

## The View That Changes You

An Interview with Michael Williams,  
General Manager and Managing Director, SUMMIT One Vanderbilt

**EDITORS' NOTE** Michael Williams is a global leader with more than 20 years of experience in running business and operations for world class brands including Disney, NFL, NHL and Formula 1. He is currently the General Manager and Managing Director of SUMMIT One Vanderbilt. Under Williams' leadership, SUMMIT has redefined immersive experiences atop the iconic modern landmark and has welcomed over 7 million guests to transcend the ordinary and engage with space in a new way. Since opening in 2021, Williams has overseen SUMMIT's success in the press with more than three thousand media placements and over one thousand hosted media and influencer guests which has resulted in 51+ billion media impressions. Williams and his team have also generated over 450 million total Instagram impressions, and 1.1 billion total impressions across all owned channels. Williams also oversees the innovative experiences and cultural moments hosted at SUMMIT, recently including Apple Music's official interview with Ariana Grande for the Zane Lowe Show and New York Stock Exchange Floor Talk as host Judy Shaw took the NYSE interview series on the road for the first time. Prior to SUMMIT, Williams was the President of the NFL Experience. He has served as CMO and Executive Vice President of Sales and Marketing with the Grand Prix of America, Formula 1, CMO and Senior Vice President of Sales and Marketing for the National Hockey League's New Jersey Devils and Prudential Center, Vice President of Marketing for the National Football League's San Francisco 49ers, and oversaw all sales and marketing for the Walt Disney Company's Mighty Ducks of Anaheim.



Michael Williams

contemplative and thrilling experiences across three floors, world-class food and cocktails from the *Après bar and cafe*, an outdoor terrace capped off by a thoughtfully curated boutique, and *Ascent*, the world's largest outdoor glass elevator. This modern New York City landmark has been lauded worldwide and across industries with recognitions such as *Tiqets Most Innovative Venue in the U.S.*, a *Tripadvisor Travelers' Choice Award*, *Architizer's A+ Award in the Architecture & Art Category*, *Elle Magazine's "Most Instagrammable Place In The World,"* and inclusion on *USA TODAY's* reader-voted list of the *"10 Best Immersive Art Experiences in the U.S. to Visit in 2024."*

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### What was the vision for creating SUMMIT One Vanderbilt and how do you define its purpose?

SUMMIT One Vanderbilt was created as a one-of-a-kind destination that welcomes

all New Yorkers and guests to discover this amazing city from a new perspective and to forge meaningful connections with each other and the space around them. SUMMIT is truly the view that changes you.

A feat of innovation, SUMMIT ignites one's curiosity by blending our breathtaking urban landscape and thoughtful architecture with immersive, multi-sensory artistic design unlike anything else in the world, offering an incomparable experience for all of our guests. We promise – you will be moved.

### Will you provide an overview of the SUMMIT One Vanderbilt experience?

SUMMIT One Vanderbilt has become the world's most immersive observatory experience, combining an unparalleled 360-degree perspective of New York City and beyond, multi-sensory artistic experiences created by Kenzo Digital, and modern architectural elements. Throughout three floors, SUMMIT sparks imagination, curiosity and creativity, as well as unexpected moments of awe. The SUMMIT journey takes off in

**OBSERVATORY BRIEF** Since opening in 2021, SUMMIT One Vanderbilt ([summitov.com](http://summitov.com)) has become the world's most immersive observatory experience, combining unparalleled 360-degree views of New York City and beyond, multi-sensory artistic experiences created by Kenzo Digital, and cutting-edge technology. SUMMIT offers an unprecedented guest experience spanning art, design and sensory exploration from the highest accessible viewpoint in Midtown Manhattan. The 65,000 square-foot entertainment space boasts equally



SUMMIT One Vanderbilt (above and following pages)



our captivating Rise elevators, quickly transporting guests to the 91st floor and into our iconic Transcendence room. A dramatic and expansive two-story space surrounded by mirrors and unobstructed views of Midtown Manhattan, it creates an illusion of infinite space and provides a multitude of perspectives through which to view the sky, the city, and each other. Our interactive and playful Affinity room is a favorite with guests of all ages, surrounding them in a sea of floating silver orbs while overlooking Central Park.

The 92nd floor is our mezzanine level, and features the thrilling Levitation, exterior transparent glass ledges that extend out 1,100 feet above Madison Avenue, with the bustling city streets directly below – a daring moment even for the most adventurous guests. On the 93rd floor, our sky-high cafe, *Après*, offers seasonal menus to be enjoyed on our outdoor terrace, and the visit concludes with a highly curated boutique and photo experience.

**What have been the keys to the strength and success of SUMMIT One Vanderbilt?**

We offer spectacular views and so much more that allow us to cater to and delight a diverse community of guests. Since opening, SUMMIT has welcomed over seven million guests from more than 207 countries and territories around the world. SUMMIT is a fully immersive art experience with unique elements for every type of guest, earning our inclusion on *USA TODAY*'s reader-voted list of the "10 Best Immersive Art Experiences in the U.S. to Visit in 2024."

