

Retail & Brand Comms

REPORT PUBLISHED: 11 JUN 2020 BY: [KATIE BARON](#)



No longer just a photogenic cog in the marketing machine, pop-ups are about to hit new highs – by adding flexible, localised brand outreach, bookable (trackable) engagement and unifying fragmented channels. From phygital superstars and hyper local hubs to concepts helping shape the ‘new urbanity’, we spotlight tactics likely to pack the biggest punch in a post-pandemic ecosystem of experiences.

Summary

Phygital Engagement & Bio-Smart Spaces

Shoppers’ migration to digital during lockdown has spot-lit the urgent need for brands to onboard better omni-channel or inspirational tech-enhanced store design. Pop-ups using AR, cutting-edge sensors and biometric tech capable of personalising and adding delight to the consumer experience talk to this shift – and the physical space as an interactive brand interface.

Life in Collaborative Context

As in [Strategies for Selling Tech](#), there’s still major mileage in using pop-ups to add a contextualising backdrop to products hard to explain, or get people excited by, within the physical constraints of most flagships. The best play to their locality and/or feed on uniting consumer clans (from wannabe actors to gamer kids), often in partnership with other brands.

Gateways, Outreach & Clan Spaces

Covid-19 has also accelerated the appreciation of initiatives honouring locality and community. Whether supporting solidarity with local retail heroes, fandoms or consumers’ reticence to travel into urban epicentres, it’s propelling the value of pop-ups that take big brands deep into peripheral consumer heartlands, with stores acting as clan hubs and service design cognisant of localised desires.

Sensorial Kicks & Performance Spaces

A new breed of sensorially-amplified, performance-driven pop up spaces are doing double duty – as micro entertainment hotspots that also serve to humanise brands at-large. Grounded in intriguing idiosyncrasies and escapism, most are bookable experiences – a trend set to boom post-lockdown (see [Resetting Physical Retail](#)).

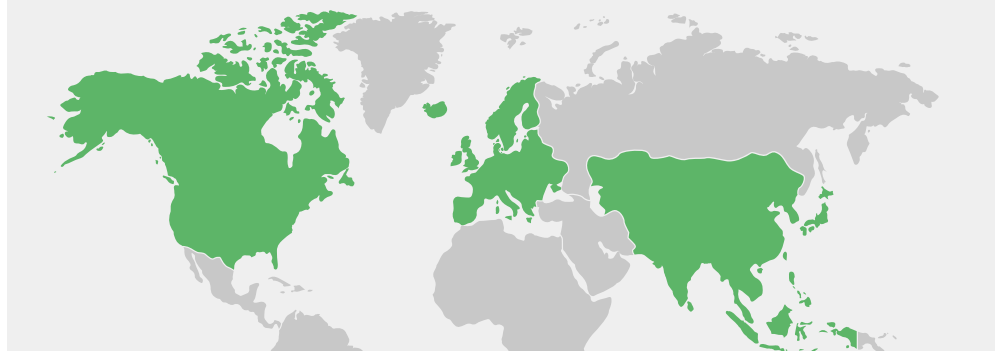
Fashion’s Fluid Moments

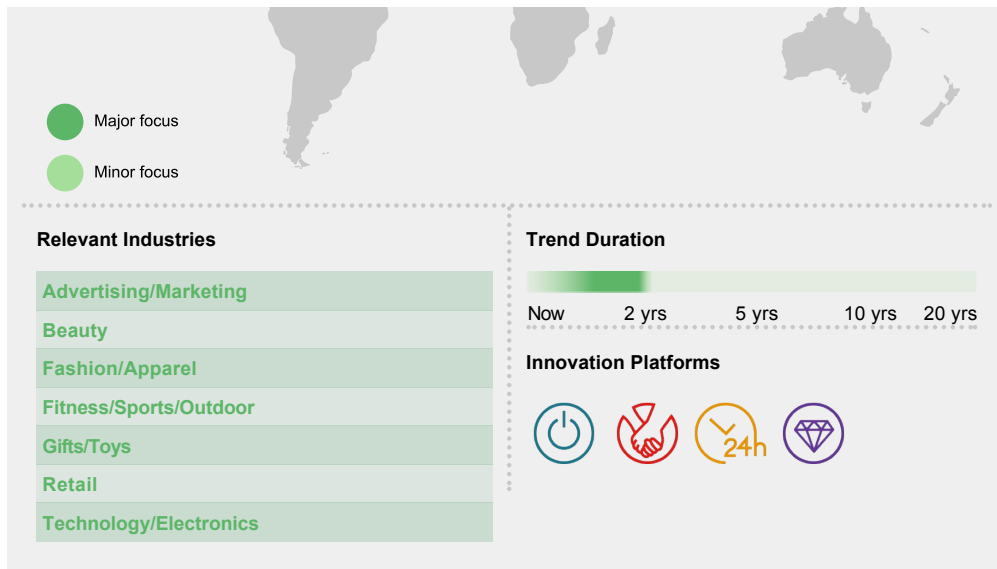
2020 has already witnessed seismic shifts in the fashion industry as long-standing Fashion Weeks across the globe shift into digital formats, merging gated (industry only) presentations with consumer-facing content and events. It’s a move toward greater fluidity and seasonless strategies perfectly aligned to a pop-up mentality.

