

The future of reality

January 29 2018, by Dr Kate Raynes-Goldie

Think you know reality? Think again! In 2018, digital technologies are moving into the physical world.

Nintendo excited and surprised everyone with their recent launch of Nintendo Labo—"a new line of interactive build-and-play experiences".

Labo brings together an unexpected combination: cardboard creations you build yourself and Nintendo's latest video [game](#) console, the Switch. The Switch itself has already innovated in the console space.

Unlike all consoles before it, the Switch can be used at home with a television or can be used as a portable device. The Switch also features two removable controllers with very precise motion feedback, so games like [1-2-Switch](#) can be played based on *feeling* what's happening rather than just looking at a screen.

Labo builds on this physical, tactile ability of the Switch by adding cardboard-based props. Labo also signals an important shift in the way we experience technology. And, perhaps, even reality.

Reality shift

So far, our general experience of digital technology is through flat, two-dimensional screens. The internet, social media, phones, computers, TV, games— all have things we look at but can't really touch or feel. So, none of these technologies are really that immersive.

Even standard virtual reality (VR) is really just putting a screen super close to your eyes. Yes, it's much more immersive, but you still can't really *touch* virtual objects.

Put another way, the physical world and the [digital world](#) have been quite separate. And this is precisely why things like Nintendo's Labo are quite ground breaking when we think about reality. They bring the digital world into the physical in a way that's immersive and touchable.

Augmented virtuality

While Labo brings the digital into the physical world, companies like Melbourne's [Opaque Space](#) are bringing the physical into the digital. Starting out in the VR space, Opaque is now pushing the boundaries in an already cutting-edge space.

Opaque's current project is [Earthlight: Lunar Mission](#), which is just what it sounds like. You're on the Moon, working together with other players to complete realistic missions.

In September last year, Opaque showed off *Lunar Mission* at the [Tokyo Games Show](#), which is one of the biggest and most important games expos in the world. Unsurprisingly, there were lines out the door waiting to try it.

Clearly, *Lunar Mission* is incredibly cool just on its own. But the [technology](#) Opaque is using to do it is even more exciting. Opaque CEO Emre Deniz described the project to me as "augmented virtuality" or "location-based VR". This means *Lunar Mission* is using physical objects to provide haptic feedback in the virtual environment. The experience is also location aware because it knows where all the objects are as well as all the players.

In other words, you can actually touch and manipulate [virtual objects](#) (including other players), because their physical counterparts have been mapped into the game.

The real combines with the virtual

Last year, Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg was already predicting that [smartphones would become glasses by 2022](#). What he's really saying is that, in 4 years, our primary way of interfacing with the real will be through the virtual.

We live in interesting times indeed.

This article first appeared on [Particle](#), a science news website based at Scitech, Perth, Australia. Read the [original article](#).

Provided by Particle

Citation: The future of reality (2018, January 29) retrieved 24 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2018-01-future-reality.html>

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