

DSA Honors Program

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Redesigning the Future:

Walt Disney World's Innoventions Pavilion

Art and Design

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**Redesigning the Future:
Walt Disney World's Innoventions Pavilion**

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Part 1: Research

EPCOT Origins and Philosophy

Before Walt Disney World in Florida was the world's most popular theme park experience (Jeffers 12), Walt Disney intended to use the Florida property to create an entirely functional, technologically advanced city. He called it the "Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow" (Pedersen 1). This dream city was to be fully controlled, planned and designed with everything its citizens of the future needed. Epcot was always to be in a state of "becoming" – a place where its 20,000 citizens would live a life they can't find anywhere else in the world. Cars would be restricted to underground tunnels to avoid danger to pedestrians. All families would ride to work or school on public monorails. The entire inner city would be enclosed and climate-controlled to protect it from the elements (Marling 30). It was a utopian vision of progress and technology.

This city was Walt Disney's original plan for his Florida property, where Walt Disney World stands today. He called it "Project X" and secretly bought up swampland under the names of different dummy corporations in order to avoid media attention and competition. However, Disney died in December of 1966 before this dream could be realized. In an effort to preserve his dream, Disney's engineers carried his forward-thinking ideals into the project that later became the Epcot theme park (Pedersen 6).

The Epcot of today is not a city, but is made to be more like a world's fair. In the front half of the park, Epcot's "Future World" was created to showcase the latest in innovative technology and to depict an exciting and optimistic picture of the future for its guests (Pedersen 5). As such, it should be constantly modernized—or made as timeless as possible. If neglected, Future World can easily become dated. Epcot is by far the largest park at Walt Disney World, and the most difficult to maintain. Many attractions rely on corporate sponsorships to operate, but sponsorships have not always been consistent. Not all of the current attractions are popular, and some spaces are not used to their best potential.

Innoventions

A notable example of this is Future World's "Innoventions" pavilion. Housed in two buildings in the center of the park (Fig. 1), Innoventions is a museum-like collection of sponsored exhibits that present the newest innovations in technology and promote healthy lifestyles. In each area, families are guided through a game or program that both teaches and entertains.

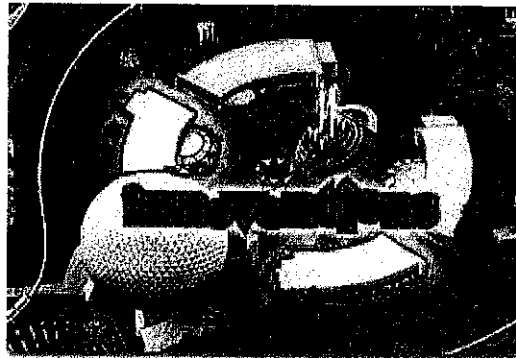


Fig. 1: The Innoventions pavilion and current branding

When Epcot first opened in 1982, these buildings were known as "CommuniCore" and showcased such cutting-edge technology as the microchip, text-to-speech programs, and computer-programmed robots. It has since undergone two major renovations in an attempt to create a more modern aesthetic—once in 1994, and again in 1999 in anticipation of the new millennium. (Pedersen 129-144) Technology has changed since then, and along with it the ideals and aesthetics of "modern" society.

My goal for this project was to create a conceptual design that brings back the futuristic element that defines Disney's Future World. This includes a design concept for the exterior of both Innoventions buildings, new designs for the buildings' entryways, and a new theme and logo to be used on promotional material and the Disney website.

Imagineering and the Disney Design Process

"Imagineering" is a term created by the Disney Company to describe their designers, merging the words "imagine" and "engineering". Legendary Disney designer Marty Sklar describes Imagineering as "the blending of creative imagination with technical know-how" (Malmberg 10). Imagineers are completely dedicated to storytelling and the experience of the guest. Walt Disney World Imagineers rely heavily on storytelling in their designs to make guests feel as if they are transported to a different time and place (Marling 14). The environments they create are carefully created to disconnect guests from the outside world and allow them to fully experience and enjoy a new "story" that takes place only at Disney World. When designing for Disney World, it is important to keep storytelling and entertainment at the forefront of all your ideas.