Pop-Ups Prop up a New Urbanity

The pandemic is likely to reshape the fabric of urban spaces, from the introduction/ normalisation of more pedestrianised zones and kerbside collection points to landlords exercising shorter term leases. Such changes are laying a path for transitory, concentrated spatial designs in sync with a more flexible, agile city environment.

At A Glance The Regional Focus of this Report – Global





Key Stats +	
55%	In 2019, 55% of US consumers shopped at pop-ups because of their unique products and experiences
40%	Large institutional landlords are opting for flexible leases. In London in 2018, British pop-up space listing company Storefront confirmed that over 40% of its pop-up spaces are by booked by such groups
37%	Retailers with physical stores experience higher web traffic, attract new customers and increase brand awareness in the market, according to 2018 ICSC study, "The Halo Effect: How Bricks Impact Clicks." opening a new physical store leads to a 37% average gain in overall traffic to a retailer's website
35%	Last year, Canadian athleisure brand Lululemon revealed it plans to sign more short-term leases to create 'seasonal' pop-up stores; in the 60 it launched in 2018, 35% of customers were new to the brand, a far greater number than in its traditional stores
10%	By 2023, 10% of all Lululemon's fleet of stores will be experiential
\$68	Small US business generate \$68 of local economic return for every \$100 spent on them, a factor that is likely to become more important to consumers after experiencing lockdown
2.4bn	The number of mobile augmented reality (AR) users globally is expected to reach 2.4 billion by 2023, fuelled in part by a growing fan desire for AR technology to enhance consumer experiences in media and entertainment
350%	Pinterest searches for 'support small business' jumped by 350% from late February to early March 2020, asserting the value of overtly localised retail concepts
+20%	Across both US locations for Lego's 2019 kids-only escape room concept, the attendance objective was exceeded by over 20%, with a combined 33 additional sessions added
200%-300%	The launch of Nars House of Climax pop-up in late 2018 spurred a Google search life of 200-300% in the NY area
3.6m	The House of Climax attained global social media impressions of 3.6m, 3.2m via influencers that had attended and 408k via 'regular' attendees
80%	Pop-ups are approximately 80% less expensive than traditional retail space

Phygital Engagement & Bio-Smart Spaces

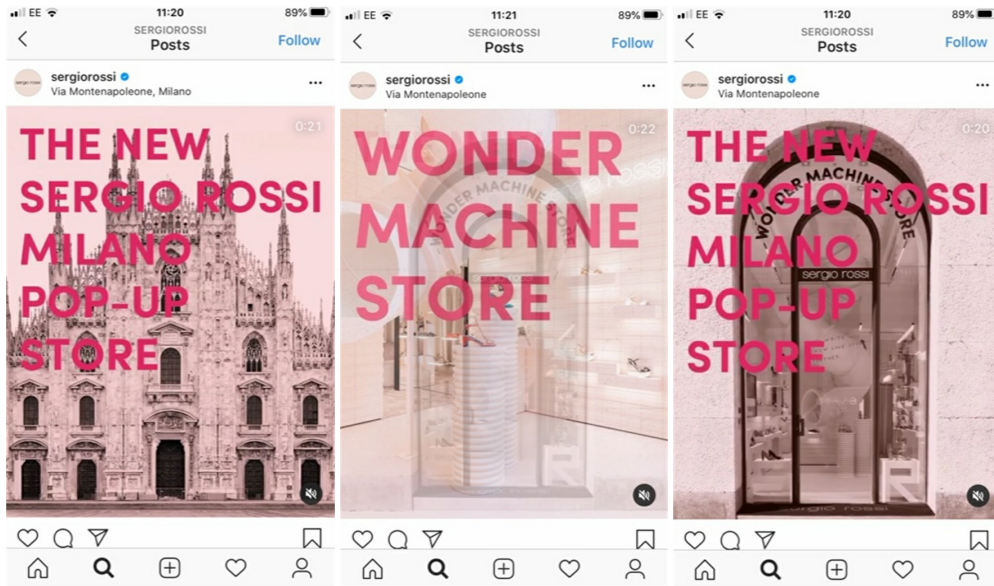
Shoppers' migration to digital during lockdown has spot-lit the urgent need for brands to onboard better omni-channel or inspirational tech-enhanced store design. Pop-ups using AR, cutting-edge sensors and biometric tech capable of personalising and adding delight to the consumer experience talk to this shift – and the physical space as an interactive brand interface.

