dein-dlrp.de Interview with David Younger

David Younger was born in Durham, England, and was introduced to theme parks with the opening of Disneyland Paris in 1992. "Theme Park Design & The Art of Themed Entertainment" was written while undertaking the world's first ever Art & Design PhD research project into the creative techniques of theme park design, incorporating a time as a Creative Designer at Walt Disney Imagineering in Glendale, California. David has additionally served an elected two year term on the International Board of Directors of the Themed Entertainment Association.

Torsten: Hello David, thank you very much for joining me for this interview. For the beginning I would like to talk with you about 3 different „beginnings". A few weeks ago you have published „Theme Park Design & The Art of Themed Entertainment", the most complete book about Theme Park industry's inner workings I know of.

Theme Parks are very much about emotions and feelings, and I think writing such a comprehensive work is not done as a normal academic & professional book but it needs a lot of enthusiasm for its subject. So the first beginning I want to talk about is how it all started for you - where did your enthusiasm for Theme Parks begin? Have you been a fan before you became a professional?

David: Thank you for your interest in the book! For me, my professional interest in theme parks definitely grew out of a childhood love of them, and I think I can trace that back to Disneyland Paris. I was five years old when my parents took me to the park the month that it opened, and I think I was the perfect age to experience what was, and still is in many ways, the most beautiful theme park in the world. I was always doodling and drawing up my own theme park ideas, or (after getting off a ride) I'd try and trace out the layout of the attraction to figure out how it all pieced together.

When it got time to go to university, I chose to go into film - really because no theme park design courses existed (although that's now changing - and even more excitingly I'm being contacted by courses looking to use my book as their textbook!). When other people would write about "Gone with the Wind" or "The Godfather", though, I would write about theme park attractions.

Torsten: To have your own Theme Park ideas early on sounds like there might be some nice anecdotes about that - do you remember what your first such ideas were?

David: I'm sure a lot of them were derivative back then, but understanding what makes theme parks attractions work is really useful, and I spent a lot of time figuring them out! I can tell you

one experience I had trying to draw out a layout when I was about 12 though, and that was for the Indiana Jones Adventure in Disneyland. With that ride you can see the show building outside the park when you arrive, so I knew it was rectangular, and I also knew that the main show scene, the "Cavern of Bubbling Death" was rectangular too - but when I tried to draw it out I could never make it fit. It wasn't until I realised that the interior room is actually at a forty-five degree angle to the rest of the building - something you wouldn't immediately expect. In the course of researching this book, I got to spend lots of time talking with Tony Baxter, the lead designer on the ride, and mentioned this realisation, which uses a technique called "Cavern Design". He explained that by putting the inside room at angle, you had all these interesting small corners off to the side that the ride vehicles could explore, instead of having regularly shaped rooms throughout, throwing off the guest's sense of direction. A brilliant layout technique!

Torsten: Sounds like a very professional approach at the age of 12 already! Did you get your first influence from Disneyland Paris only (or in this case from another Disney Park from which you tried to import an attraction) or have you been also a fan of other parks that influenced you? In the United Kingdom, Alton Towers would be an obvious choice.

David: Other parks definitely captured my attention too, and I think I was definitely influenced by the European theme park boom in the early 1990s. Alton Towers was especially magical throughout the nineties; PortAventura opened up with spectacular land theming, and of course my parents were kind enough to take me to Walt Disney World and Universal Orlando Resort. There were some theme parks I didn't visit back then, like Efteling, but I've definitely corrected that oversight since.

One of the most exciting things about researching this book was visiting so many theme parks I'd never seen before - places like Efteling, but also places like Tokyo DisneySea and smaller attractions too. It gives a much greater understanding and appreciation of how varied, exciting, and inspiring themed design can be. Although Disney leads the industry, there's a lot of other great design out there.

Torsten: So your interest spread wide early and did not stay just inside the Disney-Universe - thanks for this insight in the first "beginning" The second "beginning" I want to talk about is the beginning of the process of writing the book. At some point you decided to do the step from a fan to work as pro in this business. How did this happen? And then, on from this, working as the pro in the theme park industry how did this lead to the idea of writing such a huge book in a depth that has never been written before?

David: Well as I said before, on my film course while everyone would write about great movies, I would write about great attractions. I was very fortunate in my second year at university to take part in an international exchange program to the United States. I was hoping that, while I was out there, I would perhaps get the chance to visit Disneyland once or twice, but by complete chance I ended up being assigned to California State University Long Beach - just twenty minutes down the road from Disneyland! Needless to say, I bought my Annual Pass the first week I was there. I would have film classes in the morning, and then visit Disneyland in the evening, and very quickly saw that lots of film techniques overlapped into theme park design - scenic design, story structure, show writing, and lots more (of course, many of Disney's original Imagineers came from film production). On British university courses, you write a 10,000 dissertation in your final year, and I used that as an opportunity to write about the application of film techniques to the original Pirates of the Caribbean ride.

