

Pine & Gilmore's Annual

thinkAbout

at the New York Marriott Marquis overlooking Times Square
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The Making of the EXPY:

by Joe Pine & Jim Gilmore



Day Two PM

How this 3-D representation of our book cover, depicting a commedia dell'arte performer, came to be.

In July 1999, one of us (okay, it was Jim) did a half-day workshop with Houston-based Omnigroup, designers and fabricators of exhibit experiences. At lunch, the president of Omnigroup, Dalton Jenkins, presented an award that he and his company had established honoring community service. Providentially, Jim was seated next to the sculptor of the bronze award presented that day. His name: Trace Guthrie. Jim and Trace had a wonderful conversation. One thing that particularly struck Jim was that Trace had created a whole new art form, the political sculpture (think 3-D political cartoon).

A few months later, a small package from Trace arrived at Jim's home office. Contained inside was a small, clay sculpture depicting the cover of *The Experience Economy* – complete with an inset, handheld mirror! Holding the object in hand, the idea of commissioning an EXPY award was born. At prior thinkAbout events, when we had presented our Top Ten list of recommended experiences to take in during the course of the upcoming year, we had thought of treating the #1 experience as some kind of award winner, but never had acted upon the notion.

That soon changed as we commissioned Trace to create a larger bronze sculpture to give as our Experience Stager of the Year, or EXPY, award. EXPY winners have

since included American Girl Place (retroactively in 2000 from our 1999 Top Ten list), The Geek Squad, Joie de Vivre Hospitality, and The LEGO Company. Each EXPY winner has exemplified in a particularly excellent way the experience-staging principles we espouse.

We thank Trace for that original sculpture and his subsequent work for us. And we'd like to point out how he too practices what we preach. The box-opening experience when he sent us that first sculpture was so well designed. . . The experience *is* the marketing, indeed. Why did he not tell us he was going to craft this piece? Well, he didn't want to set any expectations in order to stage Customer Surprise!

We hope to surprise you with the announcement of our 2003 (and fifth) EXPY award winner at this year's thinkAbout. More importantly, we'll share nine other experiences in our Top Ten list, each with an underlying question that we'll craft to help you think more richly about the experiences you should be staging.



Trace Guthrie is not only a sculptor of fine table bronzes, but a brilliant creator of monumental-sized works of art. Mr. Guthrie received his first public commission at the age of twenty-one to create Oliver Twist for Hermann Park in Houston, Texas. A statue of Sam Houston for the college in Huntsville, Texas, soon followed. Today, he creates art works across a tremendous range of subjects, from the whimsical to the sublime.