- **Elegant Distancing:** Tackling the 'opening ceremony' phase of exiting lockdown, luxury Italian footwear brand [Sergio Rossi](#)'s Milanese #WonderMachine pop-up (May 2020) includes a cutting-edge infrared ceiling sensor that unobtrusively assesses consumers' body temperatures on entry, discreetly projecting results onto the floor via laser. It can also project lines of light onto the floor as a reminder of social distancing spaces, when necessary. Fully digitally integrated, fans book via telephone, email WhatsApp/WhatsApp video (the first five days saw an almost immediate take up of slots). It's due to run for twelve months.



Sergio Rossi

Sergio Rossi



Sergio Rossi

Sergio Rossi

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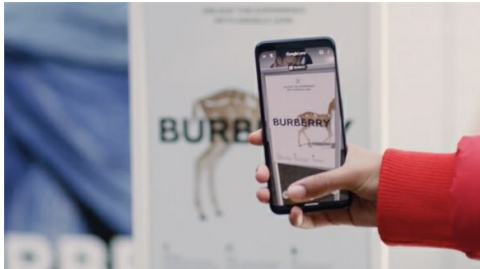
- **Perspective-Shifting Digital:** Echoing the augmented flagships detailed in [Retail's Unreal Opportunities](#), for its festive 2019 *What is Love?* campaign Burberry held a five-day public pop-up experience in East London powered by Google Lens – a 'search what you see' image-recognition tool usually used to identify products, then produce a corresponding list of shoppable items. Unconnected to selling in this instance (the focused on solely on memorable moments), visitors could use the Google Lens app to scan any of three glass vitrines and see the porcelain fauns inside gamble into digitised life on their phones, plus an aerial live feed of themselves captured from a camera 35m overhead.
- **Immersive Installation:** Translating the idea in-store, in March 2020 Burberry commandeered the experimental Corner Shop area of British dept. store Selfridges' London flagship, where inanimate penguins sprung into AR action when visitors who had accessed bespoke QR codes pointed their phone cameras at them. Shareability front of mind, a screenshot or video of the visitors and their penguin friends could be instantly shared on social media.



Burberry



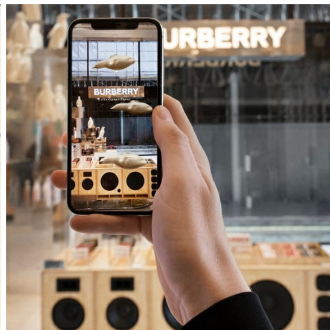
Burberry



Burberry



Burberry x Selfridges



Burberry x Selfridges



Burberry x Selfridges

- The Sentient Space:** More commercialised is the still exemplary 2018 Future X Tokyo pop-up by Japanese beauty brand [SK-II](#) and Chinese e-tailer [JD.com](#). Advanced facial recognition tech created e-profiles for visitors; once onboarded, they could unlock personalised content and product recommendations at different in-store zones by looking at cameras able to determine the state of their skin. To shop, visitors added products to a virtual basket by tapping a smart bracelet provided on entry (and synchronised to an their JD.com account) on NFC hotspots next to products or screens. A 2019 iteration of the store in Singapore incorporates the smart skin diagnostics tools into a compact line of dressing tables. See also [Biometric Brandscapes](#).