It couldn't describe everything though, and having experience with film literature which has hundreds of books on every topic you can imagine (set design, script writing, acting, and so on), I wanted to find the same for theme park design. I knew about forced perspective, and the hub & spoke layout, and berms, but I knew that in a medium as rich as themed design there must be lots more. If it didn't exist already, I decided, I would write it myself - and teach myself theme park design in the course of writing it!

Doing that opened a lot of doors with respected designers, who often told me that a book like this has been long overdue. Of course, the most exciting development came when I explained to an executive at Walt Disney Imagineering what I was doing: "You can't write about theme park design without experiencing Imagineering", he told me, "We're going to have to bring you over!"

Torsten: Wow! And that's how you originally came to work at Walt Disney Imagineering? Such a reply and invitation sounds like an overwhelming surprise and I guess you did not expect this to happen - how did you feel? With the upcoming European Championship in Football I can imagine that it must have felt like a player getting a sudden call to join the national team.

David: It was incredibly exciting - something I'd been trying to work towards since I first heard of Walt Disney Imagineering. Since then, I've heard a lot of people say that to work at Imagineering you need to find a way to stand out, and I realise now that writing the first ever book on theme park design was my way of doing that.
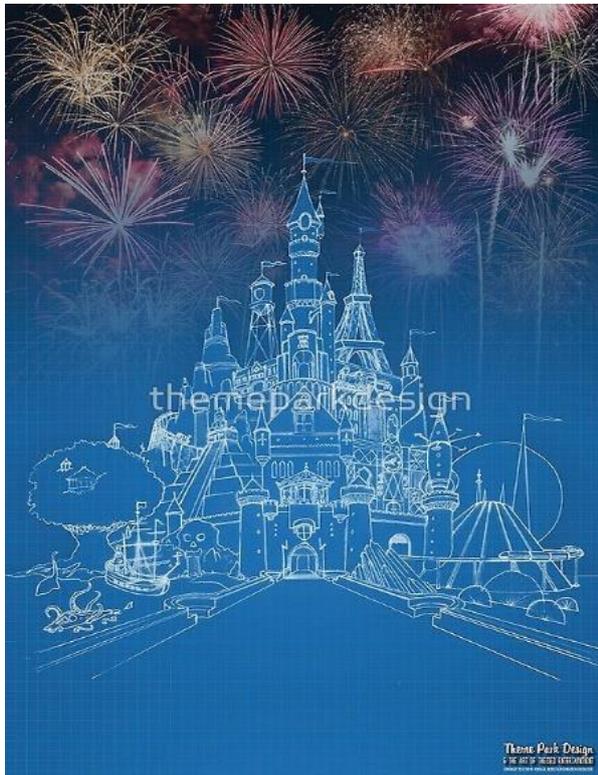
Torsten: The last "beginning" I would like to talk about takes us back to the book itself, it is literally the beginning of the book - its cover design. Seen from afar it looks like the cover simply is an obvious choice for a book about Theme Parks - a Disney castle like it has been used before over and over - but then, when you look closer, you can see that it's much more than just another concept drawing of a Disney castle but something really clever - tell me about it!

David: I'm glad you picked up on that! When it came to the cover design I quickly realised how hard it was to graphically depict a theme park because a theme park doesn't look like anything in itself - it looks like other things, like a cowboy town, or a futuristic spaceport, or an exotic jungle. The castle was the obvious icon for a theme park, but I wanted something more unique than that, and stumbled upon the thought of grouping all sorts of different theme park icons - a pirate ship, a space rocket, a movie studio water tower, a rocky mountain, the Eiffel Tower - building them on top of one-another into the form of a fairy tale castle! It's not a structure I would build in real life, but for the subject matter I think it's well-suited and fun.

Torsten: Now let's talk about the book itself. First, as I have seen some misunderstandings already by some people who expect it to be fun picture book made for fans only, like Alain Littaye's and Didier Ghez's "Disneyland Paris from Sketch to reality" or like the official "Walt Disney Imagineering" books, tell us what your book really is and at what is its major target audience?

David: Yes, people should be aware that it's definitely a textbook, not a picture book, but because of that there's a lot more interesting information I could fit in the pages (and there are a lot of them - almost 600!). Primarily this is a book intended for people who are really going to be designing theme parks, whether that's as a handbook for theme park professionals who want a quick reminder of things to keep in mind before they start their latest project, or design students looking to learn how to design for all aspects of themed design from start to finish. But as well as that, there's lots of interesting information for theme park fans who just want a peak behind the curtain of how theme parks really make their magic. The book covers everything from the business models and design programming that supports the industry though to story writing, land layout, and roller coaster design, so if you're the type of person who likes learning about forced perspective, hub & spoke layouts, and wienies, I definitely think there will be a lot of information in this book that will interest you. It's broken up into nine chapters with lots and lots of subsections and subsubsections so it's easy to jump into something that interests you, whether that's ride vehicle design, show design, or thematic design.

