

GLOBAL DESIGN RESET

A PRIMER TO
BUSINESS OF
DESIGN WEEK
2021 and BEYOND



INTRODUCTION

What lies ahead?

Our post-pandemic world is in a state of flux, and we have never been more in need of a new beginning. Navigating the future calls for fresh thinking, decisive leadership, and collaborative creativity across disciplines.

In this report, we explore eight movements that define our lived experiences, each of which have witnessed disruption in ways big and small: **Brand Rejuvenation, Connected Health & Wellbeing, Creative Mindset and Innovation Leadership, Culture & The City, Designing an Intelligent Future, Hospitality with Purpose, New Urban Models,** and **Phygital Reality.**

As global business leaders envisage a game-changing plan to chart a purposeful path forward, societies must find the talent, confidence, and innovation needed to meet the challenges of a rapidly evolving world and execute big ideas across various fields, so that we can rewrite, redesign, and rebuild the future we desire.

Rethink, Refresh, and Reset with leading entrepreneurs, creatives, and designers from different sectors who will collectively shine a light on how we can thrive amid crisis, co-create a sustainable future, and make a meaningful impact through human-centred design and technology.

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Hong Kong Design Centre is a non-governmental organisation, and was founded in 2001 as a strategic partner of the HKSAR Government in establishing Hong Kong as an international centre of design excellence in Asia. Our public mission is to promote wider and strategic use of design and design thinking to create business value and improve societal well-being, with the aim of advancing Hong Kong as an international design centre in Asia. Learn more about us at **www.hkdesigncentre.org**.



BRAND REJUVENATION

HOW CAN BRANDS STAY RELEVANT? WHAT ARE THE HALLMARKS OF AN EXCITING BRAND? HOW MUCH DOES RESILIENCE PLAY A PART IN REJUVENATION? CAN BRANDS DELIVER PURPOSE—AND HOW? WHAT IS THE FUTURE OF RETAIL?

The most successful and exciting brands today have certain things in common: clear, purposeful narratives, and the ability to evolve and stay relevant amid a fickle landscape. Policy makers and stakeholders call for sustainable development that affect change to industries across sectors. This is fertile ground where design and material innovation, cultural propositions, sustainable production, and agile business models can make a difference for the betterment of people's lives.

Striking visual identity. Brand trust and an exceptional corporate reputation. Leaders who inspire both inside and outside of the company. A purposeful vision that has to do with more than just elevating the bottom line. An advocacy that resonates. Brands that make an impact on their industry peers as well as consumers typically tick most, if not all, of these qualities. Creating buzz around a brand may be a seasoned marketer's mandate and tools of the trade – influencer marketing, for example – are often employed, but once the word is out and a brand has milked its exposure in the press and on advertisements, what makes a brand truly unforgettable can be difficult to pin down.

Brand purpose – or the “why” behind its existence – is often a differentiating factor that defines a company and allows it to resonate with its desired audience. In today's landscape, it is important to ask: What matters to customers now? Surveys find that consumers are more mindful of a number of issues that affect the planet as a whole: from sustainable living and promoting a net-zero economy to encouraging diversity, equity, and inclusion. For example, a McKinsey report said two-thirds of surveyed consumers stated the importance of limiting impacts on climate change, with 67 percent considering the use of sustainable materials as a factor in making a purchase and 63 percent saying a brand's promotion of sustainability made a difference. To effectively reinvigorate a brand's reputation and elevate its stature to a wider audience, it's no longer enough to just tap the right key opinion leaders – a brand will have to walk the talk.

CONNECTED HEALTH & WELLBEING

IS HEALTHCARE RIPE FOR DISRUPTION? HOW CAN THE AGEING EXPERIENCE BE IMPROVED AND MORE INCLUSIVE? IS WELLNESS JUST A BUZZWORD? WHAT TECHNOLOGIES WILL HOSPITALS ADOPT IN THE NEAR FUTURE?

The Covid-19 pandemic will not be the last global health crisis. Design for wellbeing, particularly in ageing societies, is in need of radical transformation. Future wellness requires ever more profound innovations in myriad aspects of our lives, ranging from the urban environment we inhabit and the lifestyles we adopt, down to the food we consume. It's time to reinterpret wellbeing from an integrated human-centred design, technology, and service perspective.

We are entering a new era in healthcare. Made ever more urgent by today's times, technology is transforming the industry in more ways than one. *The Future is Here*, produced by The Economist Intelligence Unit, cites our future hospitals will increasingly rely on robotics, artificial intelligence, and other digital technologies, with healthcare professionals able to automate many of their physical and mental tasks through combinations of hardware and software.