SK-II, Tokyo



SK-II, Tokyo



SK-II, Tokyo



SK-II, Singapore



SK-II, Singapore



SK-II, Singapore

Life in Collaborative Context

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- Hollywood Beauty Space Serves up Screen Tests: Trading on the Brand of Me**
 Maisons discussed in [Brand Spaces: 20/21](#), in February 2020 Gucci launched a new mascara with French beauty giant [Sephora](#) via an experiential LA pop-up called Gucci Beauty Network Studios. Aside testing products, visitors could do their own (saveable) screen tests. Admission was free, but RVSP was essential.



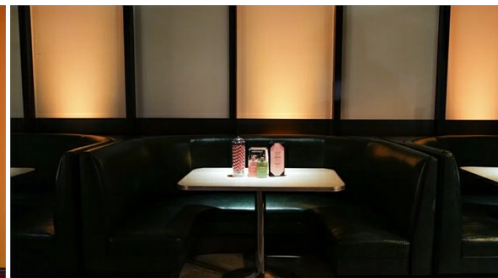
Gucci Beauty, LA



Gucci Beauty, LA

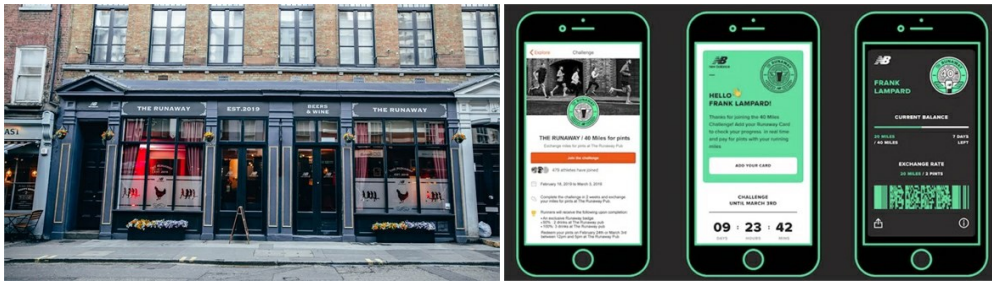


Gucci Beauty, LA



Gucci Beauty, LA

- Rewards for Running:** In a two-pronged brand hit, to coincide with the 2020 London Marathon (pre-lockdown) US sports brand [New Balance](#) partnered with running and cycling app [Strava](#) on The Runaway pub pop-up in Soho London, allowing consumers to pay for drinks with miles run. The miles, based around four key challenges were recorded in-app and then converted into a 'Runaway Card' synchronised to Apple and Google Wallet passes. A downstairs area hosted a gym, lockers, changing room and retail space.



New Balance x Strava

New Balance x Strava



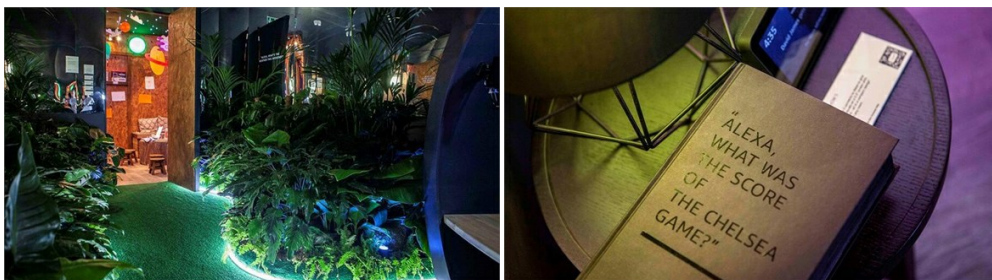
New Balance x Strava

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New Balance x Strava

- Smarts Home Imaginations Run Wild:** Ultra-contextual, in late 2019 Amazon created a seven-room smart home pop-up in Westfield mall, London, showcasing an interconnected future. A Fitbit voice-activated art installation featuring its Versa 2 watch was the centre-point; an Amazon 'Inspiration kitchen' let visitors engage with voice-controlled appliances and Dutch electronics brand Philips' 'Infinity garden' enabled those strolling through to conjure different lighting effects via chatting to smart speaker assistant Alexa.

A treehouse let kids trial learning games from UK educational games system Osmo on Amazon Fire tablets; music, lighting and projections brought calm to an 'ethereal bedroom' in cahoots with Japanese electronics brand Omron, showcasing how its wireless blood pressure monitor Evolv and Alexa can help manage their cardiovascular health. In the '4D living room' British heating control manufacturer Dratyon demonstrated smart plugs and heating devices via voiceovers. The final room – Mercedes 'neon garage' – hosted a white A-Class and a looping animation illustrating its new voice-controlled infotainment system.



