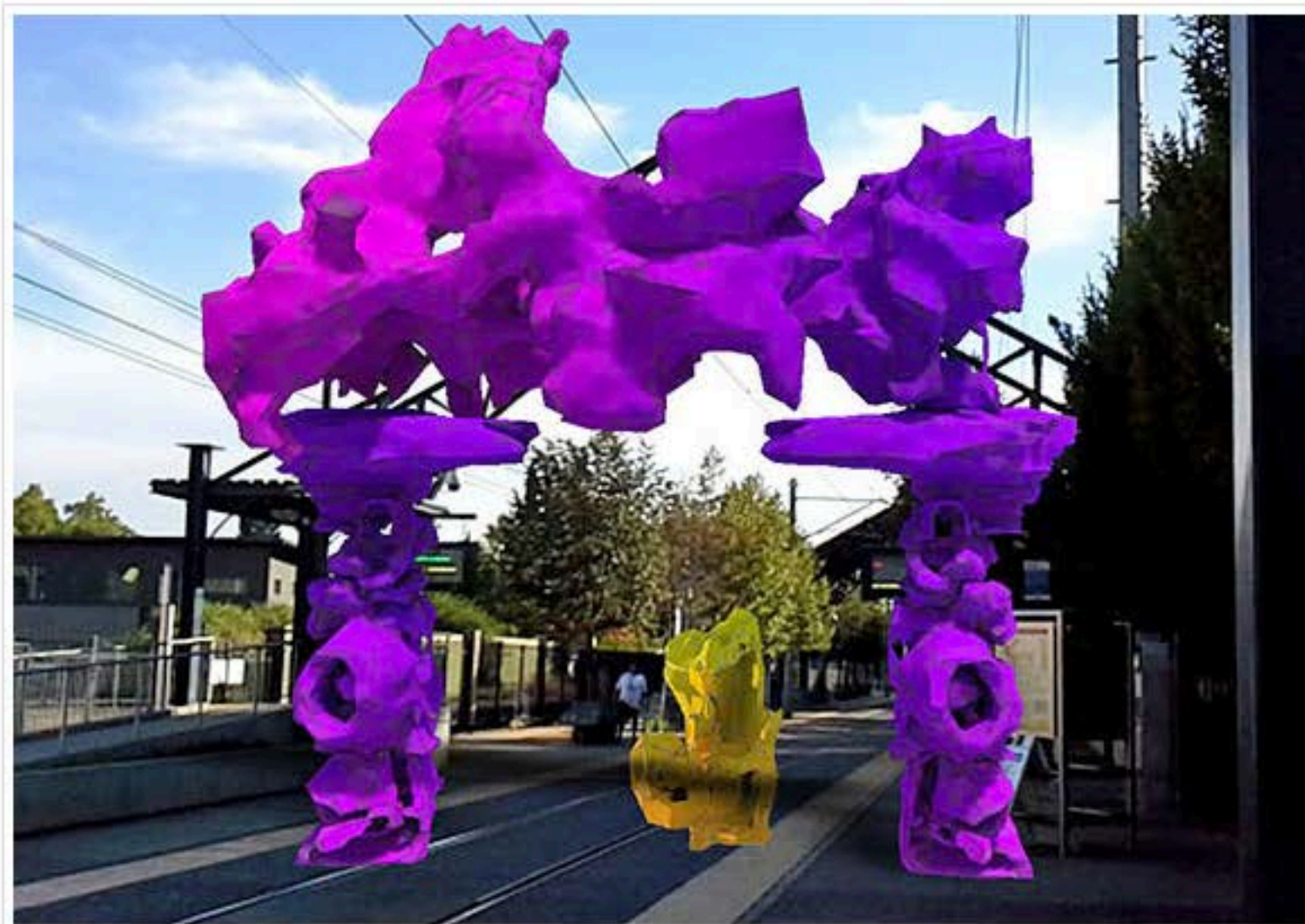


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A Virtual Boulevard in Sacramento

Posted on 14 October 2014.



Chris Manzione: Portal Station Animated 3D AR Sculpture Light Rail Station, 19th Street

Sacramento's cultural landscape is often thought to be flat as the surrounding farmland, but a part of it recently underwent a virtual remodeling that, at least temporarily, alters some of those contours. It arrived in the form of a "gallery" of augmented reality (AR) sculptures that spans 12 blocks of Broadway, a struggling thoroughfare that was once the heart of the city's nightlife and, most notably, the landmark birth spot of the once-mighty Tower Records. Besides shining much-needed light on this corridor and its history, the show, *Broadway Augmented*, gives the public a real taste of the technology's artistic potential.

AR, boiled to basics, is a real-world environment that is modified or augmented by computer-generated sounds, video images or GPS data. Those in *Broadway Augmented* are installed using a mobile imagerecognition app that, when aimed at a "trigger image" such as a painted wall, a hanging sign, or a piece of architecture, turns your phone or tablet into a portal for viewing the work in situ. What makes AR seductive for both artists and viewers is that the "objects" created with this technology take shape in the absence of the usual constraints: gravity, motion and building codes.

