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Sensory Overload

THE NORTHEAST has an embarrassment of riches when it comes to our feature topic in this issue: Instagrammable venues. Restaurants, hotels and event venues in the area continue to up their aesthetics, which made it hard to pare down our list—a good problem, indeed.

It's not just about looks, though; an immersive setting is becoming a soft requirement for planners who are striving to engage attendees at every opportunity. CWT Meetings & Events' 2020 Future Trends in Meetings and Events report listed "venues that tell a story" as one of its 20 microtrends: "Unusual venues that reflect the aims of the event are booming—think spectacular views, historic spaces or even an underwater event." (Flip to our Infographic on page 34 for more on this report.)

You might remember seeing the onslaught of images on social media from when the Museum of Ice Cream opened in 2016. The museum—which has since opened pop-up locations throughout the country—has become synonymous with Instagram, but it doesn't stop at a perfectly posed picture. I recently attended an educational session with Maria Moyano, the experiential producer at the Museum of Ice Cream, who talked about immersion being more important than Instagrammable. While the social platform certainly played into the museum's viral success, the intention of the museum is to create moments for guests rather than simply facilitate a photo opportunity. "Captions are more important than images," said Moyano. "You can't socially compare an experience." Turn to page 24 to read about—and admire—the venues we've selected for this feature.

On the other end of the spectrum, the National Association for Catering and Events (NACE) Philadelphia Chapter decided to take away attendees' sense of sight at its September 2019 meeting: Dining in the Dark. In blindfolding its guests at dinnertime, organizers effectively heightened their other senses, making for a truly unique meal. Read more on page 18.

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