Every visit to SUMMIT can spark something new and unexpected. Whether visiting for an early sunrise event, taking in the evening light show at night, or joining one of the summer stargazing sessions with expert astronomers, each guest of SUMMIT will discover a new way to be moved and inspired.

Loved by influencers and content creators alike, many visit to capture stunning photos high above the city, and we've been named *ELLE Magazine*'s Most Instagrammable Place in the World. We invite our guests to be part of the art and their creativity shines through in their posts and online content.

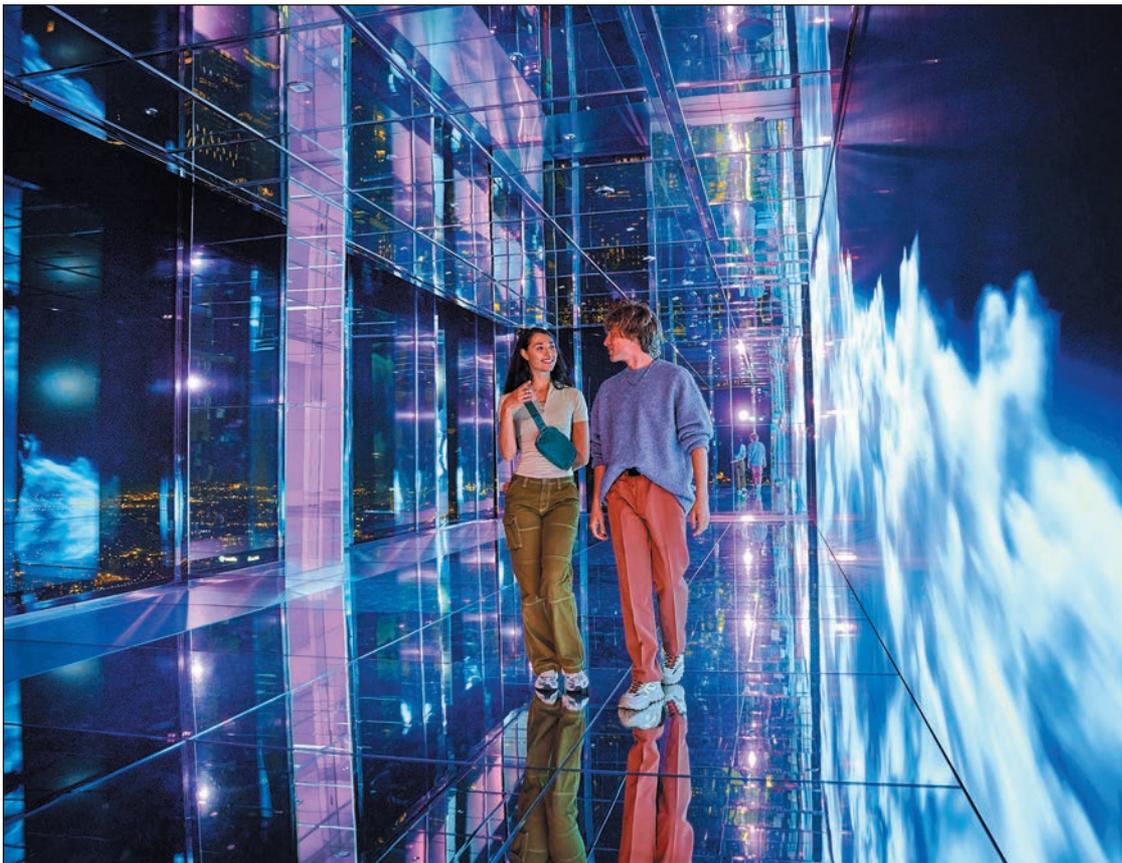
We take the guest experience very seriously and prioritize finding and training the best team out there so that we can continually deliver a world-class experience for all our guests. We are proud of the industry accolades we receive. SUMMIT One Vanderbilt was recently named North America's Leading Tourist Attraction by the World Travel Awards and was recognized by Tiqets as one of the Most Innovative Venues in the U.S.

**Will you discuss SUMMIT's culture of doing good and giving back to the community?**

SUMMIT plays an integral role in supporting the New York City community through partnerships and cultural moments that benefit local organizations throughout the calendar year. Each spring, SUMMIT One Vanderbilt and SL Green welcome the FDNY Foundation for a charity stair climb event to raise money for training supplies and resources for local firefighters and EMTs. This year, with 330 climbers, the annual event raised more than \$300,000 in support of firefighter and EMS physical fitness programs, safety education and equipment needs.

SUMMIT embraces the local arts community, offering its space as a platform for artists and music groups to perform. SUMMIT has welcomed performances from individual local musicians, nonprofit community music groups like Gaia Music Collective, and most recently the stars of Broadway's *WICKED* as part of a larger partnership with the Broadway Green Alliance. We are committed to fostering strong community ties with New Yorkers by creating enriching public moments.