Here, 11 artists, some with new media backgrounds, most without, create virtual sculptures that range from the serene to the surreal, the celebratory to the subversive. Curators Shelly Willis, director of Sacramento Metropolitan Arts Commission, and Rachel Clarke, professor of new media at CSU Sacramento, in partnership with the Greater Broadway District and with a grant from the NEA, developed this show to give a boost to this ailing corridor. Artists flew in to tour the street and select locations for their work. Those without digital 3D expertise worked with student fabricators to create their sculptures. Not surprisingly, the experienced digital artists manage the most daring pieces.

One of them is **Chris Manzione's** *Portal Station*. Point your phone's camera at the 19th Street light rail arch and out of it leap giant purple objects. They form an amorphous 20-foot-tall behemoth that looks as if it could have been fashioned out of rough-cut stone or paper mache. At regular intervals, animated golden "stones" travel under the arch along the track, mimicking the arrival and departure of oncoming trains. Manzione's work always deals with crevices and passages; here he has appropriated the literal gateway as a backbone for his elusive forms – forms that echo those seen at his show last year at Sacramento's [Center for Contemporary Art](#).



Gioia Fonda & Joseph Delappe:, *Over and Over Again & Drones Over Broadway*, 3D AR sculpture, 21st St.

Rachel Clarke's *Comics*, a swirling, animated, planet-like object made of folded, brightly colored "pages", appears on a comic book shop window, yards from where Tower Records was founded in a former drugstore, now a tropical-themed restaurant. The outer fold rotates freely around an inner spheroid, creating a point of drama when the inside is revealed to be a distorted woman's face. Clarke seems to be commenting both on the depiction of women in comics and on the growing presence of female fans in the stereotypically male-only subculture. The piece's sharp, graphic black lines help Clarke's sculptures stand out, particularly with the limited detail allowed by smartphone hardware.



Rachel Clarke: *Comics*, 3D AR Sculpture Tower Complex, 15th Street

Gioia Fonda's *Over and Over Again* presents a billboard with rotating pinwheels and beads on long, wire-like tubes that extend out from the piece. Like several other works on view, it can be seen in two locations:

overlying a billboard near the Tower Theater (at 16th St.) and perched above the Pancake Circus (at 21st St.), appending the local landmark/eyesore with fantastical architecture that seems to arise out of thin air. Hovering above Fonda's whimsical piece is **Joseph Delappe's** sobering *Drones Over Broadway*, a reproduction of a predator drone flying at high altitude. It points to how Americans ignore the fact that these unmanned death machines serve as our ambassadors in certain parts of the world.

Broadway Augmented occupies a long corridor, and takes some walking to see. There's great variety, from hanging lanterns, to animations adorning shop windows, to flat murals, and an interactive piece that riffs on video games. It's best to do the entire circuit in one go, starting from 21st street and ending at City Cemetery at 9th. The last piece, **Malcolm Cochran's** *The Peaceable Kingdom* only takes full effect when you've walked 10 blocks under the still-warm autumn sun. It depicts stone animals encircled around an actual child's grave. The imagery is drawn from Cochran's own childhood toys and the Edward Hicks' paintings of the same name. It would be overly cloying were it not for the reality of the gravesite and the keen difference between the atmosphere of the cloistered cemetery and the urban loudness of Broadway. (The other participating artists are: Ben Hunt, Sabrina Ratté, Jose Carlos Casado, Mark Emerson, Rebecca Krinke and Michael Rees.)



Malcolm Cochran: *The Peaceable Kingdom* City Cemetery, 10th St.
joints of our public lives and ourselves, was ever allowed to progress so far.

To view these works at an optimal scale, it's best to bring a tablet or borrow an iPad on a Saturday from the exhibition's headquarters, located at Sacramento Republic FC on 17th street. There, you'll find a concurrent show called *Broadway Re-imagined*, built on the same premise as the AR offering. **Mark Lanning Jr.'s** work is the reason to see this show within a show: his 44 photographs of people and locations from along Broadway ask how this dilapidation, the wearying of the

AR is very hot right now, showing up in alternative venues within the Venice Biennale, with blithely tossed buzzwords like "hack" and "intervention" used without knowledge of what those words actually mean. AR as an event unto itself is a fad, a child drawing on a white wall with a fist full of crayons, destined to be replaced by the more mature perspective of shows like *Broadway Augmented*. Like a [Janet Cardiff video walk](#), AR needs to live and breathe in the space it inhabits, first succumbing to then augmenting the realities of communities where people actually live and work.

– MIKKO LAUTAMO

"Broadway Augmented" @ between 21st and 9th street on Broadway, Sacramento through October 31, 2014

About the Author:

Mikko Lautamo is an artist living and working in Sacramento. His work uses programming to create never-repeating loops of digital animations based on social systems, biological entities and interactions. His work has been exhibited at the Center for Contemporary Art, Sacramento and at Axis Gallery and online.