Torsten: So every serious theme Park Fan should get and read it?

David: I think if you've ever wondered about how theme parks are designed, you'll definitely find the book interesting. For me, one of the best things I was able to do with the book was to have lots of quotes from respected designers explaining how they applied the concepts in the book to real projects. So the book might talk about what designers think about when choosing lands for a new theme park, and then I'll be able to quote Steve Kirk, lead designer for Tokyo DisneySea, explaining the considerations that went into deciding on American Waterfront, Lost River Delta, Mermaid Lagoon, and so on. I'm able to talk about ride layout, and have Tony Baxter explain how it applies to the Indiana Jones Adventure; land design and have Eddie Sotto talk about Main Street, U.S.A. in Disneyland Paris, or roller coaster design and have John Wardley talk about Nemesis at Alton Towers! I still find their wisdom fascinating to read.
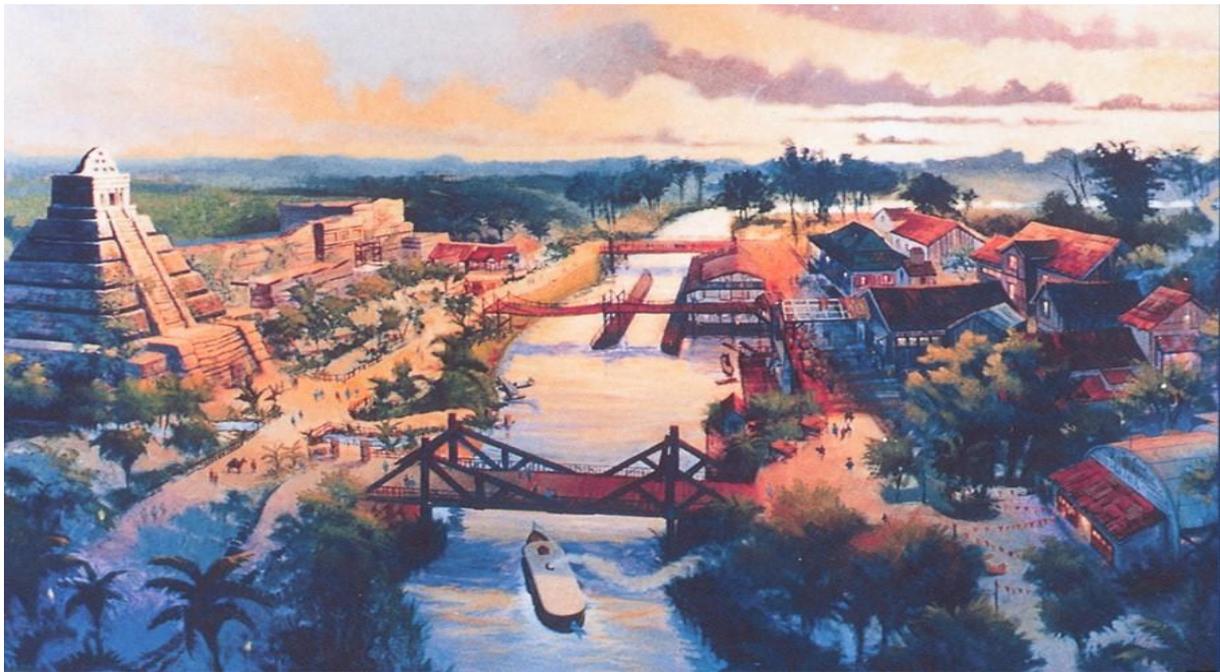
Torsten: Your book gives a real deep inside look into Theme Park industry and you just said that you were able to talk with a lot of designers - so you interviewed many people from the industry for it and published "secret" working mechanisms in your book - was it easy to make your interview partners talk about all these details or did you also have to face a lot of scepticism?

David: I was incredibly fortunate in how open and enthusiastic the designers I spoke to were - like I said before, many of them had been wishing for a book like this for a long time themselves! I've very often found that theme park designers are huge fans of the medium, and anything that can help innovate or celebrate it is really appreciated. There is of course the perspective that design is innate - that it's a talent you either have or don't have, and something a book can't teach. To a degree, that's certainly true, but the happy thing I found when talking to these designers I've respected for many years is how much they relied on mentors teaching them things that they could then build on and push forward. They reassured me that my book could fulfil that same purpose, only written down in text form rather than conveyed by word of mouth, so that for anyone with that spark of a designer within them, they'll have a head start on learning the wisdom of the industry.