Amazon Alexa x Westfield

Amazon Alexa x Westfield



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Historically, lots of brands have used pop-ups solely to connect via fun, they've had a level of casualness to them. Now, we're looking at the need to deliver more optimistic, authentic, communal connections. There's an opportunity to move from glocal to hyper local, as consumers relook at their radius of comfort.

Robyn Novak, Vice President of US architects FRCH NELSON

- **Online Kids Clans Get IRL Escape Rooms:** Conceived to put Lego on top of kids' Holiday wish-lists, in 2019 US designers [Set Creative](#) devised a timed, 'Lego powered' kids-only escape room experience in two US mall locations (Minnesota and California) where children partnered with three friends to compete against rival squads. Trading on Lego's long-standing focus on edutainment, and the influence of e-sports on this 6-12 years-old demographic, challenges (broadcast to their parents sitting outside) focused on group problem-solving and collaboration skills.

Parents booked in advance, opening a dialogue that allowed Lego allowing to follow-up with a wish-list of kid's preferred products post-activation. Attendance goals across the two locations was exceeded by over 20%.



Lego



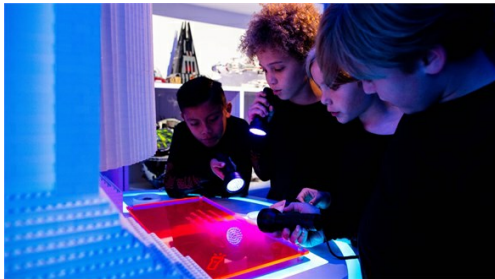
Lego



Lego



Lego



Lego



Lego

- **Test, Learn, Inspire Lab:** To celebrate the launch of its portable darkroom printer, in 2019 [Polaroid](#) launched pop-up spaces in London and Paris for fans to test products, meet photographers and indulge in storytelling areas and inspiration/education workshops. An immersive installation by American photographer [Chris Burkard](#) featured AR content embedded in each image, encouraging visitors to create their own content (see section one).



Polaroid



Polaroid

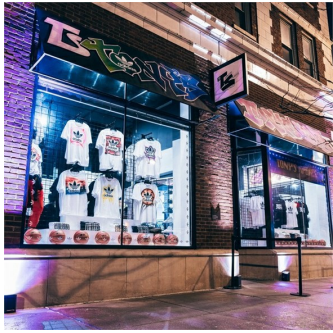


Polaroid



Polaroid

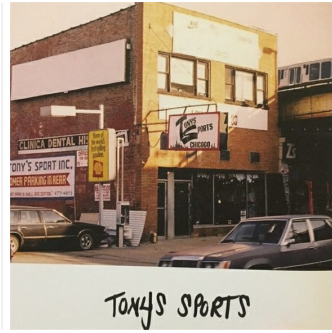
- **Resurrecting Regional Cool:** For America's National Basketball Association (NBA) annual All-Star Weekend in Chicago2020 Adidas helped resurrect iconic sneakerhead store **Tony's** (shut in 2000). The 10-day pop-up paid homage to pre-internet, word of mouth sneakerhead culture and what owner Tony Fernandez described as "people desire for the retail environment where they feel some kind of a glue between the owner and them". See also [Retail Embraces Bodega Nostalgia](#).
- **Local Commerce & Creative Capital:** Promoting creative diversity, in 2019, American designer Virgil Abloh (artistic director of **Louis Vuitton** menswear and founder of Milan streetwear brand **Off-White**), partnered on a Chicago pop-up for Nike's experimental retail division **NikeLab** – a workshop space for mentoring 10 young Chicagoans, which also sold some rare product and held free, bookable events.



Adidas x Tony's



Adidas x Tony's



Adidas x Tony's



Nike Lab x Virgil Abloh



Nike Lab x Virgil Abloh



Nike Lab x Virgil Abloh



Nike Lab x Virgil Abloh

Sensorial Kicks & Performance Spaces

A new breed of sensorially-amplified, performance-driven pop up spaces are doing double duty – as micro entertainment hotspots that also serve to humanise brands at-large.

Grounded in intriguing idiosyncrasies and escapism, most are bookable experiences – a trend set to boom post-lockdown (see [Resetting Physical Retail](#) – a report that also explains why an appreciation of the sensorial will rise as Covid-19 subsides).

