely sans dialog. The 360-degree, 20 meter high theater called “The Bubble” presents high definition digital video

animation and a musical score composed by Academy Award winner Klaus Badelt. There are some 29,000 theatrical LED lights and a host of unique in-theater sensory effects, show action equipment, lasers and other cinematic techniques. The Thea Awards Committee praised the fact that amid all this impressive technology, the systems and effects are executed so smoothly as to be transparent and always in service to the storytelling and guest experience.
Thea Awards – Add 3

ATTRACTION REHAB

Disaster! at Universal Studios, Orlando Florida USA

The Disaster! “rehab” was deemed by the Thea Awards Committee to be an ingenious reworking of Universal Studios Florida’s former, classic Earthquake attraction (in which the worst fears of everyone who rides the San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit are realized) into a new experience. It is reinvigorated through humorous and even sarcastic writing, innovative technology and creative surprises. The Disaster! update uses star power and behind-the-scenes drama to hilarious results. Through the application of Musion holographic projection technology, actor Christopher Walken appears seemingly on stage with a live performer. Image capture technology on the old Earthquake BART ride vehicle makes every rider a part of the experience. Moreover, Universal took what was once a negative—the empty dark hallway after the BART station special effects extravaganza— and turned it into a positive via a surprise twist—Dwayne “The Rock” Johnson appearing in an over-the-top movie trailer attraction finale that stars the guests themselves.

MUSEUM

The Museum at Bethel Woods, Bethel, New York USA

The Museum at Bethel Woods is one of several venues located on nearly 2,000 acres of farmland and the site of the 1969 Woodstock Festival, and the central feature of the larger Bethel Woods Center for The Arts. The Museum is a living venue that sprang from the Woodstock Festival, a cultural event that changed popular music forever. A specific story unfolds in the Museum covering events from 1960-1969, a tumultuous decade in American history, involving music, politics, civil rights, war and peace. The changes in American life that occurred during this time are told in a compelling and emotional way. The Thea Awards Committee commended the expert use of a wide variety of exhibit tools and techniques by which visitors are drawn deep into the events and their meanings that affected millions of lives. The visitor flow through the exhibits is designed to build a compelling story, starting with a 1960s timeline that builds to summer 1969 and such iconic events and figures as Woodstock, Elvis, the U-2 Spy plane incident, the Moon landing, the Kennedy assassination, the Beatles, Bob Dylan and the Vietnam War. The exhibits bring home the message of how that dramatic period of cultural history changed America and American life forever. In addition to the experience inside the museum, visitors make a connection to Woodstock by participating in live music performances in an outdoor music arena on the very field where the Festival took place.

MUSEUM

Please Touch Museum, Philadelphia USA

Please Touch Museum has been the children’s museum of Philadelphia since 1976. In October 2008, the museum relocated and expanded to the fully restored Memorial Hall in Fairmount Park, the last significant structure from the 1876 Centennial World’s Fair and a Philadelphia treasure. At over 150,000 square feet, Please Touch Museum is one of the largest children’s museums in the world. The museum’s mission, “To enrich the lives of children by creating learning opportunities through play,” is achieved through unique exhibits and environments that employ everyday objects and surroundings. Visitors begin in the Great Hall, a spectacular dome-enclosed space that features a 40-foot replica of the Statue of Liberty’s Arm and Torch, created of toys, games and found objects. Exhibits inside the museum include Flight Fantasy where children can power, build and test flying machines, and Roadside Attractions in which children can repair an automobile, get behind the seat of the SEPTA bus or pilot the John

Wanamaker Department Store Monorail. The Thea Awards Committee noted that with a combination of hands-on exhibits and experiences, both low-tech and technically innovative, plus live entertainment, a historic carousel, and visitor-friendly programming, Please Touch Museum delivers extraordinary experiences that work simultaneously for adults and for children.

