

WHERE THE WORLD TURNS



It is as true now as it has ever been: you cannot prepare for the future unless you first understand the past. London's Great Exhibition of 1851 stands proud as the first World Expo ever held, but not perhaps in the way we understand the term today. Early World Expos were wholehearted celebrations of manufacturing – of industry's presumed dominance over the natural world and its power to refine the raw earth and turn it into useful goods.

Before 1851, there had been 20 years of political and social upheaval across Europe; afterwards, these societies felt there could be only constant technological progress. The world stood at a moment of change, and London's Great Exhibition of 1851 was the pivot on which it turned – seeking to instill optimism and hope for a better future.

TURNING A CORNER

And, for the most part, they were right. The appetite continued for steam locomotives, telegraphs, and textile looms alike – inventions that largely bettered the world, then and long into the future.

Expo 2020 Dubai now finds itself at a moment just as pivotal, where recent events remind us of humankind's fragility, but also its might – exemplified by the global development of vaccines across the world.

Talk to Marjan Faraidooni, Expo 2020's Chief Experience Officer, and you see that the first World Expo ever held in the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia acknowledges this responsibility, as it prepares to welcome the world for 6 months from 1 October 2021.

This gives Expo 2020, with its main theme of 'Connecting Minds, Creating the Future', a purpose that also goes far beyond a celebratory role, for it also considers itself to be a pivot – from the unsustainable to the sustainable, capturing the world's imagination by welcoming the best minds and the most innovative ideas from around the globe.

A great example of this is Expo's 'Terra' [Sustainability](#) Pavilion. One of 3 thematic pavilions, Terra opened temporarily as a way to offer attendees an early sneak peek into what Expo has to offer. Designed to be net-zero for both energy and water, Terra features almost 3,000 solar panels on a 130-meter-wide roof canopy, as well as a mini forest of 'energy trees' – home to 2,160 panels – that sustainably capture energy from sunlight.

A CONTINUATION OF 1851

Expo 2020 is a continuation and celebration of the same optimism that drove the Great Exhibition. The 252 [Christie D4K40-RGB](#) pure laser projectors that illuminate [Al Wasl dome](#) – turning the beating heart of Expo into one of the largest 360-degree projection surfaces in the world – are just one example of the extraordinary feats that have gone into creating the Expo site. Marjan points out that one of Expo's key messages is optimism for the future – to illustrate humanity's potential to come together to address some of the greatest challenges facing the planet and its people.

"Our World Expo is really about the connection of the human spirit – this is something embedded in everything we do. For us to move forward as a global collective, especially in the context of where the world currently stands, it cannot only be about invention," Marjan shares. "It's about the spirit of human progress and how important it remains for us to continue to collaborate, at every level of society, to create a cleaner, safer, healthier world for everyone."

PIVOTAL MOMENTS IN UAE

Are we better equipped than the world was in 1851? Of course we are, and our capacity to come together has vastly improved. But it would be foolish to imagine there won't be bumps along the road towards a truly sustainable future. Will Expo 2020 prove to be a pivotal moment in that process? In a testament to its optimism for the future, Expo's temporary opening of Terra has already shown visitors its engaging, playful, and personal visitor experience. All while bringing to life the UAE and Expo's commitment to sustainability to catalyse global change. As Marjan says, "We're very proud of our optimism here in the UAE, and we believe that this optimism – one that says 'world, we believe in you' – will grow stronger as we build a brighter future together."

For more information on Christie at Expo 2020 visit christiedigital.com/expo2020

HOT DESKS. WHY CHRIS KANE THINKS OFFICES ARE AN AV BONANZA



What will it be like when we go back to the office if we go back at all? What will it mean for the AV business? According to [“Where is My Office”](#) author [Chris Kane](#), the one thing we can be sure of is that it won’t be what we once knew or anything like we imagine.

Get ready, says Chris, for “Patchwork quilt working.”

“And stop thinking of this as a binary choice. It’s not working from home or working from the office that will win out. This is not a battle between two absolutes. Something entirely new is emerging.” And why is he so sure of this? Well, Chris was vice-president of international corporate real estate for The Walt Disney Company and head of corporate real estate when the BBC moved wholesale from its London HQ and from analog to digital as it did so. He understands workspaces, especially creative workspaces.

