

captivate [kap-tuh-veyt]

-verb

1. to attract and hold the attention or interest of, as by allure or excellence.



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brew-seum

InPark interviews BRC Imagination Arts' **Scott Ault** on the new **Heineken Experience** in Amsterdam

Is Heineken a museum or a visitor center?

It's both. It's one of those odd hybrids. The original brewery is an historic landmark and is part of the industrial heritage tour of the Netherlands. The building is itself protected. Part of the experience is a museum because it takes you through the history of Heineken from its founding up to the present day. Heineken is a family business, so the narrative of the museum takes you through the multiple generations involved in the business. In that sense, then, it is a historically based museum. The theme statement we developed for the project was "Born in Amsterdam, raised by the world, cheers!" We had to present the company's history in order to satisfy that "born in Amsterdam" ideal.

What role did BRC play in the project?

BRC designed and produced the entire visitor experience. All of the exhibits, all of the media, the interactives and talking points for the hosts. The original layout was sort of disjointed, though that being said, it was still successful. Heineken wanted it to be a more cohesive story from the beginning to the end and allow for more capacity and throughput. We literally added an entire floor to the exhibit. Because it is an old brewery the building is sort of a convoluted maze, and it took several months just to figure out what the visitor flow through the facility should be. The building goes from

-1 level to +3 level: five floors of touring, and it's not all sequential. The tour is self-guided, so we had to ensure people could find their way through the attraction. There are hosts stationed throughout the building to help and there are some exhibits that are hosted that have a live presenter who can answer questions and help direct.

What is educational about it?

You learn to brew beer. People are educated about brewing by taking them back to the original brewers. You learn about the original ingredients. You see, touch and taste the raw ingredients, assisted by a Brewmaster. Then there is a Tastemaster who provides a tasting and teaches guests how to recognize the qualities of beer: the proper pour, the right head, color, and smell, as well as what you should taste in it. It is organized very much like a wine tasting. The whole experience is very interactive, with many educational components, but it is done in a fun manner. We like to say "It's not your grandfather's brewery tour."

What was their goal?

One of the primary goals was they wanted the attraction to be self-sustaining, they didn't want to have to keep putting money into it, other than regular updates. The museum

is also about extending brand outreach. Many younger people who come to Europe, including Amsterdam, do beer tours across Europe, just like wine tours. This creates a unique niche market of people who seek out the brewery tour, in addition to the general populace who is interested in the Heineken brand. The company wanted this to be a must-see attraction for tourists coming to Amsterdam, just like the van Gogh museum or a coffee shop. They wanted the Heineken experience to be in the top ten things to do.

Are corporations good stewards of truth and information as museums are supposed to be?

Yes and no. We have been trained to be more skeptical, but if you look at brands that are ubiquitous, like Apple, it is completely American and very much tied into the culture. If they opened an Apple visitor center, or museum, it would work. They haven't been around long enough to have a perspective of history, but people are very supportive and loyal to the Apple brand and its heritage. Part of what we did with Heineken was to look at the industrial heritage, how was beer made in 1870 versus now. The main room where the kettles are is full of beautiful stained glass- the room feels like a cathedral. You could never have that connection to the past, or pique the public's interest with an AIG Museum. **ipm**



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