On remote healthcare, telemedicine and telehealth are progressing. While the world's first successful telesurgery procedure took place in 2001, remote healthcare has taken off especially during the pandemic, which has discouraged many would-be patients from taking non-essential trips to the hospital for extended periods of time.

Also on the horizon is the preventive healthcare. No longer just a buzzword, wellness has grown into a formidable global industry now estimated as a US\$4.5 trillion market by the Global Wellness Institute – encompassing traditional and complementary medicine, preventive and personalized medicine and public health, mental wellness, wellness tourism and real estate, and much more. Improved health, nutrition, sleep and mindfulness are just a few of the drivers behind the burgeoning industry. Digital tools such as fitness trackers and meditation-focused apps like Headspace and Calm are also making it easier for wellness to become more accessible to a larger market.

And in places with ageing populations, improving the experience of growing old must also be regarded with importance. Elderly and end-of-life care require imagination and more compassion, even in places such as Hong Kong, where healthcare systems are already considered highly efficient. Opportunities abound for healthcare to become more holistic, inclusive, and humane.



CREATIVE MINDSET AND INNOVATION LEADERSHIP

HOW CAN THOSE AT THE TOP INSPIRE AND LEAD AS EFFECTIVELY AS POSSIBLE? WHAT WILL IT TAKE TO FUTURE-PROOF A BUSINESS? HOW CAN ONE PUT AN INNOVATION MINDSET INTO ACTION?

Global challenges from climate change to inequality continue to impede economies, cities, corporations, and people. Inspiring optimism for the future, learn about the advocacies of great minds – from renowned architects and design thinking gurus to business leaders and educators – who are crafting new ideas and design manifestos that promote awareness, arouse empathy, and sustain change in meaningful ways.

Leadership is not as straightforward as it used to be – and new realities, particularly following a cataclysmic event such as the pandemic, require not only experience and hard and soft skills, but also courage, a willingness to collaborate, and a creative mindset to bridge the gap. For many executives, the pandemic served as a much-needed wake-up call. Apart from the need to safeguard company incomes, top management suddenly had an equally pressing mandate to protect their employees' security and stability.

Alongside Covid-19 disruption, a host of other core issues present constant challenges to innovate faster and more effectively. Leaders are called to act immediately to meet the demands of society at large. Addressing climate change through net-zero targets and other environmental commitments, no easy feat for small and large corporations alike, is an urgent expectation; as is acting on advocacies that resonate with their customers.

The world's perception of good leadership has changed somewhat. When it comes to successful business transformation and leadership in crisis, those who continue to succeed have a variety of things they share: the ability to communicate internally and externally with empathy, build credibility and trust through transparency, and model an innovation mindset.

CULTURE AND THE CITY

WHAT WILL TOMORROW'S MUSEUMS LOOK LIKE? HOW CAN CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS ENGAGE THE COMMUNITY? WHAT ELEMENTS ARE KEY IN CRAFTING AN UNFORGETTABLE AND AUTHENTIC EXPERIENCE? HOW WILL THE ARTS ECOSYSTEM SHIFT AND MAKE ROOM FOR MORE DIVERSE VOICES?

Cultural institutions are essential components of our civilised lives. When it comes to taking a city's pulse, we look to museums, libraries, and heritage sites for indications of vibrance and liveability.

Besides housing historically and artistically valuable items relating past and present generations, these institutions are the cultural habitats that define the identity of a city and offer a sense of place. Design masters and cultural advocates gather to inspire the co-creation that weave together our most cherished human values, legacies, and innovations, demonstrating that the best and most creative cities are those that grow with people's aspirations while respecting the wisdom of the past.

In the wake of the pandemic, speculation is afoot on the future of museums – and the arts industry at large. [A report by the architecture firm Gensler](#) proposes that museums – whilst already community-focused and designed for public enjoyment – will become even more accessible in an effort to reach a larger audience, bolster local community engagement, and expand their influence. Tomorrow's museums, according to the report, will be more welcoming, striking a balance between more traditional ways of engagement and newer, exciting experiences that are better suited to an evolving landscape.

Hong Kong may have the first taste of this reimagined cultural experience with the long-awaited opening of M+, the crowning jewel of the burgeoning West Kowloon Arts District. Designed by globally renowned architecture firm Herzog & de Meuron together with TFP Farrells and Arup, M+ is set to house around 1,500 works spanning visual art, moving image works, design objects, architectural projects, and archival objects from Hong Kong, Greater China, Asia, and beyond. As Max Hollein, Director at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, recently [told Artnet](#): “I do think the physical experience of the museum will continue to be powerful and strong. But museums will expand significantly in ways that are not just physical, but also digital and intellectual in regard to their engagement in various areas of the world.”



