

Looking Glass converts any photo into 3-D image

January 7 2021, by Peter Grad



Credit: Looking Glass Factory

On the first day of a popular psychology course in the 1970s at City College of New York, students were told the story of how a remote South American tribe that was never exposed to technology or even electricity reacted when they saw a cowboy program on TV for the first time. Panic-stricken viewers dodged out of the way as galloping horses disappeared at the edge of the screen, while others searched high and low to find the missing animals. These were old, bulky televisions with

scrappy black-and-white displays. But to the tribe members, the images were chillingly real.

One wonders how those folks—not to mention modern-day tech geeks as well as the general public—would react to a portable projector that fits in the palm of your hand and is capable of displaying stunningly realistic 3-D color [holographic images](#). Chances are they'd be pretty impressed.

Looking Glass Factory, a Brooklyn-based tech firm, is set to offer an 8" holographic display called Portrait that will convert users' favorite personal photos into lifelike holograms. No special equipment or skills are required. Users simply take regular 2-D photos with any device, ranging from sophisticated DSLR setups to low-end cellphones—even old family Polaroids should work—and send them to Looking Glass Factory's cloud-based service.

The company uses machine learning technology they developed over six years to create the holograms. Their equipment scans photos, measures angles and reflective light, and constructs a lifelike reproduction of the subject after analyzing dozens of perspectives from which the images may be viewed.

"The idea that any 2-D photo could be transformed into a holographic image is something that's been discussed in research groups for years, but there's never been a service that non-technical folks could use to actually access this sort of capability," said Shawn Frayne, Looking Glass Factory CEO. "Now extremely realistic holographic memories of all sorts can be created and enjoyed by more people than ever before, getting us one step closer to a world in which we're creating, communicating with, and reliving our memories through holograms."

The Portrait display is expected to be available this spring. It will sell for \$350. The cost for photo conversions is \$20 per 100 photos.

The company will also offer a Holographic Capture Bundle package that includes Portrait, Microsoft's Azure Kinect depth camera, Leap Motion controller and a light field rail. The camera and software bundle will permit users to create their own images, from photos to VR characters. The Kickstarter campaign offers the bundle for \$1,099. That price will rise after the campaign closes, to \$1,449.

The company is winding down its Kickstarter campaign, which initially set a \$50,000 goal. Enthusiastic supporters blasted past that goal and as of Thursday morning, total contributions stood at nearly \$2.3 million. Supporters will receive the Portrait for \$250. They can also obtain their first 20 photo conversions for free.

Videos available at Looking Glass factory's website offer a glimpse into a wide range of possibilities for the device. With VR software such as Maya, Blender and Sketchfab, users can create realistic animated 3-D characters, record holographic video messages and create interactive applications and games.

More information: lookingglassfactory.com/

www.kickstarter.com/projects/looking-glass-portrait

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