Torsten: And you even managed to get Tony Baxter to write the foreword for your book - something that must have felt especially great for someone whose enthusiasm for Theme Parks was started by Disneyland Paris in 1992.

David: That's exactly right. There are many designers I have tremendous respect for, but Tony Baxter's influence on theme park design probably means the most to me, starting with Disneyland Paris and progressing through attractions like Star Tours and the Indiana Jones Adventure. When Tony retired, I was sad that I wouldn't get to work for him on a project, but when I arrived at Imagineering I was elated to find out he was still offering his time as a mentor to Imagineers, and he was incredibly enthusiastic about my book. I got to spend hours with him in his office and at Disneyland, discussing theme park design, the lessons he'd learned, and the information I was putting together for my book - really a dream come true for me. When he agreed to write the foreword (and what an amazing foreword it is!), I got to fulfil the childhood ambition of working with Tony Baxter on a project, only instead of designing something for him, he'd written something for me!

Torsten: Your book is not only about the techniques and the business of theme parks, it's even more comprehensive than this, it also has a big chapter about the history of themed entertainment, which you date back until (at least) the time of pleasure gardens in medieval Europe. Is there any kind of a red thread or a leitmotiv which was there continuously from several hundred years back until today that keeps all these things together?

David: I thought it was valuable to set the scene when learning about theme park design by looking back at what came before it, and really the thread that runs through it all is spatial entertainment: using the environment itself to create an enjoyable experience, which then gets enhanced by each new technological and cultural innovation that comes along. One of the main things I learned personally when writing this book was that my personal reasons for liking theme parks were not necessarily the same as everybody else's. Designers have broken these desires up into three groups: *Thrill Seekers* (who like big rides and physical experiences), *Character Huggers* (who like well-known characters and detailed stories), and *World Travellers* (who like being transported to exotic and fantastic destinations) - and I'm definitely in the third group. Lots of previous entertainments (whether amusement parks, films, books, or gardens) might cater for one sector of these, but theme parks were unique in bringing them all together in one place, and letting us step into them physically.

Torsten: Many people nowadays criticise Theme Parks as too kitschy, too artificial. When Disneyland Paris, back then Euro Disney, was about to be build, it was even called a "cultural Chernobyl" by French media. On the other hand the same people have lots of praise for pleasure gardens and alike. But back then, in pleasure gardens, there were lots of themed elements as well. We have seen artificial mosques or minarets that have been built in European Pleasure gardens at the peak of a phase we call "Orientbegegeisterung" in German (translates like „Fascination for the Orient"), artificial Mediterranean grottos in gardens in Central Europe, there was a "chinese palace" in the huge complex of castles and gardens in the Lednice-Valtice area in today's Czech republic, nowadays called "Garden of Europe". Perrault's Perystil at the Louvre in Paris can be seen as themed after the architectural style of the Roman antiquity. The

Grand Trianon, or at least several elements of it, in the famous gardens of Versailles also reminds of antiquity. Statues of old Greek gods can be found throughout Europe's Castle gardens. These are only a very few examples and there are many more - do you have any idea why judgment about "old themed attraction" on contrast to modern "themed attractions" is so different?

Artificial Castle ruin „Hansenburg" in the Cultural Landscape „Garden of Europe" / Lednice-Valtice, Czech Republic – Themed Entertainment build in the early 19. Century.

David: I've believed for a while now that the majority of the cultural criticism directed at theme parks is down to a misunderstanding of what the theme park is trying to achieve - particularly a lot of architectural critique which tries to claim the theme park as its own (and therefore critique it in architectural terms), when really the architecture in a theme park is no more or less important than the set design, or the writing, or the lighting design, or any other discipline. Because the theme park is part of the "built environment" it's easy to see where that misinterpretation comes from - but it's when you begin to look at theme parks as an offshoot of cinema that things begin to make more sense. All themed design attempts to do is place you physically in a story, and while that can certainly be the kitsch of the Jungle Cruise or the American idealism of Main Street, U.S.A., there's no reason it can't be used, like any other medium, to convey stories and experiences with more depth - and indeed, lots of museums throughout the 1990s began to see this and incorporate it into the design. I often say one of the best theme parks in the United Kingdom is Beamish Museum - which isn't a theme park at all! It's a living, open air museum, but by allowing the guests to step into another time and place it uses all the techniques of theme park design, just without the need for ride systems.

Torsten: Let's talk a bit about Disneyland Paris. Disneyland Park obviously is a Magic Kingdom that in many elements closely follows its ancestors, Disneyland and the Magic Kingdom in Walt Disney World. In the original ideas there were many more differences planned compared with those that have finally been realised. Eddie Sotto originally planned Main Street, U.S.A. to be set in the 1920s instead of the usual Victorian style. Tim Delaney had the idea of a totally different castle for Disneyland Paris - but in the end the design of many elements followed much more the know paths - what do your think are the reasons for this? Only because of budget or did Disney not dare to realise this new ways because they were too much off the track and too ambitious?

