



Make No Little Plans: Designing the Chicago Lakefront in a Virtual Reality Environment

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Immersive Virtual Reality

Architects have always needed somewhere to draw. History has seen dirt, stone, wood, and paper each serve in turn as the architect's medium. Every technological advance has helped to manifest these exploratory visions in ever-increasing fidelity, while influencing the way in which the design process is conducted. Computer technology is the latest step in this progression, adding a third dimension to the architect's drawings. Programs like form•Z, 3DS max, etc. allow the architect to build lifelike models and take clients on fly-throughs. Now, virtual reality has advanced architectural drawing to "full body design", letting architects experience their creations, rather than just seeing those creations in front of them. ShadowLight-Mirage offers a unique environment in virtual reality in which to create rich ambiances of vibrancy, vitality and vigor.

The Virtual Future?: ShadowLight-Mirage allows architects total freedom to focus on design by temporarily removing the real-world restrictions of gravity and structure. Instead of being limited by these concerns at the conceptual stage, the architect is free to express the creation in its entirety. Once the design has been fully manifested, the architect can go back and constrain the design in a global context. By addressing gravity and structure in a second stage, the designer sees the big picture, and can potentially make a different set of design choices than if the concept had been materialized in a contemporary bottom-up fashion. ShadowLight-Mirage is now in its second generation and is constantly evolving to forge the future of architectural design in virtual reality.