Thea Awards – Add 4

TRAVELING EXHIBITION

America I Am: The African American Imprint

Tavis Smiley, renowned radio and television host, envisioned a groundbreaking exhibition that would relate the African American experience, juxtaposing artifacts, images and graphics with riveting, 21st century media and immersive elements. He secured a generous sponsorship from Wal-Mart and partnered with traveling exhibition producers, AEG/AEI, and *America I Am: The African American Imprint* (AIA) was launched, using all the tools that Experience Industry professionals have to offer, *America I Am* demonstrates that “American” does not denote any single domain of ethnicity or culture, but rather a rich, diverse, collective history of many who have come to this country, whether in chains or not. History and the written and spoken word came together to create a three-acts-plus closing dramatic story structure, and shed light on a complex part of the American experience that has not been fully told. The Thea Awards Committee observed that *America I Am* pushes the boundaries of exhibition presentation in a captivating format that tells an important historical story in a fresh and new way. The 12,000 square foot traveling exhibition features 10 galleries – that include an expansive collection of important artifacts as well as three theater spaces. *America I Am* opened Jan 15, 2009 – the official birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr. – at the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia, a few hundred yards from the Liberty Bell and just five days before Barack Obama was sworn in as the first African-American President of the United States. It will continue to tour the US for three more years.

SCIENCE CENTER EXHIBIT

Skyscraper! Achievement & Impact

Liberty Science Center, Liberty State Park, Jersey City, New Jersey USA

This unique and timely exploration of the ever-present but oft-misunderstood urban icon, the skyscraper, was praised by the Thea Awards Committee as interactive, multi-disciplinary, informative, immersive, budget conscious, and inspirational. The 12,800 square foot visitor experience manifests across-the-board excellence in design and execution and most of all in the inventive, unique and totally immersive development of the skyscraper exhibits. Aiming to enlighten visitors about the complexity of the planning and construction of skyscrapers, the exhibits engage guests in the wide variety of work disciplines to help illuminate science, engineering and technology as well as to inspire future careers in the construction industry. The entire process of skyscraper planning and construction is deconstructed using multimedia, full body interactives and experiment-based lab stations. Moving from the first Zone that introduces the Skyscraper as a building environment, Zone 2 allows guests to experiment with building and city planning and explore the real world elements – wind forces, materials and mechanical systems - that impact design. At the Zone 3 construction site, hard-hat wearing guests find out what it is like to walk an I-Beam, operate a construction crane, and experience how 100 mph rain and wind force impacts a curtain wall. In the final zone, all the experiences coalesce in a look toward the environmental impact and global future of skyscrapers. Five years in the making, Skyscraper is a key feature entry experience to the \$109 million upgrade of the Liberty Science Center which looks across the Hudson River to the lower Manhattan skyline where the Twin Towers once featured so prominently. Skyscraper achieves an engaging balance of education, entertainment, guest participation and involvement.

ZOO ATTRACTION ON A LIMITED BUDGET

McNeil Avian Center, Philadelphia Zoo, Philadelphia USA

The newest attraction at America's oldest zoo opened to the public in the spring of 2009. The McNeil Avian Center introduces guests to the remarkable world of birds through a uniquely integrated combination of live animal exhibits; bird show demonstrations, replicated natural habitats, interactive and interpretive experiences, and audiovisual theater programs. These are all presented in a stunning contemporary setting that preserves key features of the Zoo's landmark Bird House Building while creating entirely new interiors and exhibits, including a dedicated multimedia theater space and a dramatic fully immersive free-flight tropical forest aviary. The Thea Awards Committee finds that the Philadelphia Zoo has brought to life an amazing venue with a very small budget and footprint that inspires and educates all who experience it. The combination of up close and personal sights, sounds and smells of the real habitats and inhabitants with the multimedia journey that pulls the viewer in and makes people better able to relate to these special creatures is a truly unique experience. The McNeil Avian Center has set a new standard that may be used as a template for educating the world about the beauty, diversity, amazing instincts and endurance of these creatures.

LIVE SHOW

Tea Show @ OCT East Resort, Shenzhen, China

Praised by the Thea Awards Committee as inventive, interesting and dramatic, the Tea Show is a permanent, live hour-long show with a cast of more than 200, installed in a purpose-built theater at the OCT East Resort. The show uses images, choreography, music and all forms of theatrical magic to create an exciting and dramatic narrative about the history of tea and its relationship to Buddhist culture - a complicated and nuanced story, yet told with simplicity. Each production number has its own unique character and style, and the show's music score is a resonant mixture of contemporary and traditional motifs. Technology was cleverly blended into the live show vocabulary. Digital scenery, dancers and effects are displayed on a large format LCD screen, with real scenery, a front projection scrim, lighting and live performers all woven together into a seamless dramatic tapestry. The scale of the digital scenery to the performers was precise and consistent and never upstaging the live performers.