SUMMIT and its base building, One Vanderbilt, set the standard with environmentally friendly measures taken during construction and "green" practices put in place for everyday operation. One Vanderbilt has been credited as paving the way for all new smart and sustainable construction projects in New



York City by reducing energy consumption by approximately 26 percent. The building is encased with high-performance window glazing that improves insulation for heating and cooling efficiency and reduces energy waste, particularly through SUMMIT's space lined with floor-to-ceiling windows. SUMMIT also utilizes a 150,000-gallon rainwater collection treatment system which reduces the demand for cooling tower water by about one million gallons.

**How important has it been to build the SUMMIT One Vanderbilt team and to invest in training its workforce?**

SUMMIT One Vanderbilt is more than a destination – it's a vibrant community for both guests and our team members. Our team reflects the rich diversity of New York City at every level, creating meaningful connections with people from all walks of life and all corners of the world. At SUMMIT, our team members feel valued through our strong commitment to their personal and professional growth. We actively encourage development opportunities that fuel their passion and creativity – empowering them to deliver exceptional experiences to every guest.

On the topic of accessibility, we partnered with Accessible Travel NYC, the local authority on accessible travel, to produce informational videos highlighting the accessibility experience for onsite representatives to learn how best serve all our guests. Additionally, our highly trained Guest Experience team offers ASL interpreters and audio description capabilities for guests, as well as an option to arrange for a sighted guide by request to escort visually impaired guests through the experience.

**How do you focus your efforts leading SUMMIT One Vanderbilt?**

It's not every day that you are given a chance to change the landscape of a city like New York – and we recognize the responsibility that comes with this kind of scale and notoriety to provide a best-in-class experience for all of our guests. As the General Manager of SUMMIT, my priorities are to offer unforgettable experiences for our guests while creating a positive workplace culture that sets our team members up for success.

For guests new or returning, New York locals or tourists from overseas, our goal is the same: to provide an incomparable experience that will move them. The immersive nature of the SUMMIT experience encourages every guest who walks through the doors to discover something unexpected, see things from a new perspective, and challenge what they have come to think of as ordinary.

At SUMMIT, we have worked hard to build a workplace culture that is uplifting at every level. Leading by example, I can see the drive and creativity that I put toward growing our brand reflected in the efforts of our team who arrive every day impassioned to deliver on the promise of our guests being moved at SUMMIT.

Coming from the experiential worlds of Walt Disney, the NFL, and F1, I have had a hand in developing brand positioning on a global scale and creating some of the most exciting cultural moments and events, while overseeing a motivated staff of diverse and talented individuals from all levels. My work with SUMMIT over the past four years has been instrumental in establishing the brand as a leading experiential attraction and

attracting some of the industry's top talent, positioning us for global expansion in the years to come.

**Will you highlight SL Green's commitment and leadership in providing a world-class hospitality experience?**

SL Green Realty Corp. continues to work closely with our team at SUMMIT One Vanderbilt, for example, in growing its real estate portfolio on the possibilities of modern, mixed-use developments.

While the office buildings of the past were traditionally designed purely to provide service space to house companies and their employees, today office buildings like One Vanderbilt have become compelling destinations – offering unparalleled amenities, unique experiences, top-tier F&B offerings, unbeatable views, a distinct location of convenience, and overall a healthy work environment that today's tenants are looking for.

SL Green takes pride in One Vanderbilt's forward-thinking design, which sets a new benchmark and now serves as the blueprint for all future projects. This approach reflects SL Green's broader portfolio strategy: staying ahead of the curve, setting industry standards, and leading the way in shaping the future of real estate.

**SUMMIT Entertainment Ventures (SEV) – a new business venture between SL Green Realty Corp. and Kenzo Digital – announced a new SUMMIT planned to open in Paris. What can guests expect from this new SUMMIT destination?**

As SUMMIT Entertainment Ventures' (SEV) first major international project, Paris – the city of light, art, and timeless allure – was a natural choice. In Paris, guests can look forward to another unique and breathtaking experience that will echo the iconic New York location, yet will be just as unexpected. Paris is the ideal location for SEV to create a cultural adventure that reimagines how people engage with the city's rich heritage and vibrant spirit.

**With all of the recognition that SUMMIT One Vanderbilt has received, are you able to take moments to reflect on SUMMIT's impact and success?**

After welcoming over seven million guests to SUMMIT One Vanderbilt, witnessing those first moments of discovery and wonder as guests enter our space never gets old. SUMMIT allows multi-generational families to play together, complete strangers to bond over an awe-inducing moment, and our team members to be proud and passionate about the work they do. That is what makes it so successful.

Opening during the pandemic was a bold choice that allowed us to pave the way for New York City's recovery. After an extended period of isolation during the pandemic, New Yorkers came out on the other side craving human connection and community-based experiences. SUMMIT provided just that – an opportunity to connect with one another in a completely immersive space – and we have been blazing trails ever since. ●