

(Potential) Augmented Objects

+ Eyeglasses have the potential to become something far more than devices of vision correction and style: add intelligence and capability, and we create a tool for gleaning information about our surroundings. A pair of glasses with voice recognition becomes a hands-free display of a potential wealth of information! A businessperson with a bad sense for recognizing faces and remembering names could use voice and facial recognition to digitally place a name with a face; on subsequent meetings with these same people, this person's glasses could "flash" the person's name or annotated information they have about them on their retina as they speak. Or a tourist could be flashed information when their glasses recognize a landmark, or take photos or video with just a voice command – no hands, no bulky camera to carry around and lose. Following someone's landmark-based directions becomes less of a hassle if your glasses can recognize where you are and show you where you need to go. And as we've seen earlier with Augmented Reality, there are lots of general uses for virtual information projected onto a real background...

+ An enhanced pillow might be interesting as well; friends of mine have incorporated flat subwoofers into their pillow, and surely someone has already experimented with putting sensors in pillows... Such a pillow might notice when a person's neck is stiff, and adjust to the appropriate firmness or play soothing music when they are trying to sleep at night. If it is familiar with a person's sleep cycle and they become restless as they sleep, it might know to wake them up from a nightmare or adjust itself to make them more comfortable. If it detects sweat, it might know to adjust the temperature in the room. For those who are ill or prone to sickness/seizures – maybe such a pillow could keep track of their pulse and body temperature as they sleep, alerting them if they might be sick (or others, if they suddenly need urgent medical attention). Finally, it might keep track of a person's sleep schedule, and act as an alarm, making noise or vibrating to wake the most persistent-late-sleepers up at just the right time in the morning.

+ Enhanced tools – strange as this may sound – would be interesting as well. I do a lot of metalworking and painting, and for all of the supplies and tools I go through, I don't really have a good idea of their lifespan. For example - what if my hammer had a way to indicate that the balance was off (and therefore I might need to check the head to see that it hasn't come loose)? It would be interesting if it could even just indicate its usage statistics - much like a car indicates its mileage. I'd be curious to see how many total swings I've ever made or the amount of force I typically exert with each swing. What if my tools had RFID tags corresponding to their shelves in cabinet and could sense when I turned the lights off to leave the forge? If they sensed that had been left out, they could potentially beep or flash an LED to let me know that I forgot them – leaving me with peace of mind, since tools that I inevitably forget and leave out will "disappear". Another example of an enhanced art supply might be the paintbrush. It would be neat if my paintbrushes could keep track of how long and how often I have used them, and alert me when I have stored them improperly (i.e. upright on the bristles in water) or show me what percentage of their original bristles are still on the brush.