

2nd International Conference on **Computer Graphics & Animation**

September 21-22, 2015 San Antonio, USA

Participatory museum experiences: Augmented

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In two recent exhibitions, the McNay Art museum in San Antonio, Texas was looking for ways to convert visitors into participants. In its search for ways to engage patrons, the McNay partnered with Augmented Ideas, LLC, led by two University of the Incarnate Word professors to create new experiences centered around the exhibitions. The first exhibition – ‘Real/Surreal’ – was a traveling exhibition of surreal, hyper real and realistic paintings. In this exhibit, augmented reality was used to create a discovery “game” in which the visitor finds visual clues within the painting. Once found, the clue unlocks questions, activities, and information about the paintings on top of the paintings themselves. This activity encourages visitors to look more carefully and actively at the paintings, and allows a variety of multi media experiences without interfering with the ability of the museum patron to experience the original art. The second exhibition – ‘CUT! Costumes and the Cinema’ - patrons used their mobile device to collect virtual versions of the costumes on display. By using the camera features of the mobile device, they were then able to “try on” these costumes in a virtual dressing room. The results of this virtual dressing room could be shared with friends and the McNay for use on their Facebook page. Together, using unobtrusive augmented reality techniques, the McNay was able to engage a new generation of patrons, provide an entirely new level of interaction and information without using any exhibition space or imposing on the original art works.

Biography

Adam Watkins is the CEO of Augmented Ideas, LLC and Professor of 3D Animation & Game Design in the School of Media & Design at the University of the Incarnate Word in San Antonio. He holds an MFA in 3D Animation and a BFA in Theatre Arts from Utah State University. He is the author of 12 books and over 100 articles on 3D animation and game design.

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