

WORLD FEEL

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It's easy to buy VR equipment and hard to get it to work. But the real challenge is building conducive (fun) virtual environments. For this, you need software that really isn't publicly available. Fly-through is grabbing, true, but a shadow of VR. Public domain tools give minimal interactivity, funner yet, but they put the whole world design in the hands of C programmers.

We don't have a solution to easy construction of a world, but we do have quite stable software that at least makes world-making relatively easy and very flexible. The kid's summer program depended on the VEOS rapid configuration capabilities.

Now, given the custom software, it is still hugely difficult to design worlds that *feel good*. In my opinion, anything you show the public will be a success, given minimal performance requirements, but poorly designed worlds leave users confused, disoriented, and frustrated. Interest declines rapidly when users have to hassle with poor design. Check out W Industry's Dactyl Nightmare for an example of a poorly designed experience. Sure you'll get greater throughput, but you miss the *magic*.

Here's the kicker: good virtual design is counter-intuitive. The virtual world is *not* a simulation of physical reality, it has far greater capabilities. So the main strategic question you should ask is: what kind of experience can I provide (rather than the engineering questions like "what kind of equipment?")

And please try to avoid the deception that designers without extended experience within a virtual environment can design good virtual experiences. Again, because of general public acceptance, critical assessment of world quality has not yet become an issue. But what I'd like to see is something that *excites and astounds*.

Meredith Bricken is empirically the best world designer in the US. Even a slight application of her expertise will move the experience from average to great. She directed the Kids-in-VR summer program, so she's the person you want to talk to about design access for new users. She also built Virtual Seattle, the only world with an international reputation, and she built the VSX, the airplane world that changed the corporate policy of Boeing to strongly advocate VR.