

# The Creators Project

## New Museum Launches Free Downloadable VR App

Irina Makarova — Jan 25 2017



*Rachel Rossin,*

*Man Mask, 2016, Courtesy of the New Museum, New York*

The New Museum and Rhizome launched a virtual reality exhibition that is available to the public as a free downloadable VR app. **First Look: Artists' VR** features the works of six commissioned artists, most of whom are leading voices in the VR field: Jeremy Couillard, Jacolby Satterwhite, Jayson Musson, Rachel Rossin, Peter Burr and Porpentine, and Jon Rafman. Developed by the startup platform EEVO, the app is available to download on Google Play and will be available for iOS phones shortly.

The New Museum has been successfully pioneering VR programs since 2003 when Rhizome—a leading platform in digital art—became their affiliate in residence. In 2012 they launched First Look, a digital commissions and exhibition program and since 2014 the museum has led NEW INC, a residency program for VR, tech artists, and startups.

There has been an increased shift toward virtual reality in how we view commercial art, from Alfredo Salazar-Caro and William Robertson's DiMODA (Digital Museum of Digital Art)—a digital exhibition platform for VR artists, to James Orlando's *Hyper.Zone*, an interactive VR videogame platform where you navigate through multiple levels filled with contemporary artwork, to Kyle Marler's *Flatsitter* project, a site-specific performance VR experience.



(left) Jacolby Satterwhite, *Domestika*, 2017, Courtesy of the New Museum, New York. (right) Jeremy Couillard, *rebirth\_redirect*, 2017, Courtesy of the New Museum, New York

Jayson Musson's *An Elegy for Ancestors* is a celestial memorial commemorating the victims of police brutality. The piece is a poignant conversation that elevates individuals past statistics. In Jon Rafman's *Transdimensional Serpent*, you travel through multiple alternate worlds while sitting on a giant, milky white snake eating its own tail. Faceless people and fantastical horned creatures walk around you as a voice whispers the lyrics to Metallica's "Nothing Else Matters."

In *Man Mask*, Rachel Rossin transports you to a tropical *Call of Duty*-themed landscape, where familiar images of violence are uprooted and displaced. Peter Burr's *Arcology* plunges you in a black-and-white graphic labyrinth that is a completely surreal mindscape. Jacolby Satterwhite's *Domestika* is a psychedelic industrial party/rave filled with winged ungulates, enormous floating constructions, all floating in a boundless star-filled space. Jeremy Couillard navigates you through the afterlife in *rebirth\_redirect*: you experience watching yourself leave your body and traverse an unfamiliar cosmology.

The pieces in the exhibition, collectively and individually, are thought-provoking social commentaries that read like a series of dreams and phantasmagorias. The real challenge is getting past the "whoa" factor of removing something off the white wall and viewing it in a virtual 3D space.

The increase in VR artwork displayed in non-traditional spaces has continued sparking the debate of what's the ideal and preferred form of viewership. The removal of the long lines, the entry costs, and time factor makes the app format seem like an accessible, free, and convenient way to view digital artwork whenever and wherever. Just whip out your Google Cardboard and get immersed.

Despite the accessibility and excitement on the user front, the VR art viewing experience is still in the beta stages on the development end. "I would say that there is a real swell of interest in VR right now as it becomes more attainable. That said, it's costly and challenging to negotiate distribution and exhibition. It remains to be seen how truly accessible a medium it will be," Lauren Cornell, a New Museum curator, tells The Creators Project.