- **Mystique, Performance & Anticipation:** In late 2018, Set Creative also devised an actor-led NY pop-up for French cosmetics brand [NARS](#) based on, according to experience strategy director Stefan Tauber, “creating anticipation in a world where people have everything at the touch of a button”. Peepholes revealed part of a brush, or a sculptural space with the black mascara fluid; another room had mirror balls amplifying the volume of the mascara, but to heighten anticipation it was never possible to touch or see the entire product in one go. At the end a hand popped out of another hole to dispense the product, retaining the mystique until the end. The pop-up was free, but bookable (a later version was ticketed).



NARS



NARS



NARS



NARS

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We were able to captivate people for fifteen minutes without them ever having the actual product in their hands. There was a very important sense of intimacy involved, which is of course key the sense of a brand being human.

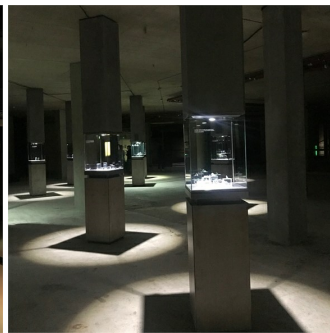
Stefan Tauber, Experience Strategy Director, Set Creative.

- **Separating the Senses:** Contrary to the common assumption that the more senses combined the better, Tauber suggests separation is far more effective in pop-up branding: “Addressing too many senses simultaneously turns experiences into an overload of sensations that leaves audiences struggling to process and enjoy everything at once. Experiences have to be more nuanced, layered and considered - almost comparative to humans’ motoric processing capabilities or music production; while a pop song can cover the entire spectrum of senses throughout, brands should be mindful which one to stimulate when.”
- **Subterranean Atmospheric:** Void, presented at London Design Festival (LDF) 2019 by photographer [Dan Tobin-Smith](#) and responsible gem-mining brand [Gemfields](#) (both British) – was a masterclass in product-enhancing atmospheric. Based in a barely-lit two-storey subterranean setting, visitors wandered through spot-lit glass displays of natural gems, before peering into an atrium of large mesh-sided cubes. The cubes provided a backdrop for moving visuals of Tobin-Smith’s microscopically detailed images of precious stones, transforming their unique imperfections into mesmerising galaxies.

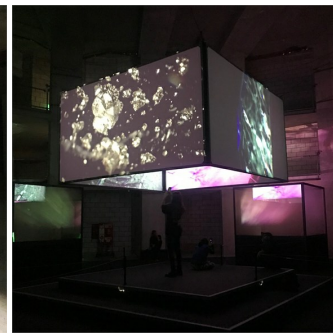
Enhancing the immersive ambience was an almost celestial concert soundtrack by British female-only “electronic drone choir” [NYX](#). The set was designed by UK studio [Tem](#), which specialises in site-specific, cutting-edge visuals for music performances.



