

Virtual Reality in Museums



Virtual Reality in Museums: Making Art Come Alive

Virtual reality (VR) is a technology in a major growth phase, and we've recently explored it as [the education revolution waiting to happen](#). Let's take a moment to discuss an educational application for VR that happens to fall outside the halls of a school, though, and inside halls hosting art and history. **Museums today are discovering how VR can improve the visitor experience and make works of art come alive—here's what you need to know.**

Not Your Traditional Exhibits

When you think of museums, you likely think of quiet, traditional spaces displaying works of art and treasures from bygone eras. Well, you're right—but many of these culture-rich facilities are trying out VR in an attempt to further connect visitors with the art and history contained within their walls. Just as VR has made classrooms more interactive, it is starting to turn self-guided museum tours and in-person exhibits into entirely new experiences—some, in fact, that you can take without ever leaving your home.

Here are some examples of how museums have adopted VR technology:

Transporting visitors to different eras in history.

VR can be used to convey a variety of sensory information about a particular time or place, especially historical ones we have only been able to conceptualize until now. At the [“Pterosaurs: Flight in the Age of Dinosaurs” exhibit at Carnegie Museum of Natural History](#), museum-goers get the sensation of flying through prehistoric landscapes to hunt insects, their physical movements mimicked on the screen. In another unique example, a new [British Museum exhibit](#) allows visitors to explore the bronze age using a projection on a physical dome structure, tablets, and 3D headsets.

Incorporating a 4D feeling of display into the museum experience.

Art is often moving to view, but what would it be like to experience? 4D exhibits might just provide the answer. [At Carnegie Science Center, an exhibit called "Watershed"](#) uses augmented reality (AR) and a Kinect gaming system to let visitors of all ages explore different types of watersheds.

Allowing museum patrons to go inside a painting.

Harnessing the immersive power of VR technology, some museums are encouraging visitors to experience the inside of a work of art rather than just admiring it from the outside. Take, for example, [Dreams of Dali exhibit in St. Petersburg, Florida, a partnership between The Salvador Dali Museum and Disney](#). Using Oculus Rift headsets, visitors can explore Dali's 1935 painting "Archeological Reminiscence of Millet's 'Angelus'," actually feeling like they're maneuvering around within the work of art.

Guiding tours with additional information and immersive experiences.

Traditional tour guides in museums are full of knowledge about the art they're describing, and developers of VR solutions for museums want to make sure users don't lose that valuable part of the experience. Take the [WolfbertVR app for Samsung Gear \(powered by Oculus technology\)](#), for example. This app allows users to view galleries remotely, allowing the public to access the exhibits digitally and free of charge. Released last November, it also includes a guided tour of the featured gallery along with commentary on the paintings. New galleries are posted every 4-6 weeks.

What's Next?

The slew of museums jumping on the VR bandwagon represents a relatively new phenomenon, and it's one that's been met with cautious enthusiasm. [While some in the industry are not fond of digital access](#) and say it will decrease museum attendance, most appear to be excited about the potential to host exciting and immersive VR-backed exhibits that bring art to life.