Sea World Encyclopedia Article

Sea World

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In the highly competitive amusement industry—a $4 billion dollar industry by 1990—Sea World has attempted to provide visitors with a greater understanding of marine life. Unlike Disneyland and other amusement parks, Sea World uses environmental education, spectacle, and science to create an experience that appeals to tourists. The spectacle of Sea World is centered around orca shows; the most famous orca is Shamu. With an environmental experience compared to *Wild Kingdom* and *Jacques Cousteau,* Sea World enables tourists to appreciate nature in a tradition that places humans in control of nature. Sea World performs as a figurehead of green consumerism. "Sea World," Susan Davis notes in her cultural analysis of Sea World, *Spectacular Nature,* "is not so much a substitute for nature as an opinion about it, an attempt to convince a broad public that nature is going to be all right." But Davis contends, "Sea World represents an enormous contradiction. Using living animals, captive seas, and flourishing landscapes, the theme park has organized the subtle and contradictory cultural meanings of nature into a machine for mass consumption." Opened in 1964, Sea World was soon purchased by Anheuser-Busch and by the late 1990s operated four parks in Florida, California, and Ohio.

Further Reading:

Davis, Susan G. *Spectacular Nature: Corporate Culture and the Sea World Experience.* Berkeley, University of California Press, 1997.