DESIGNING AN INTELLIGENT FUTURE

DO SMART CITIES COME WITH A COST? CAN ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE BLEND SEAMLESSLY INTO OUR LIVES? WHAT TRENDS CAN WE EXPECT TO EMERGE IN THE NEXT FEW YEARS? WILL THE HUMAN TOUCH BECOME OBSOLETE?

With the advent of AI and IoT, the future of work and mobility will never be the same again. We live in a world where seamless connectivity, autonomous navigation, and smart production are fast becoming a reality. From eminent designers to the entrepreneurs driving innovation, we get a glimpse of how integrated design and technologies are shaping and transforming our cities, economies, and lives.

Creatives are now weaving Artificial Intelligence into every detail to exceed our current experiences and enhance everyday processes. At the Tokyo 2020 Olympics Games this year, a team of robots raked patterns in the sand in what was a giant Zen garden. This may just look like a public art installation, but *The Constant Gardeners* analysed video footage from the games and translated this into its sand drawings to create 150 illustrations on activities that transpired throughout the Olympics.

On another day and at another corner of the globe in California, students at the ArtCenter College of Design were lectured on NIO's newest electric vehicle at the fourth Virtual Car Classic. What makes this EV a breakthrough is Nomi, the car's built-in virtual driving companion that not only provides navigation functions but creates a deeper emotional connection with its driver as the world's first in-vehicle A.I. Its objective is to turn the vehicle from a mere mode of transportation into a mobile living space. This digital feature promotes the EV into an object far greater than a means of mobility where its user can sit back while it does more of the work.

What these two innovations demonstrate is the shift in smart design and how it now not only eases life, but also interacts with its users to evoke greater emotional response. Creative leaders are using tools such as A.I. to step in and form more meaningful relationships with its users in an optimized and swift manner. These intelligent designs are nothing without the data they collect, and designers are constantly improving and making adjustments based on this. Through this, a smart AI system may fulfill or ease the role of the designer in having to complete large amounts of design work by filtering what improvements need to be done moving forward and making necessary revisions. This type of tech will be co-creators in designing our futures.

HOSPITALITY WITH PURPOSE

HOW HAVE THE DEFINITIONS OF HOSPITALITY AND LUXURY CHANGED?
WHAT DOES AN IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCE MEAN TODAY? WILL
SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS CONTINUE TO GAIN GROUND?

Among the sectors most impacted by the pandemic, hospitality has experienced an unprecedented level of disruption that has made reinvention not only inevitable, but imperative. While the subject of sustainable hospitality may continue to challenge the industry, embracing nature, diverse cultures, human factors, and environmental initiatives have become vital design thrusts in the delivery of experiential services.

From curfews and social distancing measures to staff reductions and, in some cases, complete shutdowns, the hospitality industry, comprised of hotels and resorts, restaurants, and more all over the world, has had much to endure. Driving the need to reinvent hospitality businesses are new consumer needs and desires which have also evolved in the interest of personal health, safety, and peace of mind. As Deloitte's *The Future of Hospitality* white paper also points out, consumers may be slow to return to their old habits.

The pandemic has also spawned new developments that are unfamiliar yet welcome. Touchless hospitality, as conflicting as it may sound, is thriving, making advancing digital services essential for the industry as expectations on the ideal guest journey continue to change.

And as in many other industries, sustainability has become a priority for hotel and restaurant businesses amid growing environmental awareness among their guests. It is no longer enough to discourage the use of single-use plastics – guests today have more sophisticated and educated expectations from properties to do tangible good by Mother Earth, hence the birth of new buzzwords such as regenerative travel, for example. A 2020 white paper by architect and interior designer Bill Bensley, *Sensible Sustainable Solutions* covers three core pillars: building hotels with purpose, thinking locally and sustainably, and building sensibly with regards to energy conservation through architecture.

Sustainable food systems are gaining ground in Asia and across the globe, with a number of leading chefs and restaurateurs eager to make their mark in this space. Three-Michelin-starred Eleven Madison Park in New York City, a mainstay on the World's 50 Best Restaurants list for years, recently pivoted to a plant-based menu. In Asia, initiatives such as Zero Foodprint Asia have launched in the region “to create a ‘new normal’ by mobilising restaurants to directly support improvements in the food system” and help reverse climate change. As many places in the world kickstart their recovery in earnest, what will reimagining the guest experience for a post-Covid-19 world entail?



