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SEP 14, 2017 @ 06:24 PM

Experience Art In VR, From Your iPhone, With ArtPassport



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GalleriesNow's ArtPassport is a free app that works with prettu

As Apple was announcing its new trio of iPhones, I was standing in an art gallery in London hearing about a new VR app that lets you visit art galleries from your iPhone. ArtPassport has a simple plan - make galleries accessible.

So now, from my own home, I can go to all sorts of art galleries virtually and see things that perhaps I missed when I went to the space, or perhaps that I can't visit because of time or geography. Now I don't know a lot about art, but I'm a big fan of VR and I was rather taken by the app. For one thing, it addressed a huge issue for me - accessibility.

A lot of people probably don't realise that you can walk into an art gallery and look around. These aren't supposed to be empty rooms, they're supposed to showcase an artist's work and perhaps (in some cases at least) lead to sales. But like a lot of things, the casual browsers of today might be the art collectors of tomorrow, so nurturing them with a nifty VR app seems sensible.

But there's more to this than just VR. There's information about finding galleries - this can be harder than you'd think - as well as notes about the shows and artists. The app has been made by people who really love the world of art, and it shows in the quality of the app and the detail they've put into it. They've even posted a VR kit to South Korea to grab 360 images from the Kukje Gallery in Seoul. So this can be a great way to visit places you'd never normally have the chance to see.

And there's another angle here too. The developers told me that archiving the shows serves an important record of what's happened in a show and preserves it for the future. We chatted about an installation I never got to see at the Tate Modern, and how much I wished I'd been able to experience it (2003's *The Weather Project* by Olafur Eliasson). In the future, no one will need to miss any show, as VR and perhaps AR will provide a way for us to experience shows long after the gallery has moved on to the next thing.

[ArtPassport is free in the Apple Store](#) and is produced by Galleries Now. There's no Android version yet, but I'm told there should be eventually. I asked about other platforms like Steam VR and was told that, indeed, there were long term plans for that. For now, you can explore the galleries and art using your phone and moving around to

see 360 images. You can also use a VR headset to get a more immersive experience. I tried it with a Google Cardboard viewer, but there are many options out there.

I'm no art expert, but this app certainly did what it was designed to do. It opened a new world up, and helped demystify an otherwise somewhat unfriendly experience. At the launch, the developers told me that the trepidation I felt about entering galleries was likely the same as the art world feels about technology. So perhaps this is a chance for very different people to learn something new from each other.

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