

Japan develops 'touchable' 3D TV technology

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Children watch the giant image of a whale shark on a huge screen in Tokyo. A Japanese research team has said Thursday it had developed the world's first 3D television system that allows users to touch, pinch or poke images floating in front of them.

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"It is the first time that you can feel images in the air," said Norio Nakamura, senior scientist with the research team at the National Institute of Advanced Industrial Science and Technology.

"You can have the sense of touch like poking a rubber ball or stretching a sticky rice cake" when manipulating images, he told AFP by telephone.

The technology changes the shape of [three-dimensional images](#) in

response to "touches", aided by cameras that monitor how the fingers move, Nakamura said.

It is not known when the technology will be put to practical use but its creators see it being used to simulate surgical operations and in video game software allowing players to experience the sensation of holding weapons or sports equipment.

It could even use scanned images to supplement existing realities, said Nakamura.

"This technology could create a virtual museum where visitors, including vision-impaired people, can put their hands on valuable sculptures that are usually untouchable," Nakamura said.

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