This project took me through what would be the concept stage in an actual Disney project—to the point where the design is ready to pitch as if to company executives. Normally a project would then move on to a feasibility stage, engineering, and eventually construction (Malmberg 48). Even after being approved, an idea may be constantly changed throughout the process.

In the Disney spirit, I worked under the philosophy of "Blue Sky" ideation. When starting any project, Disney designers are encouraged to entertain their wildest "blue sky" ideas while brainstorming—no matter how implausible (Marling 17). If these ideas do not work out, they may still lead to other solutions later on. In my case, this allowed me to experiment with new ideas in branding and exhibition technology.

Purpose and Philosophy

The purpose of Future World (and, by extension, the Innoventions pavilion) is to teach and inspire its visitors (Marling 164). Using the newest technology in never-before-seen ways, it seeks to teach new scientific ideas in a fun and fascinating way. Then, after seeing and interacting with the new technologies, guests are inspired to go home and make the future happen in their own communities.

In addition to creating a futuristic atmosphere, the new design for Innoventions should also continue to provoke this excitement and wonder. The possibilities of the future are endless to an open mind. Within the Innoventions space, guests should feel as if they can take hold of those possibilities and shape the future into anything they can imagine. Epcot's Future World is different from other Disney parks in that it is not fairy dust that makes magic happen—it's science. But the Disney wonder is still present. With all of this, one must also keep in mind that the audience for this space is on vacation. Ultimately, the space must maintain a friendly and entertaining environment and never become too serious or didactic.

Picturing the Future

In order to bring Innoventions back up to date, I first had to decide what the "future" looks like to our culture today. Throughout the decades, the future has taken on many different looks. During the atomic age of the 1950's, people dreamed of the "automatic household". Self-driving teardrop-shaped vehicles and polished metal automatic appliances that catered to your every need were seemingly just a few years away. In the 1980's and 90's, the world changed with the revolution of the personal computer. Images of screens, levers, and microchips dominated much of the world's view of what the future would look like.

But how do people in the 21st century envision the future? This is a difficult question. There is no set of rules and no comprehensive study that can possibly keep up to date on the constantly changing technology and opinions of the current culture. To try to find some visual trends, I took to the internet and researched new concept designs for products that are expected to be possible within the next 30 years. I found such ideas as clothing printers, keyboards of projected light, insect-like cars, and rotating skyscrapers. I also paid attention to other pop culture and commercial sources to try to gauge what is commonly seen as "modern" or "futuristic".

What I found consisted of both abstract and visual concepts. As I see it, people no longer wish to see a cluttered, busy future. Our current idea of the future is sleek and very simple. Our fascination with microchips, cables, and push buttons has come and gone. We are no longer interested in seeing the inner workings of our technology. Even power cords are a hassle and an eyesore. The future of today is wireless and buttonless. Touchscreens and voice controls become more and more popular and online cloud technology allows us to share anything we want instantly with just a touch.

LED lighting and projection technology are also commonly found in today's future, as are complex organic curves and smooth, shining surfaces. Modern technology is simple, intuitive, flexible, compact, and personalized. Common colors of the future include a neutral white, cool blue, green, and bright orange.

Part 2: Concept

Logo and Theme

The new Innoventions logo is simpler and cleaner than the previous branding, yet just as full of energy and movement (sometimes in a literal sense). "Innoventions" is boldly spelled out in Rezland Logotype Font. I chose Rezland for its sleek, circular curves and the forceful pointed "v".

As technology advances, the separation between two- and three-dimensional design becomes less significant. Modern logos often appear to be three-dimensional, as if they occupy "real" space. The new Innoventions logo, therefore, is given depth and appears to float right off of the background toward the viewer.



