

Cover theme

This cover story is a “product“ of the first XYZ competence forum, which took place in May 2001 at a theatre in Stuttgart called Tribüne. Once a year, the forum discusses a key topic, which is also reflected accordingly in the ABC magazine. The forum not only addresses clients and partners, but also representatives from every other field – from exhibition-construction companies over architects to exhibitors. Talks by speakers X and Y were merged and edited for this report.

Trade fairs and theatre are two dissimilar brothers, but they are brothers. Whether to a fair or to see a drama – people go consciously and willingly. They take out time for the same. They have their own way of doing so. They are specially dressed for these occasions. They pay for entry. And people go to see a fair or to a theatre to see and to be seen. People meet each other and eat and drink together. In this respect, fairs and theatre have common roots: the religious ritual. “Fairs“ are said to have originated in Frankfurt, where people used to meet in front the cathedral for important religious services. They came from all over, were hungry and thirsty, and soon there were traders who intelligently converted their needs into business. The exhibition in the church premises surrounding the service can thus be considered the first fair. Even the places were similar: All Greek theatres, no matter where they are, face the sea. They all have an open stage. The landscape is the stage. Even in theatres, which are far away from the sea – e.g. in Termessos in Turkey: through a pair of ravines one can see a bit of sea.

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This creates the expanse, the transcendence.

Therefore the most beautiful fair sites are always near water. For the same reason, Lisbon was a winner against Hanover, because the Expo there was on the Tejo, which forms a ten-kilometre wide lake just before the mouth. It is not without reason that trade fair companies are setting up big lakes and ponds around fair halls. If one takes a look at the fair in Munich or the architectural plans of the fair in Stuttgart, there is always a lake in front of the fair hall. And this once again takes us back to the Greek theatre. There are really a lot of things in common and they have the same origin. Theatre shows, fairs and events have one thing in common: they always give an experience of space.

Every time people enter a room, they go in consciously, remain in this room for a while, experience things and leave with pictures in their mind. Therefore fair stands and events are very much similar. Both have three dimensions and offer three-dimensional communication. But in reality trade fair entries have four dimensions. Time is the fourth dimension. This means that designers of the fair entry have a certain amount of control as to how much time people will spend at the exhibition stand. Time is one of the most significant aspects of the communication of experience. And this experience imparts pictures in memory. Architects and planners build rooms and create the picture of a brand.

Many would remember the pavilion from Finland at Hanover Expo. There was this wonderful room, this very quiet dark room with a pond. People stood there for eternity, although it was a hectic and hot summer day. But as soon as they entered the room, they were all still. It was superb: a dark room with a painted pond, tiny projections on the wall– here a dragonfly, there in the corner a woodpecker. The floor was soft, the room was darkened And suddenly people were quiet. They were hearing with their feet.

Feet – one of the most important hearing organs. One listens from the reflection that is coming. And this takes us once again back to the tone of a room.