David: There are a couple of concepts in theme park design relevant to this. The first is "ideation" - coming up with as many creative ideas as possible, as its only in comparing them that you can see what's best - and the second is 'eyewash' - coming up with the boldest, biggest, most outrageous concept you can think of, and later pulling that back to something realistic. The ideas you mention for Disneyland Paris certainly come out of applying these concepts, and it's not unusual for a project of Disneyland Paris's scale to have thousands of ideas abandoned for various reasons, including budget, marketing, operations, or simply creative preference. The 1920s Main Street, U.S.A. was dropped because Michael Eisner was concerned that gangsters wouldn't harmonise with Disney's optimistic theme; the Discoveryland castle was dropped because marketing argued the castle was an iconic and essential Disney image. But even though the ideas were dropped, we shouldn't overlook the quality of what replaced them - if we'd got Tim Delaney's Discoveryland castle, we wouldn't have got Tom Morris's stunning fairy tale castle, and with Eddie Sotto's 1920s Main Street, U.S.A. we wouldn't have got Eddie Sotto's gorgeous 1900s Main Street, U.S.A. Disneyland Paris is a park that I can still look at and find ingenious design decisions, and although it uses the 'castle park' mold, it refreshed it in brilliantly clever ways. The Main Street Arcades, the steampunk Discoveryland, the swapping of Adventureland and Frontierland, the Le Taniere du Dragon caves, Adventure Isle, and the island-bound Big Thunder Mountain, are all brilliant design decisions (among many others I couldn't even begin to list!). Having spoken to Tony Baxter, who was the lead designer on the park, I'm most amazed by his use of a design technique called 'Double Duty', which is the aim of getting multiple uses out of any single element. Just look at the entrance to Frontierland: Fort Comstock. In the original Disneyland in California there were two cowboy forts: the fort marquee to the land, and Fort Wilderness on Tom Sawyer Island. Instead of building two forts again, which would be redundant, Tony decided to combine them into one fort, which not only allowed him to make the fort bigger, but also made for an even more impressive land entrance, and ALSO allowed him to make it into its own walkthrough attraction as well (Legends of the Wild West) - and all for no extra money! That's clever design.

Concept Art Tim Delaney's Discoveryland Castle ©Disney
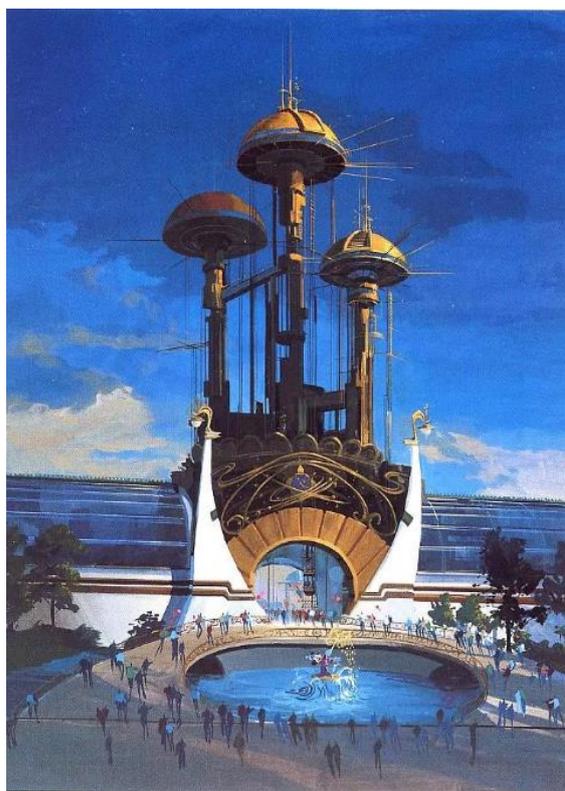
Torsten: A major difference between Disneyland Paris' Disneyland Park and the other Magic Kingdoms is Discoveryland, as you also already mentioned in the last answer, which follows a completely new theme in contrast to the other Tomorrowlands. At least in its front area, the theme is the imagination for a promising future, great authors and inventers dreamed at the turn of the 19. to the 20. Century. It really worked well from the first day on and fans loved it. Tell us a bit more about how it was designed.