Previous branding:



"Flat" versions of the logo were also created for simple letterheads or when printing colors are limited.



Logo Variations

This logo design challenges convention with its changing color palette. While the white text and blue-white lights above it remain unchanged, the streaks of light in the background may change colors freely. This means the logo may have a different look every time it is seen, though it is always clear that it is the same logo.

This also allows for customization and personal connection with its audience. Visitors to the website or even to the Innoventions buildings themselves may be given the opportunity to directly interact with the brand by changing and choosing the colors of the logo.

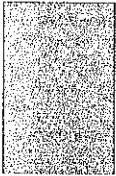


Color Scheme

The colors of most of the imagery I found were dark and stern, which does not fit the optimistic feel that Future World aspires to. Instead, I decided to work with similar but somewhat brighter colors. In addition to the blue, green, and orange that appeared in several inspiration sources, I added a purple and a yellow to the scheme. On official documents, printed material, and any other media that do not allow for customization, the colors of the logo will be chosen from those provided in this color scheme.



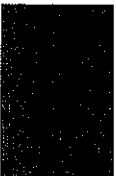
C = 0 R = 248
M = 45 G = 157
Y = 78 B = 77
K = 0



C = 17 R = 219
M = 0 G = 227
Y = 80 B = 89
K = 0



C = 65 R = 75
M = 0 G = 191
Y = 39 B = 174
K = 0



C = 63 R = 49
M = 0 G = 197
Y = 0 B = 244
K = 0



C = 72 R = 104
M = 90 G = 63
Y = 0 B = 152
K = 0

Front Signage

At the entrance of the Innoventions buildings, the logo literally emerges into real-world space and is presented in three dimensions. LED lights on the upper wall behind the logo are programmed to change colors throughout the day. At night, this effect will be even more spectacular.

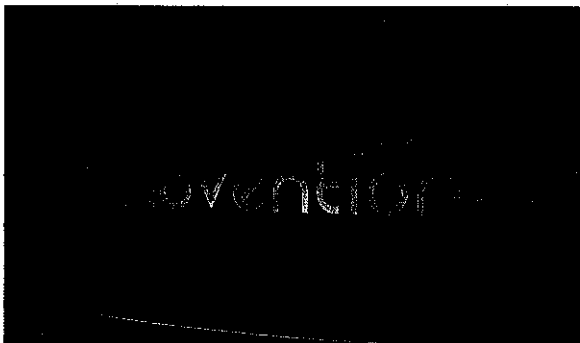
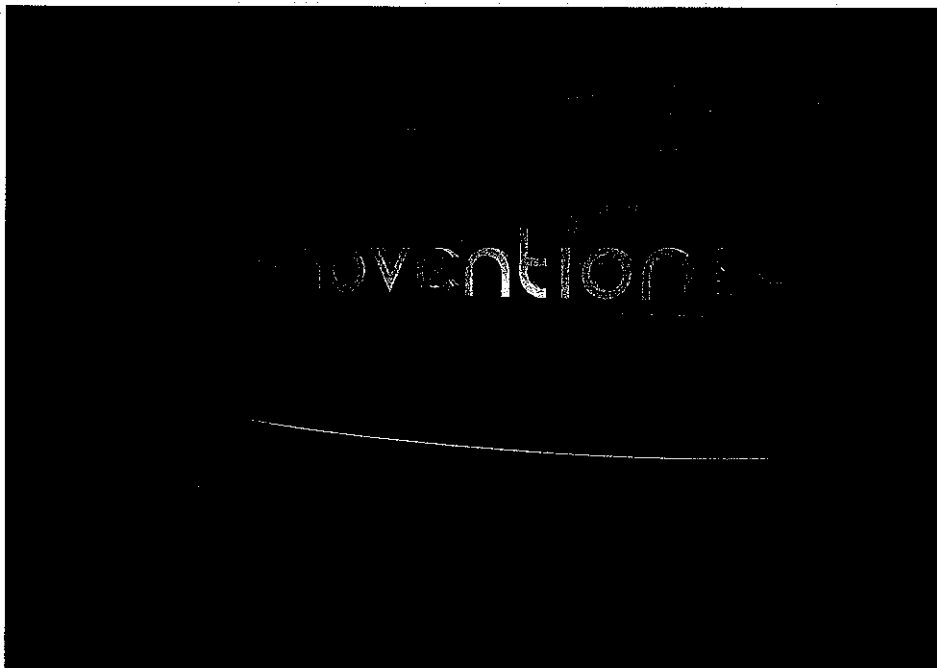


