

week 8 :: augmented and mixed realities

Augmented Reality: A New Way of Seeing, Steven K. Feiner, 2002

i can clearly see the value in augmented reality perfectly working... the classic examples of the mechanic trying to identify parts + processes, the doctor operating on surgery, someone wishing for a directly mapped navigation. having the information we need when + where we need it would be astonishingly useful, but i think the dream falls short when dealing with the clunky head-worn implementation and troublesome episodes of too-much or too-few or too-irrelevant items of information. until computers truly know what we're thinking or intending, you fear the risk of introducing distracting clutter. the paper doesn't directly address the user interface, namely turning on or off parts of the augmented view, so i'm not exactly sure how the user specifies what to display and when. of course, there's the choice of removing the head display completely to turn off the thing...

augmented reality might be good for the individual user in times of displaying helpful information, a selfish sort of functionality, but what happens when you start considering it in the context of social culture? [perhaps engineers don't put this high on the priority list, but...] one of the first scenarios i envisioned was a hopeless lothario-wannabe, who had pickup-lines and love-tips fly into sight while out on a dinner date. the reminders or suggestions ("compliment her outfit, stupid!") would prettily augment her forehead or other well-displayed body parts. although this is a silly, lame example, you might wonder what other people might be augmenting **on** or **what** when they're talking to you. are they projecting their secret pet peeves about you? are they projecting some twisted fantasy, or a banal grocery list? mapping personal information [practically] directly onto another individual seems kind of creepy and inappropriate. it's the same discomfort one feels when approached by someone behind a large camera, or wielding a pair of binoculars. the intermediate object, however benign, dramatically interferes with face-to-face interaction. if the tool becomes invisible or imperceptible, distrust may brew [which we can see today as many establishments now ban camera phones].

maybe a more subdued version of AR would be a tool to virtually annotate the physical environment. it would be more of a personal sketchbook or notepad instead of general reference information. instead of seeing a restaurant with all its reviews virtually augmenting its facade (a weird point in which most restaurants do poster their windows with articles and reviews), one could post their own personal experience or dining review onto the restaurant, which would pop up whenever you returned to the establishment. the annotation tool would be more 'the world is your sketchpad' than 'the world is your television'.