VIRTUAL REALITY MALL COULD BE THE SHOPPING CENTER OF THE FUTURE

The Reality Theatre Mall is a virtual reality ecommerce platform, which uses fantasy and interactivity to redefine the retail experience.

There has been much talk of the necessity for retailers to introduce digital features to the physical shopping experience, in order to keep up with the customer’s taste for online shopping. But British designer Allison Crank has gone the other way, creating a virtual reality mall, that uses fantasy and interactivity to redefine the ecommerce experience.
Users access the **Reality Theatre mall** using the Oculus Rift headset, which enables them to wander freely among brightly colored animals, neon signs and virtual people. They navigate the space using a controller, traveling up and down escalators to any place. The platform is a blend of fantasy, retail and gaming. Crank envisions customers meeting and liaising with designers in the virtual space, enabling both parties to collaborate on products that could then be ordered as physical products — much like an immersive second life that merges with reality. (There could even be the potential for shop assistants to work from home.)

Crank’s project is very much an art piece but it does raise very interesting questions about how virtual reality could be used to enhance online shopping in the future. How could existing ecommerce businesses set themselves apart using virtual or augmented reality?

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