The reasons Chris gives are both subtle and complex, but in essence he can detect shifts in the balance of power that has kept centralized working in the ascendant since the early 19th century – the pandemic, he says, has merely served as an accelerant to an existing trend. “Work will soon be a whole raft of things at different times in different places with different people – a patchwork quilt of working.”

TECHNOLOGY HAS LEFT THE BUILDING

Tech, of course, and the astounding capability of today's personal tech has literally put power in the hands and homes of most office-based workers. Now that we know cloud computing works and Zoom and Teams have taken over, much of the need to gather together is gone. That's a power shift right there, says Chris, but it hasn't entirely removed the collaborative, creative ways of working that agile businesses need; gathering places are still required. Not meeting rooms where hierarchies are reinforced, but [AV-rich ad-hoc creative spaces](#) where they're discarded, and new ideas are generated - something emerging generations are already familiar with.

NOBODY GOES TO WORK ANYMORE

The idea you have to go somewhere to work is becoming outdated, especially for anyone growing up in a time of networking and abundant choice. If stuff, increasingly, comes to you, why should work be any different? Chris shares, "With a shift from shareholder to stakeholder value, the differentiating factor for employers is going to be one where they will have to authentically demonstrate that they are an employer of choice. And if AI and automation deliver as we think it will, the work only humans can do will have huge value."

If attracting good people to your business is critical, it seems you'd best make sure your workplaces are attractive too. And if that's something real estate owners have previously not considered their concern, they'll soon have to.

PROPERTY'S BROKEN BUSINESS MODEL

Chris maintains that the current power structure where developers can build office space, then lease it for a fixed period, collecting rent automatically three months in advance, is so out of step with the agility the of rest of the business world it won't last. Disruption is inevitable, and the slow - soon-to-be rapid - breakdown of this model is the true driver.

"What's known as flexible space is already at 10% and is forecast to grow to 30%; I can see it easily reaching 50%. There's going to be a fundamental shift to real estate as a service - niche models, like subscription, that mean the real estate business is going to have to work a lot harder to get people to come in."

It seems the office we once knew was already doomed because the social and financial ecosystems that kept it alive are no longer there to sustain it. It wasn't COVID or tech or society; it was just wrong.

"THE BIGGEST OPPORTUNITY FACING THE AV BUSINESS"

Three times during his interview with us, Chris Kane said he saw the changes he detects as the most significant opportunity facing the AV business. Partly because employees will demand it, partly because employers will need to offer it, but wholly because the old commercial real estate operating system can't survive in its present form.

It's a bold claim, but given Chris Kane's reputation and track record, we're inclined to believe him.

LET'S DO IT AGAIN. RITUAL MAKES CINEMA SPECIAL



Surprisingly, it was the little rituals that made it special, never the big gestures. When visits to cinemas were - we will be polite and say less sophisticated than they are now - it was the accumulation of little things that added up to something more than the whole could ever be.

It was sickly sweets eaten on sticky seats, velvet ropes on gold poles guarding auditorium entrances, the expectant queue you endured in the drizzle - the cheap paper ticket passed from behind a glass screen as though it were the most valuable thing in the world. The way even now the smell of popcorn transports you back to faded foyers.

MAGIC HAPPENS HERE

The idiosyncratic inefficiencies of those old cinemas - inefficiencies now removed - came together to form a mini-drama that played for every screening. A ceremony marking the boundaries of a different world that had rules very different to those outside. This place, those rituals said, is extraordinary. Magic happens here.

And it would be a shame if today's streamlined and incomparably efficient cinemas ever lost that feeling. Their picture quality may be light years ahead of the old, the sound astounding, the concessions actually edible, but let's not lose the 'je ne sais quoi' we once had.

STREAMING CAN'T MATCH THE CEREMONY OF CINEMA

It matters if that goes missing because streaming—no matter how big its production budgets, or the talent it attracts, or the awards it collects—can never match the ceremony of cinema. It's our [One Ring](#), our superpower, our [Elder Wand](#).

Sure, you can stream movies, close the curtains, turn off the big light, order pizza and switch the soundbar to cinema mode, but it isn't the same. It can never be the same and will never be special enough because you'll always be at home. Press pause or answer the door and the spell is gone.

And that thing cinema loves to talk of - of it being a shared experience? Well, add ritual, and you give audiences shared emotions and cultural cues too. Suddenly we're common-minded companions on the same journey - that's why football crowds chant, why rock fans crowd surf (and buy merchandise by the bushel) - because those rituals make us feel a part of events we share.