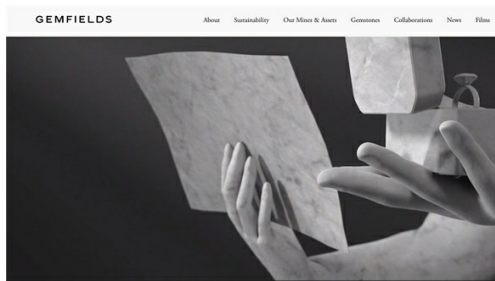
Gemfields



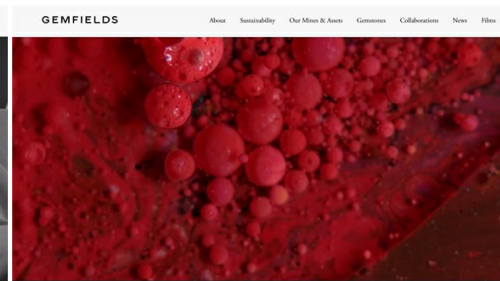
Gemfields



Gemfields



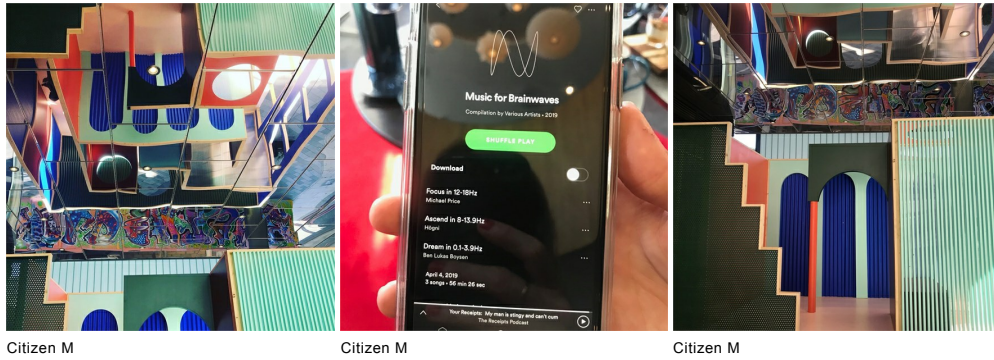
Gemfields



Gemfields

- **Sonic Interventions:** Also at LDF 2019 was Never Lost, an outdoor installation annexing the [CitizenM](#) hotel in Shoreditch (East London) – a playful, non-traditional walk-in maze whose subtext was enhancing the business traveller experience: each of its secluded dead ends emitted one of three tracks from a specially commissioned album, Music for Brainwaves, created by British record label [Erase Tapes](#). Three composers used frequencies scientifically proven to combat travel-related issues – anxiety, aiding sleep or improving focus.

See also [Brands Bank on Immersive Theatre](#).



Citizen M

Citizen M

Citizen M

Fashion's Fluid Moments

2020 has already witnessed seismic shifts in the fashion industry as long-standing Fashion Weeks across the globe shift into digital formats, merging gated (industry only) presentations with consumer-facing content and events. It's a move toward greater fluidity and seasonless strategies perfectly aligned to a pop-up mentality.



We're currently reviewing the role of locations as an ecosystems of experiences in terms of fulfilment, experience and service as different components. For fashion, pop-ups are likely to play a key role in terms of accommodating more fluid seasons."

Robyn Novak, Vice President of FRCH NELSON

- In-Motion Gateways to Farther Flung Luxe:** Presenting itself as a brand constantly in motion, and willing to travel, in late 2019 Gucci launched its global 'Gucci Pins' pop-up strategy with spots in Japan, Hong Kong, Korea, Paris and America. Creating a direct connection to digital search, the localities are all marked in Google Maps and the Gucci app with a bespoke pin emblazoned with the same print.



Gucci Pins, Paris



Gucci Pins, Singapore



Gucci Pins, Hong Kong



Gucci Pins, Hong Kong

- **Eyes on Different Prizes:** Promoting its Miami store launch, while also acknowledging how the shift to digital is refocusing fashion's sights on cities beyond the traditional big four, during Miami Design Week in December 2019 Italian fashion house [Bottega Veneta](#) put a luxe sheen on an iconic South Beach diner. The gold-foil-wrapped eatery, topped with a pink neon Bottega sign, served the existing all-American menu – but with Bottega-branded napkins, straws, coffee cups, salt and pepper shakers, and matchboxes.

It echoes Prada's formidable precursor concept in Miami Basel in 2017 – The [Prada Double Club](#) Miami by Belgian artist Carsten Höller: an invite-only neon and foliage-filled art installation in a former ice factory/film studio, to be experienced as a fully functioning nightclub.



Bottega Veneta, Miami Basel



Bottega Veneta, Miami Basel



Bottega Veneta, Miami Basel



Bottega Veneta, Miami Basel



Prada x Carsten Höller, Miami Basel



Prada x Carsten Höller, Miami Basel

- **Cultural Kudos, Remixed:** More fluid fashion seasons and potentially far less shows for most luxury brands, means the previous dominance of newness will need to be superseded by imaginative shows of cultural capital – including remixes of heritage. Louis Vuitton's 2019 summer museum experience in LA – Louis Vuitton X – is a key example: it showcased its 160-year-old legacy via historic creative partnerships across 10 themed rooms annexed by an accompanying pop-up shop. By scanning a bar code, visitors could also access three exhibition-specific Louis Vuitton-inspired Instagram camera effects.



Louis Vuitton X



Louis Vuitton X



Louis Vuitton X



Louis Vuitton X

- **From Pop-Up to Perennial:** Prada's Harbour City shopping mall pop-up (summer 2019) was conceived to migrate into a permanent store installation in its Canton Road store after the initial hit. Also see the brand's Prada Wonderland at the Galaxy Macau resort in 2019.



