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## What the event industry can learn from festivals

Crises, in spite of everything, have always produced something new: new agency models, new values, new attitudes. In an interview with agency head Cedric Ebener, the *Event Design Yearbook 2020 / 2021* opens up perspectives on events with and after corona. The successful experience architect reveals what designers of brand experiences can learn from festival organisers.

Read an **excerpt**:

### How will the industry fare after the corona crisis?

The industry will not be the same afterwards. The agency-customer relationship will experience many changes. Customers who turn their backs on their agencies will not find any loyal agency partners at their side in future either. Agencies, on the other hand, that are now given the opportunity to master the situation together with their customers will be able to be closer, more intense and better valuable partners for precisely these customers.

And new agency models will emerge. It is already evident now that important players in the industry are putting together new offers and cooperation models in order to survive. Everything that proves to be promising will

become a business model and prompt imitators and further new startups.

Flexibility and creativity will gain value in all these models because both together are the key to finding solutions to new challenges both now, during the crisis, and of course afterwards. And it is only after this phase that this value will really be acknowledged and appreciated, in other words bought into, by many previously conservative customers.

In this respect, after this crisis the economy will need more agencies and more freelancers than ever before. However, presumably these will not always be available in the old constellations but will largely be forced to function as completely new setups.

The markets and projects these agency constellations will be involved with will also work in an equally novel manner. We will all experience a great digital boost and we will notice in the process how important real encounters are. The conception of these real encounters will be faced with new tasks in terms of experiential quality, authenticity, dramaturgy and appreciation. At the same time, we will set digital benchmarks against real encounters, especially regarding the availability, accessibility and cost/use as well as the retrievability and exchangeability of digital events. The industry is getting more digital and more real at the same time.

The handling of Small and Big Data will also change. This is because, on the one hand, both will become more important and more influential the more we people interact with each other digitally. Especially in these situations, the human psyche and the reorientation of consumer habits in times of crisis such as these are scarcely predictable. This interplay of Big Data, Small Data and what we stand for as professionals in the events sector, namely a knowledge of human nature and empathy, will become more intense and interesting.

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**Despite corona, we would also like to address other subjects on the industry's mind before and presumably also after. For example, sustainability. Despite its growing importance, in practice one rarely sees truly sustainable brand experiences. Music festivals are doing significantly more to gradually become more sustainable. Why is this not evident among brand experiences?**

Of course, the purpose of events, especially regarding sustainability, as well as the authenticity of value promises and purpose declarations by organisers and organising companies, is being increasingly critically questioned. With good reason, I find, because it is only when we can provide good, honest and understandable answers to all these questions that we as an agency have done a good job for our customers.

Festival organisers are indeed one step ahead, because they are in close contact with their target group and listen to this target group. Many companies have become good narrators in the meantime but are not quite as good at listening and especially at events they only make use of the possibility of dialogue to a limited extent.

*Sustainability is not a compromise nor a restriction. Sustainability is nothing other than an attitude.*

Annually recurring festivals with solid learning effects and a target group with an extreme focus on sustainability indeed have it somewhat easier. But this is no excuse. We must make it clear to our customers that in the end they will be measured against the credibility with which they make it possible to positively experience sustainability also on an exclusive level. Because sustainability is not a compromise nor a restriction. Sustainability is nothing other than an attitude.

Katharina Stein in an interview with Cedric Ebener (Managing and Creative Director CE+Co)



## Event Design Yearbook 2020 / 2021

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The world is changing. A host of developments are impacting our lives: sustainability, values, equality, purpose, digitisation or "Gen Z". However, a consideration of the majority of brand experiences gives rise to the question: Where is the change? It occurred: with COVID-19! And suddenly it was about people's lives, about our supply system and saving our and many other sectors.

This is therefore a special Event Design Yearbook. It allows us to revel in projects that have been prohibited for months in 2020. It also shows experience concepts from the time before COVID-19. With all the foreseen changes after the pandemic, as described for example by Cedric Ebener in the interview, one can only speculate how the concepts presented here might look in future.

Katharina Stein has been dedicated for over ten years to transdisciplinary trends and themes in live communication. After studying psychology, sociology and political sciences at RWTH Aachen, she worked in various positions and areas in gastronomy, the hotel business, marketing and event management and handled corporate customers including Bayer, Heidelberger Druckmaschinen and Henkel. Since the foundation of eveosblog in 2009, she has been a freelance publicist and copywriter with a focus on live communication.