Could this shared experience also be the reason we remember visits to the cinema with such affection and clarity? The first movies we saw, the first nervous hands we held, and yes, the age we lied about to get in - all part of the shared [cinema](#) experience we pass on to new generations.

CINEMA DESERVES MORE

Movie theatres with no sense of theatre are just buildings where films are shown - and cinema deserves and is much more than that. It's the ceremony of meeting friends, sharing rituals only you know, making memories together that only you share. One day we may even remember 6-foot floor markers and plexiglass at the registers with fondness.

Cinema is a unique art form; it needs its galleries and its places of celebration just as much as any other art form, and cinemas are those places. So, let's keep cinema's little rituals alive; the inconsequential things that help make cinemas living, breathing, life-affirming creators of our shared experiences.

MISSING OUT



This is a love letter to going out. To its sheer unpredictability, to its chaos, to the wonders of a beautifully messy, 'didn't we have a good time?' adventurous night out.

You see, it's not just the planned events we've been missing. Not just the movies we intended to see that never released, or the bands that didn't tour, or the long-anticipated family gatherings that never came together. It wasn't only the scheduled stuff we lost that has left our lives poorer.

It was the things we could never have planned. Discovering that restaurant down that side-street that serves those rice and peas. Seeing the movie that changes your life, that you only saw because you ducked inside to get out of the rain.

Perhaps you even found love, and life's partner, in going-out's nightly rolling of the social dice. It was the fashionable way, once.

YOU CAN'T GET THAT AT HOME

For those of us who are in the business of providing planned [entertainment](#), it is easy to forget that uncertainty is a core part of going out's appeal. It's not about the familiar and the safe - that you can get at home - it's about the unexpectedly exciting. That's what fires the craving for 'out' whenever the pandemic locks us 'in'.

You're at home, streaming a movie. What do you do when it ends? Make another coffee, scroll online, go to bed? The end of that movie is the end of the affair, and that's that. There's no nipping into a bar for a nightcap, no tasty street food to sample, no selfies to share - just the familiar. And a lot of it at that.

So, when lockdown ends - probably more as a gradual loosening than a big bang - will we keep to our home-bound habits? There will be some hangover certainly, but it seems unlikely that we'll never venture out again.

NOTHING COMPARES

We don't go 'out' because it's convenient, or because it's cheap, or because there's no alternative. We love going out because nothing, nothing, nothing compares to the heady mix of being among friends and strangers simultaneously, where anything is possible and anything can happen.

Working from home may endure, but the chance of us all shutting the world out for all time and for evermore is vanishingly small. When you sleep there, eat there, and put in eight hours work there, who isn't going to want to escape once in a while?

This then, ends our love letter to the irreplaceable, unpredictable joy of just going out and seeing what happens - because ain't nothing gonna happen when you've sat at home.

THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART PLANS FOR THE FUTURE OF THE PAST



The [Cleveland Museum of Art](#) has been praised, rightly, for its sure-footed response to the pandemic. It has been able to make its [collection](#) even more widely accessible, on the heels of the museum's landmark launch of Open Access- and has been able to do so at relative speed. From March-December 2020, there was a 153% increase in Open Access downloads over 2019, clear evidence their web-based initiatives had inspired home audiences.

So why was it able to pivot with elegance from an open world to a locked-down one? What had they done to make them so nimble?

On March 14, when the reality of the pandemic took hold, and CMA closed to the public, the museum's cross-collaborative teams quickly shifted focus to creating online toolsets. But rather than put existing experiences online, they asked what a future museum experience online should look like. The CMA created multiple new resources, under the umbrella "Home is Where the Art Is," creating experiences that allow people to engage with the collection. They give them meaning, place them in context, and aid understanding of the world. An artefact being just old, or simply beautiful, is never enough unless you know the story it tells.

"ONE SOURCE OF TRUTH"

The Cleveland Museum of Art has established what Jane Alexander, their Chief Digital Information Officer calls their "One Source of Truth", where backend systems are integrated and can update every 15 minutes. Add an image, and all the metadata appears everywhere, from Collection Online

to the ARTLENS Gallery.

Continuously updated (every week, over two hundred objects may be installed), the Cleveland Museum of Art is well prepared when a new exhibition is planned, or a pandemic strikes. The backbone of the museum's tech infrastructure, this "One Source of Truth" drives everything from the description on the walls to the information in the Collection Online.