Prada, Harbour City



Prada, Harbour City



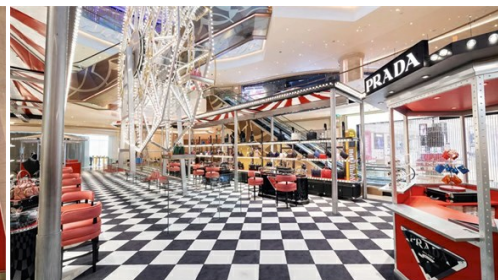
Prada Wonderland, Macau



Prada Wonderland, Macau



Prada Wonderland, Macau



Prada Wonderland, Macau

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“Smaller formats are an undercurrent that’s been rumbling for years, but now there’s a large uptick inherently connected to the new spaces of our changing urban fabric in the wake of lockdown – shutting down streets for new pedestrian zones etc. Think: mobile, concentrated, celebratory and transitory.”

Antony Perez, Vice President, CallisonRKTl architects

- **Recalibrating Kerbside:** US architects NELSON Worldwide has created theoretical designs retro-fitting the kerbside spaces (garages, car parks, parallel parking spaces) with prefabricated shipping containers housing lockers for pick-up and returns, and potentially connections to virtual concierges.



Nelson Worldwide



Nelson Worldwide



Nelson Worldwide



Nelson Worldwide



“It’s about getting closer to consumers, dispersing the experience and then connecting to a distribution centre – as if it [the physical brand space] is a node of a digital strategy. Small, unique, high-service, high touch.”

Paul Conder, Vice President, CallisonRKTl architects

- **Winding up Window Power:** Melissa Gonzalez, CEO of US pop-up architects and experiential strategists [The Lionisque Group](#) believes such shifts in urban spaces will amplify the role of the retail window: “If so much is going to be about the kerbside, what do you do with your store? You activate the windows. We’ve always talked about telling stories from the outside in, this is going to be important”.

Responding to that is Swedish technologists [Ombori](#)’s partnership with Swedish hardware brand [Clas Ohlson](#). Consumers can control content on motion-sensitive, interactive window displays via their smartphone with just the flick of a mobile phone, activated by scanning a QR code. People can transfer that browsing to their devices at any time. See [Retail Windows Innovations](#) for more tactical ideas.



Ombori x Clas Ohlson



Ombori x Clas Ohlson



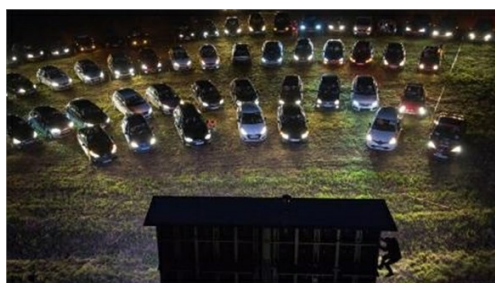
- **Delivering with Drive-Ins:** Temporary drives-in are also about to hit a new stride. The English National Opera (ENO) has already developed a socially distanced entertainment plan using a drive-in format. Its ‘Drive and Live’ series within the grounds of north London’s Alexandra Palace sports and entertainment venue, will allow audiences to experience live operatic performances from their cars, if distancing continues in the autumn.



The ENO’s Carmen



Alexandra Palace



A drive-in cinema



The ENO’s Aida

Future Insights

Fund the Phygital

Lockdown has accelerated consumers' affinity with digital commerce, raising their expectations for store spaces with omni-channel integration and (for pop-ups) more thrilling tech-boosted experiences. From remote bookings to spaces brought to life via the power of an AR app, use pop-ups to deliver on these irrevocably changed appetites.

Embrace a New Urbanity

In many cities Covid-19 will change the urban fabric, offering new opportunities that only the commitment-light world of pop-up brand spaces can truly build on. From drive-in experiences to concierge-infused kerbside initiatives to a rethink of the retail window, as Conder says, "consider the pop-up a key physical node in your digital strategy".

Call Out to Clans

Temporary spaces that speak to specific communities, from sneakerheads or gamer kids, are key to joining the dots between online fandoms and physical clans, cementing your value as a brand that can work all touch-points. Look to LEGO's kids escape rooms as an example of creating IRL solidarity (which consumers will still crave) but underscored by wider behaviours.

Dig into Local

From the devastating impact of Covid-19 to issues raised by the Black Lives Matters protests, now is the time to show local communities support and respect. From Virgil Abloh's NikeLab project offering for young Chicagoans (challenging the lack of diversity in the creative industries) to the resurrection of well-loved, defunct regional stores, step back into local with heart.

Topics

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