David: Tim Delaney really pioneered two amazing innovations with Discoveryland at Disneyland Paris. The first was a response to the problem of 'Future-Proofing' that plagues many futuristic themed projects. To quote from my book: "Future-Proofing describes how any element designed to depict the present or the near future will quickly become outdated as time moves onward: the prediction is either proved right and the design is no longer futuristic, or it's proved wrong and becomes irrelevant, particularly with the pace of contemporary technology." Tomorrowland in Disneyland California has needed constant updates (most clearly in 1959, 1967, and 1998) - which is incredibly expensive! Tim realised that depicting a future as seen by people of the past (primarily the Victorians), it would never need to updated (and this approach was so successful it was later duplicated for Magic Kingdom, this time with a future as seen from the 1930s).

As well this however, Tim applied a style of design that was routinely used in the other lands but hadn't been used in a Tomorrowland. Lands can be of two types: Specific Lands depict a specific time and place (like Main Street, U.S.A. - an American small-town at the turn of the century) while Amalgamated Lands depict an amalgamation of places (like Adventureland - which includes medieval Arabia, the 17th century Caribbean, early 20th century India), rather than making it a Specific Land (which in some cases can limit what the land can incorporate). For the first time, Tim made it an Amalgamated Land, and although the overarching art style is Victorian, we can see a *Clockpunk* (Renaissance) future with the Orbitron, a *Steampunk* (Victorian) future with Space Mountain, an *Atompunk* (1950s) future with the Autopia, and a *Used Future* (contemporary) future with Star Tours.

These two innovations work together spectacularly, and really made Discoveryland something special - especially when you consider that Tim was also working to a requirement imposed by the French government that the land needed to represent French culture as well.

Torsten: Your book is not only about Disney Theme Parks but about Theme Park industry in general so you have for sure visited many other parks as well - some are copying Disney a lot, like Europa Park, at least in its early years, some follow completely different philosophies like De Efteling (with the exception of Carneval Festival) - what do you think could Disneyland Paris or Disney in general, learn from these other parks?

David: Although Disney certainly dominates the industry, I wanted to make sure I included lots of other theme parks too, including Efteling, PortAventura, Alton Towers, and Europa Park. It really is fascinating how art style, theming style, and story style can combine to create such a wide range of theme parks. The most common are called "Design Style Archetypes" and include *Traditional parks* (like Efteling), *Presentational parks* (like Epcot), *Postmodern parks* (like Universal Studios), *New Traditional parks* (like Disneyland Paris), and *Themed Amusement parks* (like Six Flags). Although many European parks did copy Disney in the 1980s

(something common to new theme park industries, and something seen in China at the moment), many of their own original designs can certainly be seen as Disney-quality, if not Disney-style, like Efteling, which has an amazing atmosphere to it. There is a trend within the industry that is making a majority of projects *New Traditional* in style, and even though it's personally my favourite style, it is a shame to lose those others types of attraction. The strength of the smaller parks is that they're not as influenced by these trends and have the opportunities to do something unique, especially parks like Puy du Fou and Futuroscope, and that's something I hope Disney doesn't lose sight of.

Torsten: Could you explain in short words, what the different types you mention stand for?

David: Gah, that's tricky! It's hard to really simplify their definitions, because doing so requires even more definitions! Traditional would be immersive, amalgamative lands, and low story - all three are terms which then need defining.

At their very basics, the *Traditional style* is the type used by Disneyland (when it opened) and Efteling - they are 'immersive' (meaning that they attempt to "really" put you into the worlds they present), but then use amalgamative lands and low amounts of story (like Pirates of the Caribbean, which doesn't have much more story than "pirates loot the town" - there weren't plot points, named characters, or backstories). *New Traditional* came about in the late 1980s, and is immersive like *Traditional parks*, but uses specific lands (particularly lands based around single intellectual properties like Harry Potter or Star Wars) and high amounts of story (with named characters, plot switches, and lots of backstory). The *Presentational style* is a "documentary in three dimensions", with non-immersive attractions, non-fictional content, and abstraction. It was pioneered with Epcot, but can also be seen in Futuroscope, SeaWorld, and World's Fairs. The *Postmodern style* was pioneered by Universal Studios and is a kind of reaction to Disneyland's Traditional style in that it admits it's artificial and contemporary (and interestingly was adopted by Disney for its own studio parks, like Walt Disney Studios Park). Finally, the *Themed Amusement style* is where low-level of theming is used to differentiate and brand what are obviously amusement park rides - while Big Thunder Mountain tries to make you think you're really on a runaway mine train, for example, the *Themed-Amusement* Superman: Ultimate Flight uses colours and logos to associate itself with Superman, rather than immersively putting you in the world of Metropolis.

Torsten: Ok, I do not want to overstretch your patience too much and already have asked many questions. I would have many more, about design principles, techniques etc. you mention in your book, but maybe we can talk about those in a future interview. So before we come to the end of this interview, I would like to take a view into the mind of an Imagineer. I will simply give you 5 words and would like to know in shorts words, what these mean to an Imagineer and what you connect with them:

-Imagination
-Theming
-Mathematics
-Walt Disney
-Art

David:

Imagination: I think Tony Baxter put it best when he defined 'imagination' in Journey into Imagination at Epcot: gathering, storing, and recombining. Imagination is all about constantly being on the search for great concepts, ideas, and elements (and especially in the theme park industry this means constantly being on the lookout for things outside theme park design), and finding ways to innovate them by turning them on their head, applying them in new ways, and combining them with other ideas.