Current branding:



Entranceway Signage

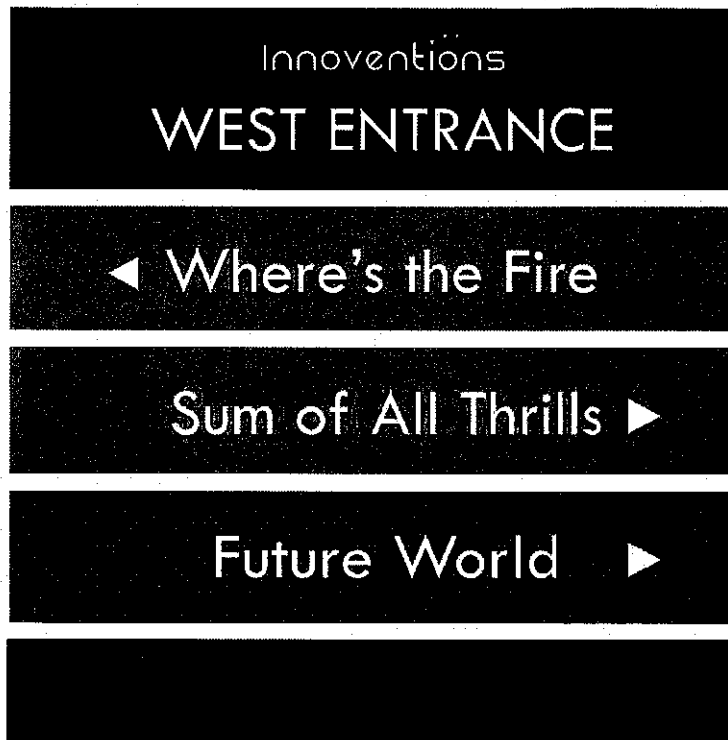
Inside the main entranceway of each building stands another dynamic three-dimensional Innoventions logo. The logo is suspended above a multi-touch interactive table where guests can look up exhibit information and show times, play games, or control the colored lights in the entranceway. This station allows guests to change the Innoventions logo to their favorite colors for all to see. This direct interaction creates a connection to the brand and enforces the idea that they have the power to decide what the future looks like.



Wayfinding

The secondary system of the Innoventions branding comes in the form of wayfinding signs within the two buildings. Since Innoventions houses multiple exhibits in a nonconventional floorplan, proper signage is necessary to avoid confusion and disorientation. With wayfinding signage, it is important to choose a clearly readable type that complements the Innoventions logo and futuristic look.

I chose Tw Cen MT to fulfill this purpose.



Conclusion

Working on this project gave me an opportunity to explore new concepts in design and to approach my final solution in a new and different way than what I am used to. I really enjoyed playing with futuristic concepts in the "magical", over-the-top style of Walt Disney World. Throughout this project, I was glad to be able to utilize much of what I learned over the years in different areas of design and bring it all together for the purpose of bringing new life to one of my favorite places.

Even now, there is still much that I can continue with on this project. Predicting the future is a bigger task than I expected, and there are many more technologies to be explored. Due to a lack of knowledge of Innoventions' floorplan and full scale, I was only able to create a few individual pieces and could not go much into detail with the interior of the buildings. I would like to continue researching Innoventions and working on this project, evolving it over time and expanding it to include a full redesign of Innoventions' marketing materials and the building interiors themselves.

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