3D design goes mainstream

By Lara Utian-Preston   31 Jan 2019

While virtual reality, augmented reality and 360-degree video and photography become the norm within advertising, filmmaking, and content production, their applications across a range of other industries and sectors are also set to exponentially increase.

Lara Utian-Preston is the founder of Red Flag Content Relations.

2019 is set to be the year where 3D design and modelling explode across sectors based on a host of trends driving the affordability, accessibility, and creativity within the space. New uses for 3D-modelling and designing in the fields of engineering, construction and architecture, education, development, industrial and automotive design are already revolutionising these industries.

With the rapid changes taking place in the space, it is becoming more and more essential to stay on top of the latest trends, and also to ensure easy, affordable and consistent access to 3D designs and models.

WebAR and WebVR

Augmented reality and virtual reality are not going away – but rather with the rapidly emerging area of web development that enables mobile devices to provide augmented reality and virtual reality experiences, these tools will become more and more prevalent.

Augmented and virtual reality rely on 3D design to create fully immersive experiences, and the demand for creative 3D designers who can create anything from VR eCards, a WebVR 360 video experience shared as a personalised greeting card, to VR and AR game characters and environments.

Baby-Born VR eCard

Birthday Train VR eCard

Scifi Scene with a Special Message VR eCard

3D and advertising

The advertising industry, often early adopters of new technology, is once again leading the way in terms of the creative applications of 3D design and VR. Agencies looking to ensure their clients stand out from the crowd are exploring a host of 3D and VR applications.

From creating 3D characters and imagery that can help define a brand, to 360-degree videos that can be viewed on mobile devices, advertising is becoming more and more multi-dimensional in addition to being multi-media.

A WebVR 360 video experience can easily become a 360 video ad, viewable on most smart devices via Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube.

The creative process itself is also being transformed by 3D design. 2019 will see more and more agencies using 3D design to create storyboards that create an immersive experience for clients – saving time and money when it comes to production.

Using 3D modelling to develop concepts ahead of incurring additional production costs will become the norm in the near future.

3D and gaming go mainstream

With the exponential increase in gaming globally, the demand for 3D characters and environments is also growing. 3D designers are contributing to the popularity of gaming based on exciting 3D characters, weaponry, landscapes and environments.

While the multi-billion-dollar gaming industry on its own could provide ample opportunities for designers and developers, in 2019, games are becoming, well, more than just games.

Various industries are also utilising gaming platforms for a variety of end-uses, including automotive design. The San Francisco based Unity Technologies, known for its widely used virtual and augmented reality gaming platforms, has spent the past three years working with automakers to improve automotive design.

Gwan Yip, CEO and co-founder of Code & Craft, has recently written about how more and more, retailers, fashion houses, and architecture are also learning more and more on gaming technology, platforms and developers to innovate and take their industries into the future.

As gaming, VR and AR (or mixed realities as they are sometimes known) become part and parcel of the broader economy, on-line market platforms such as Flat Pyramid, that contain tens of thousands of 3D designs, will become more and more essential.

360 videos and 360 web pages

First, there were standard definition (SD) videos then high definition (HD) videos and now, the latest trend is 360 videos and 360 web pages.

This new form of photography and filmmaking, but for the most part, these photos and videos can be seen on 2D phones and devices. While a 360-degree video is not the same thing as VR, however, for many, 360-degree spherical content will be the first immersive "VR" experience they have, particularly via Facebook and YouTube.

360 videos can be created in two main ways, by using a 360 video camera or through a 3D engine and or WebVR editing tool. However, creating through a 360 camera requires sophisticated post-production in order to stitch the video frames together to create an equirectangular, or spherical video. It is also very challenging to use 3D engines like Unity or Unreal Engine due to the huge learning curve required in mastering this 3D engines and software applications.

The easiest and most effective way to create it that requires no programming/coding skills is through a WebVR editor such as the WebVR editor. This tool enables users to showcase their 3D models as a 360 video or a 360 web page. With Flat Pyramid's WebVR editor you can you can create WebVR experiences using the WebVR Editor and export it as a 360 Web page and/or generate a 360 video to share.

This is a major breakthrough because for the first time ever 2D & 3D artist, 3D modellers, graphic designers, Illustrators, as well as any creative person anywhere in the world can easily create 360 videos and 360 web pages to showcase their work.
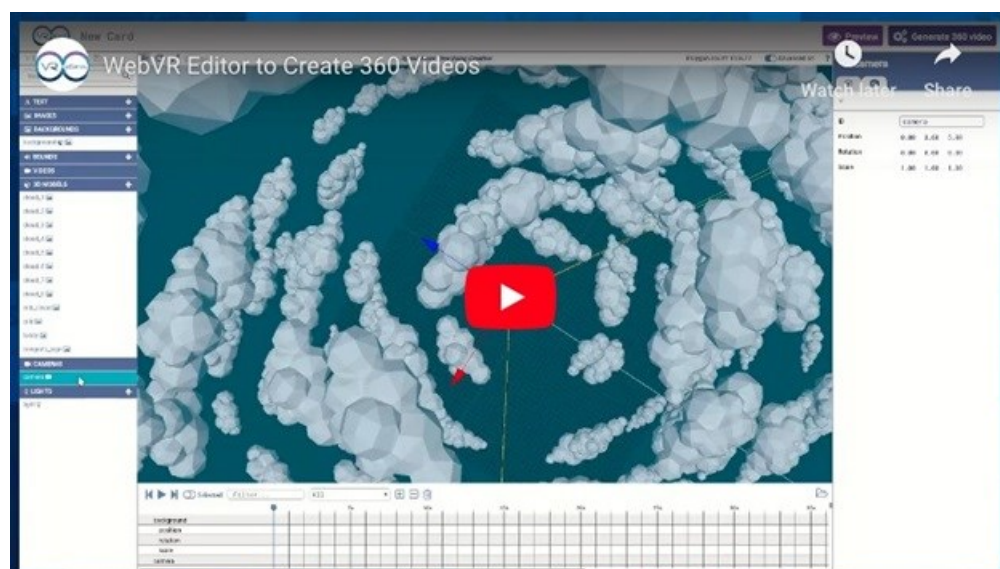
3D solutions for Africa

As African solutions for African challenges come to the fore in 2019, 3D designers are leaders within the space. Already on the Flat Pyramid platform, African designers are sharing their 3D models and designs, and I am sure to see more creative design solutions coming from the African continent in 2019.

One such solution according to *Forbes Africa*, is being provided by Johannesburg's iMed Tech is using 3D design and printing for both the creation of physical products as well as the development of prototypes.

As the iMed Tech managing director Nneile Nkholise explains, "There is a backlog of medical products, such as prosthesis, which we have a high need for, particularly in a continent like Africa where there is a high number of people damaging or losing valuable body features due to traumatic accidents or diseases such as diabetes, which contributes to a lot of people losing limbs from lower-limb amputation."

Another innovative project, Somalia Architecture aims to imagine how Mogadishu once looked, and to assist in the rebuilding of the city. So far, the team has produced up to 15 3D models including the former parliament, the national theatre, the monument of the unknown soldier, and the Mogadishu lighthouse.

ABOUT LARA UTIAN-PRESTON

Lara Utian-Preston is a passionately committed communications expert and strategist with a focus on promoting African content and events. Two decades of working across Africa have provided her with insights and experience that she puts to work for the projects she manages. In 2006, Lara founded, and still personally manages, Red Flag Content Relations, a full-service communications agency that also focuses on African entertainment and lifestyle brand marketing, strategy, and publicity.
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