Theming: Theming has a few definitions - 'Themed Design' is the creation of dimensional story experiences (dimensional in that they happen in real space rather than being seen or read about like in books and movies); 'Theme' is the unifying qualities of a project (which can be their Dramatic Theme, such as 'scary', 'wonderful', or 'inspiring', or the Manifestation Theme, such as 'Pirates', 'Cowboys', or 'Toy Story'), and Theming is the physical constructs themselves - the giant submarines, the Victorian wallpaper, or the rope fencing.

Mathematics: As a designer, I'm not really involved in the engineering aspects of a project, which is where most people would assume the mathematics of a project are, but I am heavily involved in the Design Programming of a project, which uses mathematics just as much. Projects have be justified from a business perspective, with budgets that need to be kept to, and hourly capacities that need to be achieved. If we need to process 2000 people per hour, for example, how many ride vehicles does that mean we need? How many guests per ride vehicle? How often can the vehicles be dispatched? Lots of maths to think about!

Walt Disney: In my opinion, Walt Disney was the creator of the theme park, and although themed projects had come before, his innovations defined the theme park as its own medium (I even have a section in my book on Disneyland's innovations). Although Disneyland wasn't perfect at opening, I'm still continuously amazed had just how much Walt Disney got right, and I have nothing but admiration for him and his work.

Art: Art is tricky one, and while I do feel that theme parks are an art form in their own right, I haven't really laid out my case for it, and isn't something I discuss in the book. For the meantime, I think I'll share Eddie Sotto's thoughts when I asked him about it: "I don't know if I can say its art, but there's certainly an art to it."

Torsten: So we are now getting close to the end of this interview and as I asked you about three different "beginnings" for the start I would like to you about three different "endings" now. Your book is finally published, after such a long work, what was it like to have it finally completed, to have first real print of it in your hands?

David: The funny thing is that the book project's been going for such a long time (and I've done almost every aspect of it myself!), that there's never really been a 'finish' to it. Lots of milestones were hit along the way, but even now I'm still working hard to let people know about the book, working with universities who are planning on using it to teach the next generation of theme park designers, and planning what will come next. That said, having the book on my bookshelf alongside the dozens of other theme park books that have inspired and entertained me is tremendously rewarding. I'm very happy with how it turned out, and even happier with the kind words that readers (whether theme park designers of theme park fans) have emailed to me.

Torsten: I think some of our readers, as most of them are from Germany, may be especially interested in this: when you are talking about universities that want to teach with your book in the future, are there any German universities you are in contact with or are there any German universities you know of, where students can already study in the field of theme park design?

David: I don't know of any universities in Germany specifically, but there are many courses in the United States now, and they are beginning to spread to Europe. Even where there aren't dedicated courses for Themed Design, there are lots of disciplines that contribute to it - design, illustration, filmmaking, writing, engineering, theatrical design, engineering, business - it's hard not to find a discipline that can be applied to theme parks!


Torsten: The second "ending" I would like to talk about is a fictional question, the „end of Disneyland Paris" - may sound a bit strange, but I do not want to talk about its closure, but about the end of its main construction process. We all know that when The Walt Disney Company initially signed the contracts with the French government in 1987 they had a timeframe of 30 years, until 2017, in which they had the rights to use the lands that we call the Resort of Disneyland Paris. Since then these contracts have been re-negotiated and the deadline has been expended to 2030. But at some point Disney is obliged to build the final major phase of the development which's CenterPoint will be Disneyland Paris 3. Theme Park.

So just imagine this: In 2018 you re-join Walt Disney Imagineering. Because of the huge success of your book you climb up the ranks at light-speed and in 2022 when the planning for the 3. Park, due to open on April 12, 2027, 40 years after the signing of the contracts and for the 35th anniversary of the resort, starts, you are appointed to be the head of development, with complete freedom to choose the major theme for the 3. Park, the sub-themes for each land etc. - What would you build as 3. Park of Disneyland Paris?

David: This is a question that could occupy me for years! While I have lots of ideas for themed lands I'd love to see, and park archetypes that I think that would work well with Disneyland Paris and the Walt Disney Studios, it's important for a project to begin with strong creative research and lots of ideation. There is a section in my book on 'Selecting Themes' that gives lots of guidance on this, but it would probably start by looking at what Disney worlds I would like to step into (TRON? Pirates of the Caribbean? Frozen?), what original worlds would could house or work well alongside those stories (a Horror land? A Superhero land? An Age of Sail land?), ensuring there isn't a redundancy with what the other two theme parks offer, and then finding a way to unify those story concepts together. The possibilities are vast.

