

Augmented reality evolves

by Shepherd Laughlin - Friday, October 28, 2016

<https://www.jwtintelligence.com/2016/10/augmented-reality-evolves/>

In January, the [BBC](#) heralded 2016 as “the year when VR goes from virtual to reality.” But it’s another technology, often discussed in the same breath, that has truly gone viral: the surprise success of Pokémon Go has put augmented reality, or AR, in the pockets of millions.

As Pokémon Go again [rises](#) to the top of the app-download charts in advance of its plans for a special in-app event centered around Halloween, massive technology companies and creative agencies alike are taking a fresh look at AR and its potential commercial applications.

Apple is rumored to be planning a major AR push. The company’s new iPhone 7 Plus has two cameras, which would allow the device to intelligently sense depth and vastly improve its capacity for AR applications. Without announcing specific plans, Tim Cook [gushed about AR](#) in a July earnings call: “We are high on AR for the long run, we think there’s great things for customers and a great commercial opportunity.” Meanwhile, Alibaba has created a [location-based AR mobile game](#) to promote its upcoming Singles Day shopping event.

But why do AR? Experts caution against adopting the technology for its own sake. “The geolocative technology has been around since 2010, but people haven’t really found a use case for it until Pokémon Go,” says media artist [Tamiko Thiel](#). “The question is, what will they find that really makes use of it?”

Thiel recently created [Gardens of the Anthropocene](#), an installation for the Seattle Museum of Art that envisions a future environment transformed by climate change. Visitors to the museum’s Olympic Sculpture Park could peer through their digital devices and see a digital overlay of lurid tropical vegetation.



Another recent AR project offers a window to the past. *Mi Querido Barrio (My Beloved Community)*, presented by artists of New York City's Caribbean Cultural Center African Diaspora Institute, uses the AR app Blippar to overlay stories onto the neighborhood of East Harlem, often calling up images of people and places that have vanished. As gentrification threatens to erase the neighborhood’s sense of

place, the project can be [seen as an act of preservation](#). “I am very interested in sight and drawing on all the levels of connotation, legend, lore, fantasy, history, that are connected to a site, and bringing that to the surface,” says Thiel, who was an advisor on the project..

On a more commercial level, brands are trying to use AR to revolutionize online commerce. For London Fashion Week in September, online retail platform [Lyst](#) created a window installation titled “[Hunannequins](#),” featuring scantily clad models who could be “clothed” with the help of an AR app.



Hunannequins by Lyst, created with M agency



Created by the agency M, the installation featured photorealistic digital recreations of garments that could be seen from multiple angles. “The way, fundamentally, these media experiences are unique is that they are free of viewpoint,” says Callum Reid, whose work at M focuses on emerging media. “Room-based VR and augmented reality share a very common experiential space.” That is, people can walk around within these spaces, rather than being confined to one spot, as is often the case in 360-degree videos delivered by VR.

“These types of technologies are going to reduce that distance between a real-world experience and a digital experience, which is obviously very important for a retailer,” Reid continues. With improved techniques for scanning real-world objects and recreating them in AR, we’ll be able to tell, for example, whether a leather jacket looks cheap only by seeing its AR equivalent, Reid says.

The ad world will follow, says Thiel. “Advertising is getting into spectacle and event, so with the success of Pokémon Go, people will start saying, okay, this sort of spectacle, whether in public spaces or within a building, might be something that people would be willing to engage with,” she says.

For more on emerging media, see our [review of the Versions conference](#).

Main photo credit: Gardens of the Anthropocene, by Tamiko Thiel

Augmented reality evolves

by Shepherd Laughlin - Friday, October 28, 2016

<https://www.jwtintelligence.com/2016/10/augmented-reality-evolves/>