

Augmented Reality, Art, and Public Space

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Figure 1: Digital Neuron, Heavy Projects, University of Geneva, Switzerland, 2016.

ABSTRACT

An overview of how AR art has evolved and, in particular, how Heavy Projects' work has transitioned from guerrilla-style AR street art interventions to large scale, interactive, public space murals working with such clients as the University of Geneva, Qualcomm, SXSW, Google I/O, and San Francisco Design Week. This talk provides workflow examples of "Digital Neuron" AR mural [Geneva, 2016], "Parabola" AR mural [San Francisco, 2017], and "Evolution of an Idea," the largest AR mural in the world [185'x25', San Diego, 2015]. In illuminating these projects, this talk outlines best practices for other digital artists to create outdoor AR artworks. In short, this talk will provide general insight into the progression of AR art, discuss prominent digital artists currently working in this space, and deliver a practical workflow of how to create works in the new medium of interactive AR art.

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CCS CONCEPTS

Human-Centered Computing: information visualization, ubiquitous and mobile computing

KEYWORDS

augmented reality, public space, semiotics, art, interactivity

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1 INTRODUCTION

Augmented reality [AR] presents unique opportunities to creatively problematize the political and economic systems that shape the awareness of both individuals and the public writ large. We propose to leverage AR and promote new media content creation and envision AR as the first step in the evolution of better tools of expression that democratizes the mechanisms of public media production. AR|AD Takeover [New York, 2011] used street level ads and billboards to trigger a citywide curated art installation in augmented reality that displays on Android and iPhone mobile devices. Specifically, in New York City, we augmented specific ads in Times Square with digital artistic content. In this way, the incursion of commercial ads into public space becomes a place of dialogic interaction rather than a monologic consumptive message. The AR|AD Takeover showcases Ron English, John Fekner, PosterBoy, Dr. D, and OX, whose work has historically addressed commercial advertising in public space.



Figure 2. AR | AD Takeover, Heavy Projects, New York, NY, 2011.



Figure 3. Bowery Wall Resurrection, Heavy Projects, New York, NY, 2012.



Figure 4. Productive Consumption, Heavy Projects, Austin, TX, 2014.



Figure 5. Evolution of An Idea, Qualcomm, San Diego, CA, 2015.

2 EXPOSITION

A digital, virtual extension of the grassroots, street-level ad takeovers by Jordan Seiler's PublicAdCampaign in New York City, the AR|AD Takeover also acts on the assumption that public space and the public interaction with that space is a vital component of a city's health. By visually altering and physically interacting with the public environment, residents become psychologically invested in their community.

The AR|AD Takeover evolved into Heavy Project's production of large, public space, interactive murals designed to leverage AR to bring citizens into urban spaces and occasion a dialogue with the static 2D art. It is this artistic dialogue, made possible through AR's creative interactivity, that we hoped to contrast with the consumptive monologue of commercial advertising.

Through a meaningful discourse occasioned by new and artistic interactions with public space, this new way of seeing the world merely offers individuals the opportunity to effectively transition from a passive consumer to an active thinker equipped to define the environment in which they must exist and move through to conduct the necessary tasks of their daily lives.

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