As Jane explains, this was initially conceived to allow the museum to be nimble and flexible. When the team is creating a new interactive experience, or a new display appears on the market, the backend can cope and not force a grassroots rethink. An example is the Christie® MicroTiles® based [ArtLens Wall](#), a 40 ft, interactive multitouch wall that displays - in real-time - all the works from the permanent collection currently on view in the galleries.

At any moment, any curator, educator or collections manager can update information on any object in collection, from the integrated backend system to any outward facing platform shifting to reflect what is on view. And because the CMA had the foresight, long before the pandemic, to remove barriers between visitors and the collection, its videowalls remain impressive. Touch-free interactivity and mobile device interfaces feel like natural extensions rather than gimmicky bolt-ons - it continues to invite visitors to understand art and artmaking through intuition, play, and creativity.

ADDICTIVE, EXPLOSIVE AND EXPONENTIAL

So, how did this translate during the pandemic? One popular digital toolset is a reverse-image search for exploring the CMA collection [online](#). Upload your own pictures, and AI will use machine learning to find visually similar images in the collection - offering fresh ideas every time you hit 'shuffle'. It's a fascinating and addictive way to explore using images you snapped or drew. Did you see what the great masters saw? Are there hidden resonances to ancient art? You can [try it yourself and see](#).

All this is possible only because of that backend investment - as is the richly populated 'From Home' section of the website where the museum stays open even when it's closed. Or the publicly accessible [live Open Access dashboards](#) where you can see which objects are most popular or being viewed on Wikipedia and other partner repositories. These showed explosive and exponential activity during lockdowns - neatly demonstrating the reach of the CMA's collection.

ONE WORLD

AV is part of an ecosystem of information that adjusts to changes around it. That, in CMA's case, meant investing for the unknown. But by utilizing existing technology and a flexible backend, they have pivoted to a new reality with speed, responding to an ever-shifting landscape with quality, digital toolsets and creating innovative experiences for everyone.

Visit Christie for more [videowall](#) solutions.

CHANGE HAPPENS, JUST ASK THE ARMY



For most of human history, if you wanted to go any distance - to the next town - or war - you got on your horse.

But things change. They change all the time. And because we've been lucky enough to live in a relatively stable world for the past fifty or so years, it has always been easy to equate change with progress. It didn't always feel that way. Then suddenly, COVID-19, and it didn't for us either.

HORSEPOWER NEEDED

Conmy Hall was built at a time when it was still unthinkable, lunatic even, to think we wouldn't need some kind of horsepower. It was a 1934 state-of-the-art indoor equestrian facility for General George Patton's mounted troops. Then stuff happened, and riders and horses were put out to grass. Irresistible change had come to the United States Army just as surely as it has come to us, leaving a very large and very underused building behind. And some horses.

What happened next wasn't so much a pivot but an entire dressage of change, with Conmy Hall becoming by turns a gymnasium, then an indoor ceremonial area, and a venue for multi-agency briefings and strategy sessions. With seating for 1,200, it's a huge arena - as it would need to be to accommodate a troop of horses at full trot or a U.S. Army band at full volume. Indeed the 12-million-pixel, 144-foot-wide [Christie® CorePlus LED videowall](#) that now runs its length even has a 25-foot automated pull-out entry built directly into it - retractable at a touch of a button.

No wonder the U.S. Army, the White House, and the Department of Defense now use the 35,000 square foot indoor space for their ceremonies and presentations.

END OF AN ERA

Quite what the men who trained and rode and cared for the horses would make of that no one is sure, but they'd probably lament the ending of an era that had given them purpose and employment. Where we see progress, they would have seen something very different. And now we find ourselves in their position too, speculating on what the future might bring, wondering how social changes like working from home will alter markets or if social distancing will continue to hamper shared experiences.

No doubt the very companies who carried out the [Conmy Hall installation](#) are thinking along those lines right now; companies like [The Bridge Group](#), VCB Events LLC, and [Quince Imaging](#) are not ones to rest on their laurels.

HUNGRY FOR CHANGE

That's the thing about the AV industry; it's traditionally good at handling change - hungry for the next big thing or the next social trend. It's true that this change has been incremental in the past, but is there any reason to believe that AV will be any less successful this time, just because this time it's wholesale? It seems unlikely.

What seems more likely is that it will take even significant changes in its stride. It won't be easy, these things never are, but you have to jump the hurdles where you find them.

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