NEW URBAN MODELS

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE OF CITIES LOOK LIKE? HOW CAN DESIGNING THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT BECOME MORE SUSTAINABLE? WHAT CHALLENGES DO ARCHITECTS FACE IN OUR NEW NORMAL?

Quality of life and respect for nature are complementary goals. Architectural projects that convey urban prosperity, as well as sustainable practices and human wellbeing, converge where mobility, economics, and people-centric design intersect to address the growing challenges of urbanisation, and redefine a covetable and livable urban lifestyle.

There has been much debate on the resilience and future prospects of our urban landscape. The pandemic has irrevocably changed views on density and urbanization, offering an opportunity to consider how to reset our built environment and tackle emerging as well as deep-seated issues that have long hounded the world at large. Adapting to government-enforced conditions such as lockdowns and remote working has uncovered the need to think about the viability of our neighbourhoods and communities. With millions having had to stay at home, green spaces have never sounded more desirable or more fundamental for mental and physical well-being.

Rewilding urban spaces, for one, is on the agenda. Defined by the World Economic Forum as the effort to “restore an area to its original, uncultivated state, shifting away from the centuries-long practice of controlling and managing nature for human need,” rewilding in urban areas could manifest in initiatives from building parks on empty land, to incorporating biophilic design where possible. Research by Yale University found that immersion in nature is an antidote for stress, and that cities as well as businesses are increasingly aware of dwellers’ desire for access to green spaces. Cities such as Singapore, Nottingham in the United Kingdom, and Harbin in China have gotten a head start; could other cities around the world follow suit?

Creative placemaking, or employing strategies based on arts and culture to promote social change and improve the built environment, is another interesting approach to rethinking our communities and cities. Typically involving partners across a range of specialisations, placemaking can help transform neighbourhoods into places of beauty and culture while promoting local heritage and sustainability.

Spurred by creativity from all parties and expertise from designers, architects, and urban planners, our future cities could become safe, sustainable, and vibrant, all at once. The possibilities are endless if true collaboration takes place.

PHYGITAL REALITY

WILL THE METAVERSE TRANSFORM OUR DIGITAL EXISTENCE AS WE KNOW IT? HOW CAN THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE BE IMPROVED? WHAT BREAKTHROUGHS ARE ON THE HORIZON?

Gen Z lives in the phygital reality, where the line between physical and digital is rapidly blurring. Riding on innovations in AI, 5G and the popularity of NFTs, the fusion of the two worlds is expressed in a metaverse that is challenging the boundaries of lived experiences and economic activity. Pioneers at the forefront of this disruption can predict how the metaverse will unfold—and as the worlds of gaming and entertainment set the stage for our new digital reality, creative leaders and designers are rising to the challenge and making great strides in this ever more immersive world.

To meet these demands, companies moved 27 times faster toward their online and digital services. This extends beyond e-commerce and the main marketing pull is now in unique experiences in the phygital realm, as having to create lasting connections between brand and consumer was now the challenge.

As the race to please the Gen Z market ensues, retailers are banking on experiences outside the traditional, where the consumer is engaged through extended reality. Across industries, this is concretely demonstrated by the likes of AI-powered assistants and virtual changing rooms in retailers, online classrooms where students can learn beyond pages in a book, or in fintech and ease of online banking. These new and increasing experiences are upgrading the user and customer experience and bridging physical gaps through digital means for more seamless and more tailor-made transactions.

Supplementing these digital experiences, creatives are carving their place in this movement, carving strategies and narratives that will transform user experience and expand the world. These strategies focus on content, on design, or both. The combination of entertainment, content, and data-gathering is said to be a key strategy that many are banking on, and one of the smartest ways to achieve all three is through User-Generated Content, as seen on virtual games, apps, and social media.

As many have now had to shift to a digital-heavy lifestyle, what was once seen as a temporary solution is now a permanent reality.

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28 NOVEMBER - 3 DECEMBER

Asia's premier annual event on design, innovation and brands since 2002, **Business of Design Week (BODW)** organised by Hong Kong Design Centre (HKDC) gathers some of the world's foremost design masters and entrepreneurs from Hong Kong as well as overseas, driving discourse on the value of design and innovation to inspire global audiences.

BODW is organised by Hong Kong Design Centre (HKDC) and co-organised by Hong Kong Trade Development Council (HKTDC), with Create Hong Kong (CreateHK) of the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR Government) as the Lead Sponsor.

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