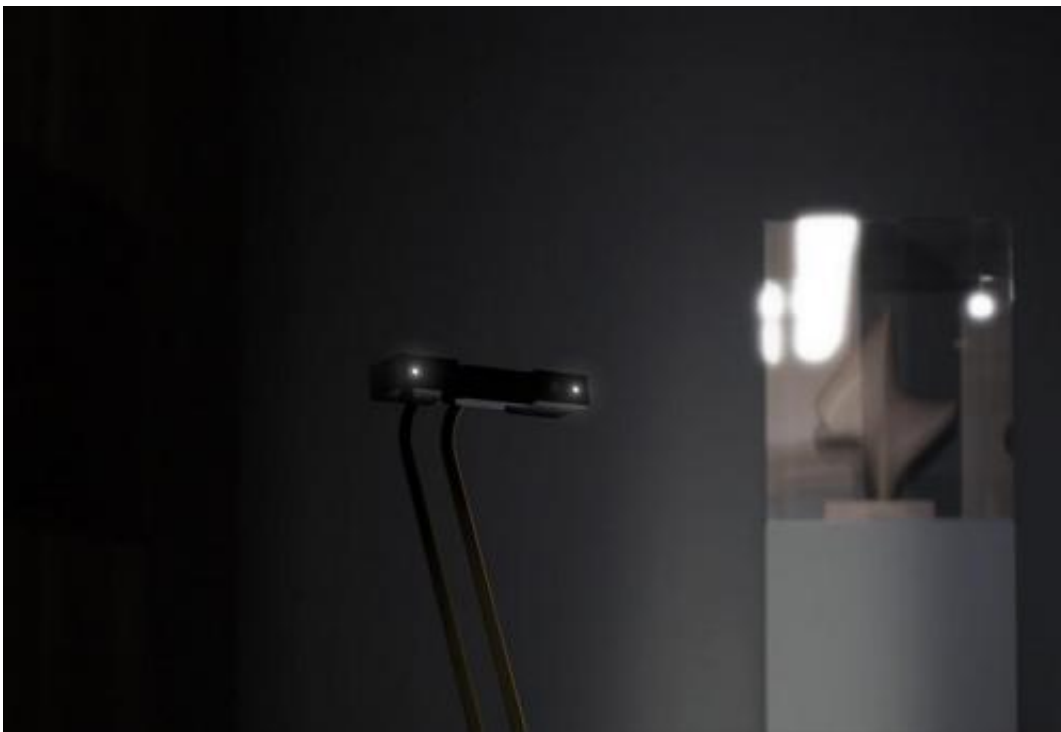


'After Dark' telepresence project allows online visitors to take virtual tour of Tate Gallery at night

August 13 2014, by Bob Yirka



People around the world who'd like to visit London's famous Tate Gallery, but haven't the means, can now do so virtually, courtesy of roaming robots with cameras zipping around the museum at night (when there are no real humans to stumble over) offering eerie views of historic

art. If you'd like to be one of them, you'd better hurry as the service is only going to be available for the next five nights.

The robots have been put in place by RAL Space, as part of a proposed project by The Workers, winner of the first IK Prize—set up by Tate Britain to highlight creative and talented people in the digital arena. Four telepresence equipped robots have been deployed, which can be controlled remotely. Online visitors will get a chance (first-come first-serve) to steer one of the bots, allowing for a somewhat private tour. Others will be allowed to jump on a tour conducted by staff on the [After Dark](#) web page. The museum will also have experts on hand to provide commentary on various pieces of art. Each bot has its own forward facing headlight which can be focused by the virtual visitor any way they wish allowing for better viewing of pieces on display—a necessity as the lights in the museum will apparently be turned off as per the usual after-hours schedule. The bots have also been trained on the museum topography, and have embedded software that prevents them from crashing into objects, walls, and of course works of art.

Team The Workers, made up of three design students at Royal College of Art in London, have told the press they hope their idea will inspire other similar ways to allow those without access to visit museums and other art houses around the globe, courtesy of their computers.

After Dark is believed to be the first of its kind—other museums have placed webcams in their galleries, but none thus far have placed controllable robots, allowing virtual visitors to move to whichever exhibit they choose, to change angles and get feedback from museum workers as they roam—similar in most respects to the experience a visitor would get if they actually visited the [museum](#) in person.

The tours will take place Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday (August 13-17)—details can be found on the [Tate page](#).

Potential visitors should note that virtual tours are timed to prevent any one person from hogging all the time available.

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