



## INTERNATIONALLY ACCLAIMED THEMED EXPERIENCE LEADERS **THE HETTEMA GROUP AND THEMESPACE** ANNOUNCE MERGER, FORMING **THG**

ANAHEIM, CA (21 April 2022) – This morning, **The Hetteama Group** and **Themespace**, two internationally-acclaimed experiential design leaders, announced a merger combining forces to create **Themespace \ Hetteama Group**, known as **THG**. This new independent creative agency is dedicated to creating awe-inspiring attractions around the world for theme parks, museums, and leading brands. The company has worked closely with high-profile clients including Universal Creative, Walt Disney Imagineering, DreamWorks, Sony, Paramount, Nickelodeon, Los Angeles Dodgers, Galaxy Entertainment Group, Cedar Fair, McKinsey & Company, and Chicago’s Museum of Science and Industry, among others. More information on THG can be found at **THGcreative.com**.

Based in Pasadena, California, the new THG will build upon **The Hetteama Group** and **Themespace**’s decades of designing one-of-a-kind experiences, transforming ideas into reality in partnerships with clients spanning myriad industries including theme parks, destination attractions, rides, resorts, museums, casinos, sporting events, and brand experiences. Experts in immersive storytelling, these industry leaders are paving the way for a new paradigm in entertainment, redefining the boundaries of themed experience.

**Phil Hetteama** of **The Hetteama Group** and **Erik Neergaard** of **Themespace** unveiled this partnership today at the 2022 Themed Entertainment Association (TEA) Summit in Anaheim, California at the Disneyland Resort. Hetteama will now serve as THG’s Chief Executive Officer, while Neergaard will serve as THG’s Chief Creative Officer and COO.

“I’m thrilled to partner with Themespace,” said **Phil Hetteama**. “I have long been inspired by Erik’s creativity and innovative spirit, and I believe he will be the perfect partner as we embark

on this new chapter. As an independent agency, we will specialize in close partnerships with our clients, to help them realize their goals and turn their dreams into destinations. Through our holistic approach combining both the creative and business sides of a project, we have the ability to create incredible experiences from concept all the way through execution.”

Said **Erik Neergaard**, “It is incredible to be working alongside a revered titan of the experiential entertainment industry like Phil. Together we have assembled an even deeper team of talent, combining our expert industry veterans to offer a broader array of world-class services. This will enable spectacular options for envisioning and bringing to completion guest-centric projects that touch, move, and amaze.”

With a distinguished nearly 40-year legacy in themed entertainment, **Phil Hetteema** leads a world class team of experience designers, architects, and media producers known for creating uniquely compelling guest experiences with great emotional resonance. With The Hetteema Group, his notable projects include *One World Observatory* at One World Trade Center, a spectacular sightseeing opportunity turned inspirational personal journey through New York City’s history; the *High Roller Observation Wheel* at The LINQ, Las Vegas, the world’s tallest observation wheel; *DreamWorks Water Park*, the multi-record setting largest indoor water park in America; *Beyond All Boundaries*, an epic, multi-sensory cinematic experience executive produced by Tom Hanks for the National WWII Museum; and the *Crystal Lobby Show* at the Galaxy Macau, a breathtaking, kinetic pavilion crafted from more than 380,000 crystals that dazzles in a spectacular show of light, color, and sound. Prior to forming his own company, Phil Hetteema was Senior Vice President, Attraction Development for Universal Studios Theme Parks Worldwide. He was responsible for the creative development of all major attractions and shows, including *Terminator 2: 3D*, *Jurassic Park*, *The Amazing Adventures of Spider-Man*, *Backdraft*, and many more. He oversaw master planning for all five Universal parks, including domestic and international expansion for Universal Studios Hollywood, Universal Studios Florida, Universal’s PortAventura (Spain), and Universal Studios Japan, and, most notably, the conception and delivery of Universal’s Islands of Adventure in Florida. Phil is an alumnus of ArtCenter College of Design, where he has acted as instructor and endowed a scholarship for Environmental Design. He has been a guest lecturer at Carnegie Mellon University, USITT, IAAPA, KIN,

ICOM, SIGGRAPH, and others. Hetteema holds four patents for entertainment technology solutions and has been honored with numerous Thea Awards from the Themed Entertainment Association (TEA) including The Buzz Price Thea Award for Lifetime of Distinguished Achievements as well as playing a key role in Thea Award-winning projects, including *One World Observatory* (2016), *Beyond All Boundaries* (2010), *FiestAventura* (2000), *The Amazing Adventures of Spider-Man* (2000), *Universal's Islands of Adventure* (2000), and *Terminator 2:3D* (1997).

The Chief Creative Officer and founder of Themespace, **Erik Neergaard** has acted in a host of creative leadership and advisory roles for signature parks and attractions for some of the world's most high value brands, IPs and developers such as Universal Studios, 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox, DreamWorks, Sony Studios, Paramount Studios, Hasbro, Meow Wolf, Dubai Parks and Resorts, Nickelodeon, London Paramount, and McKinsey & Co. Hailed for his ability to elevate an experience to the delight of the audience and the success of the developer, Neergaard is recognized as a dynamic, creative visionary with a long history of developing innovative and award-winning experiences all over the globe. Key projects include NEOM: *Cultural Configuration*; the Los Angeles Dodger Stadium: *Centerfield Project*; rides such as *The Secret Life of Pets: Off the Leash*, *Jurassic World – The Ride*, *The DreamWorks Theatre: Kung Fu Panda Adventure*, and *The Simpsons Ride* for Universal Studios and *The Beatles Yellow Submarine Adventure* for Sony and Apple; and theme parks including Dubai Parks, London Paramount Entertainment Resort, Paramount Studios Park, and Wanda Wuhan Movie Park. Erik has been a guest lecturer at the Art Center of Design in Pasadena, CA, a Futurist for McKinsey and Co., and regularly acts an expert advisor in the field of experiences for culture and entertainment for major consulting firms on large giga-projects. Erik holds patents for entertainment technology solutions, and he has contributed to Thea Award-winning projects including *The Secret Life of Pets: Off the Leash* (2022), *Heineken Experience, Amsterdam* (2010), *Forces of Nature* at Arizona Science Center (2009), *The Simpsons Ride* (2009) and *The Amazing Adventures of Spider-Man* (2000).

**PRESS:** Contact Carla Befera & Co. [lauren@cb-pr.com](mailto:lauren@cb-pr.com)

**PHOTOS:** Downloadable high-res photos and video are available here:  
<http://cbpr.co/press/THGmerger>