



Richard Humann's "Ascension" consists of 12 imaginary constellations suspended in the sky and is viewed through an iPad using the augmented reality platform Aery. Richard Humann



By Ted Loos

Nov. 27, 2019



This article is part of our continuing [Fast Forward series](#), which examines technological, economic, social and cultural shifts that happen as businesses evolve.

When walking on the High Line, it's tough to look more lost than some of the tourists, but I did a pretty good job of it last month when I tripped on a curb while looking at art. (I caught myself before falling, but still.)

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I was taking in an exhibition from Aery, a new augmented reality platform tailored to digital art exhibitions. Looking up to the heavens through an iPad, and not at my feet, I was using a loaner tablet to get an artwork by Richard Humann to magically appear.

But it worked: On the iPad, a constellation of a rose appeared, at an angle in the sky and topped by a crown, as Mr. Humann intended. A couple of out-of-towners who were watching me seemed mightily impressed when they looked over my shoulder at the screen.

The technologies known as augmented reality and virtual reality (AR and VR, for short) may seem futuristic, but they are being employed by artists more often.

For me — someone who looks at art for a living, but also avoids downloading new apps — experiencing three exhibitions of augmented reality art over a couple of weeks was a crossing of a threshold, one that more and more people will experience in the years ahead.

"It's going to have a huge impact on the art world," said Jay Van Buren, who, as chief executive and co-founder of the tech company Membit, helped create Aery, a joint venture between Membit and the real estate firm Related Companies. "Artists can do anything with it," Mr. Van Buren said.

Membit's technology is based on what it calls a Human Positioning System, its version of GPS. Essentially, the user adjusts the placement of the device based on a set of instructions. Aery is currently in beta mode, but is coming to Apple's App Store soon for iPad and iPhone, and eventually will have an Android version.

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