BRAND EXPERIENCE

The Heineken Experience, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

The observation of the Thea Awards Committee was that this reinvention of the Heineken Brewery Tour in Amsterdam has raised the bar for corporate experiences world wide. This total makeover of the brewery tour, the *New Heineken Experience*, educates and entertains the visitor with information about how beer is made and the experience of actual brewing, using the magic of storytelling. It is active, immersive, involving, fun and of a quality in keeping with the image of the product itself. As a corporate experience, the *New Heineken Experience* is a breakthrough because it is a celebration of the world of the customer rather than of the product, and because it speaks in a way that is meaningful to Heineken's primary audience of 18- to 30-year olds (18 is legal drinking age in Holland). Using quality, immersive storytelling techniques, the Experience delivers an intelligent but engaging sensory explanation of beer making. Guests can see, smell, taste and even help with the brewing process. Then, in a twist, guests can experience the brewing process from inside the brew kettles, in a simulation called "Brew You," before raising their mugs for the finale.

About The Themed Entertainment Association (TEA)

The Themed Entertainment Association is an international nonprofit organization, founded in 1991 and based in Burbank, Calif. USA. TEA represents over 7,000 creative specialists, from architects to designers, technical specialists to master planners, scenic fabricators to artists, and builders to feasibility analysts working in over 600 firms in 39 different countries. TEA is dedicated to connecting organizations seeking to engage, enchant, educate and entertain their guests and visitors with the creators of compelling places and experiences worldwide. Its members have conceived, designed, fabricated and produced highly successful experience-based exhibits, attractions and interactives for museums, science centers, corporate visitor centers, live events and live performance venues, themed entertainment and retail centers, casinos and resorts, themed restaurants, aquariums, zoos, heritage centers, theme parks and more. TEA presents the annual Thea Awards and the TEA Summit and hosts the annual SATE Conference (Story, Architecture, Technology, Experience). TEA also produces a variety of print and electronic publications, including the TEA/AECOM Global Attraction Attendance Report, TEA Project Management Guidelines, and TEA Annual & Directory. Visit the TEA exhibit booth at the IAAPA Attractions Expo (booth 6059) and on the Web at teaconnect.org.

About the Thea Awards

Like the TEA, the Thea Awards, sponsored by Economics at AECOM, were created to bring recognition to achievement, talent and personal excellence within the themed entertainment industry. From a modest beginning in 1994, the Thea Awards have become internationally recognized as a symbol of excellence. The public is welcome to attend the black tie 16th Annual Thea Awards Gala, which will be held March 6, 2010 at the Globe Theater, Universal Studios Hollywood. Tickets may be ordered online at teaconnect.org. The name of the award is a play on three words: the first is "Thea," the Greek goddess from whom all light emanates. Thea was the mother of Helios (the sun), Eos (the dawn), and Selene (the moon). The second key word is "Theater," a word derived from the goddess Thea. The third word, of course, is TEA, the name of our association.

About Economics at AECOM

Economics at AECOM (formerly ERA/Economics Research Associates) is an international consulting firm focused on economic analysis for the entertainment and leisure industry, real estate development, public-policy analysis, tourism, and economic development. Since its founding in 1958, Economics at AECOM has completed over 15,000 assignments yielding unmatched experience in land use economics. In the process, the firm has made important contributions to some of the world's most innovative and successful development projects. Their projects span the globe and range from repositioning single land uses to New Towns planned over 30 years. In broad terms, Economics at AECOM assists private developers and public agencies in assessing the future economics and outcomes of real estate projects and economic development plans. Economics at AECOM offers a diverse array of economic analysis and tools to answer complex problems. Website: aecom.com

Thea Awards Nominating Committee

Dawn Hollingsworth (Visual Terrain), Chair
Larry Wyatt (MSI Design), Vice-Chair
Craig Hanna (Thinkwell) TEA International Board Liaison
Karen McGee (BRC Imagination Arts) Coordinator
Marty Sklar (Walt Disney Imagineering)
Harrison “Buzz” Price (Harrison Price Corp.)
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Yves Pépin (ECA2)
Bob Rogers (BRC Imagination Arts)
Jack Rouse (Jack Rouse Associates)
Bob Ward (Strategic Insights and Creative Imagination)
George Wiktor (The Hettema Group)
Jeremy Railton (Entertainment Design Corp.)
Steve McIntyre (Anitech Systems, Inc.)
John Robinett (Economics at AECOM)
Nancy Seruto (Seruto & Co.)
Brad Merriman (Management Resources)
Patricia MacKay (Ones and Zeros)