Torsten: An Age of Sail park sounds interesting since it brings thoughts of Tokyo DisneySeas with it, which many fans would love to see in Paris, but, because set in a fixed historical timeframe, would still have to have enough differences to Tokyo DisneySeas to be completely unique. Any ideas about this one? In which kinds of lands could it be separated? A Land for each seafarer nation and its specific heroes? Or by the destinations, exotic and dangerous, they sailed to? What rides could be in there?

David: Although I'd love it for a land (Spanish treasure galleons wary of legendary sea monsters; a bustling trading port around a citadel fortress; legends of golden cities across the sea), I'm not sure I'd necessarily do an entire Age of Sail park. One of the benefits of *Excursion Parks* is that they take so many disparate themes and make them work together,
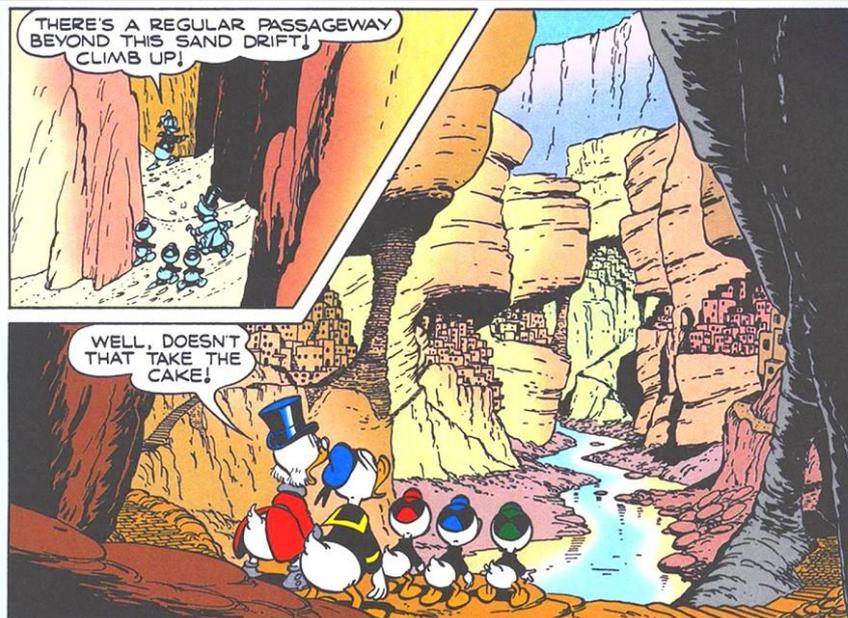
Scrooge, Donald and the nephews when they discover the Golden Cities of Cibola.

so it would perhaps be limiting to constrain an entire park to one time period. Would a wider history park work though? Could it be world history or European history? Would a 21st century Epcot work? Onto that, it's also worth thinking about what flagship Disney attractions there are around the world that could be brought to Disneyland Paris. Could entire lands be built around them as the centrepiece (like how American Waterfront was designed around Tower of Terror - even if the attraction was left to the second phase of development)? You might notice that I'm not getting specifics about any concept, and that's because the process of ideation requires coming up with lots of ideas before choosing which you'll progress with - as Walt Disney said "It's hard to choose the best idea when there's only one to choose from."

Torsten: Ok, my second „ending"-question was fiction (or maybe not ;)) now let's talk about the third ending, a real one now. Your book has been written, it has been published, this phase has ended for you - what can we expect next from you in the close and in the far-away future?

David: My plan now is to get back to design, but I've enjoyed writing this so much that I don't think this will be my final book. Even at almost 600 pages, there was material that I had to cut out of this book, so I'd love to pull that together, write it up, add something new to it, and see if I can put together a worthy follow-up. Hopefully it won't take as long to write as this book did!

Torsten: Are there full chapters or subjects you had to cut out that could be the heart of a new book? Or would it be an even more detailed look at the subjects you already covered in the current book?

David: Because they're quite long chapters, and there are only nine of them (Medium, Business, Process, Theme, Story, Design, Theme Parks, Lands, and Attractions) the structure was figured out pretty early on, so no entire chapters were cut, but there are lots of sections and subsections (and subsubsections!) that make up those chapters that went through a lot of changes. I don't think a follow-up book would go over the same topics, but there definitely would be ways to add to the information, and because the theme park industry is constantly changing there will always be new things to add in and update. I've had some people contact me to ask if I would write a book on 'Theme Park Engineering' or 'Theme Park Operations', and while I'm not the person to write those, I'd love to read books like those one day.

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Part 1

Part 2

Part 3

Part 4