



2023 Event Report

In partnership with:



NIANTIC



The University of Texas at Austin
Stan Richards School of
Advertising & Public Relations
Moody College of Communication





Event Overview:

The “Social Impact BuildFest” is an inclusive event that encourages diverse communities to embrace emerging technology and use it to address the social issues they face everyday.



On March 24th to 26th, 2023, the Texas Immersive Institute hosted its 2nd Annual “Social Impact BuildFest” at the University of Texas at Austin. At this event, attendees of all kinds gathered to build Augmented Reality (AR) experiences that, in some way, makes the world a better place. They began by identifying specific social issues and brainstorming how AR could be used to address it. Teams then prototyped their experience and presented it to a panel of industry judges. Everyone was guided by expert mentors throughout the entire process, providing a fun and accessible environment for anyone to learn tangible technology skills. (And walk away with a portfolio project too!)





Attendees:

"Social Impact BuildFest" united a diverse group of both University of Texas students and members of the Austin community. The 65 participants formed 11 different teams who worked together to build unique AR experiences addressing various social impact issues. Accessibility was a huge goal for this event and it was made clear that no technical skills were required to attend.

>50%
Of Attendees
Had Never
Coded Before

32+
Unique Majors
Registered

Of the student registrants, we had a huge diversity of majors including Public Health, Economics, Neuroscience, Government, PR, Environmental Engineering, RTF, Architecture, and Business.

This highlights the appetite for this kind of event across all corners of the university and the interdisciplinary nature of the teams and projects. Tickets were also sold out just 8 hours after outreach began! Over 3,300 people viewed the Eventbrite after the event sold out and had there been enough space, it's fair to assume that about 345+ students would have attended.

The BuildFest team focused their outreach efforts on underrepresented communities within UT Austin. This, along with a human-focused approach to emerging technology, is why the event was able to attract attendees with a huge diversity of identities. The overwhelmingly positive feedback we've received from attendees post-event affirm the success of the BuildFest as an inclusive event that provides a unique opportunity for all kinds of people in our community.

~55%
Of Attendees
were Women
of Color



Social Mentors:

Our diverse panel of Social Issue Mentors worked directly with teams during the ideation phase to ensure that the experiences being built are sensitive to the true needs of the communities being impacted. By integrating these informed perspectives early in the building process, we can limit the issue of projects being tone-deaf or otherwise detrimental to the communities they are trying to help.

Disability Access Needs:



Dr. Natalie Czimskey
 Lecturer @
 Department of
 Speech, Language,
 and Hearing Sciences

Mental Health & Wellness:



Stephanie Dodoo
 Associate Director of
 Diversity and Inclusion
 @ UT Counseling and
 Mental Health Center

Environmental Inequities:



Madison Phelan
 Communications
 Associate @ Global
 Sustainability
 Leadership Institute

Gender Inclusivity:



Dr. Natalie Tindall
 Director of the Stan
 Richards School of
 Advertising and Public
 Relations

Race Visibility:



Maria Owens
 Researcher
 @ LSU Public Policy
 Research Lab

Keynote Speaker: Jiabao Li

Jiabao Li is an acclaimed artist and Assistant Professor of Design at UT Austin who emphasizes interspecies co-creation using technology tools such as wearables, AR/VR, robotics, and installations. Her work encourages audiences to lead a more sustainable future and think critically about our relationship with other living things. She has spoken at TED and won countless awards for her amazing work.

Speaking to the BuildFest audience, Jiabao explained her Eco-Centric design process and shared the meaning behind some of the amazing projects she's created during her career.





The Technology:

The platform sponsor for the Social impact BuildFest 2023 was Niantic 8thWall. Teams used the industry-leading WebAR platform to build Augmented Reality experiences that can be accessed on any phone with no app required. Members from Niantic 8thWall’s development team taught a technical workshop about the basics of the developing for the platform and also helped teams solve technical issues as they came up throughout the building process.



Production Team:

Leadership Team:



Zane Giordano
Founder +
Lead Producer of
"Social Impact
BuildFest"



Erin Reilly
Founding Director of
The Texas Immersive
Institute



Dr. Natalie Tindall
Director of the Stan
Richards School of
Advertising and Public
Relations

Student Team:

Phoebe Lin
Amanda Miller
Smirah Obazei

Austin Teng
Sam Hewitt
Sarvesh Chidambaran

Christopher Davila
Nox Patel
Andrew Peterson



Project Showcase

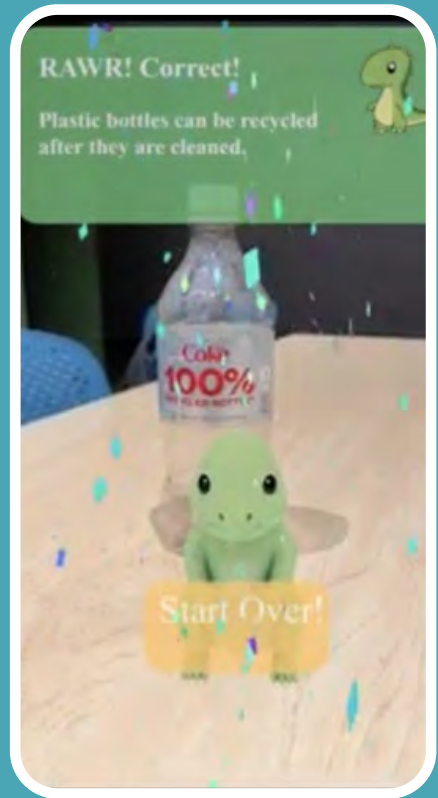
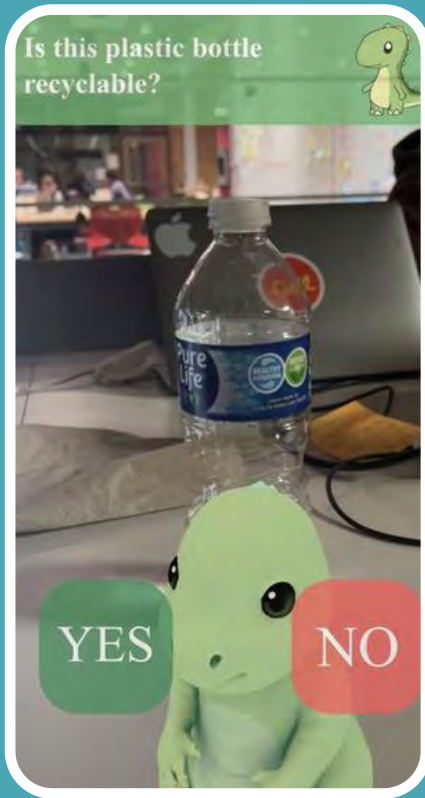


RecyclAR:

**1st Place:
Best in Show**

Using real-time image recognition to identify if the item in front of you is recyclable or not.

Designed to be used in the classroom, this AR experience teaches young students how to properly dispose of often miss-sorted waste items such as pizza boxes and plastic utensils. Through interactive demonstrations, it simplifies recycling guidelines, dispels common misconceptions, and promotes long term eco-conscious habits in young people.



Try Demo Here:



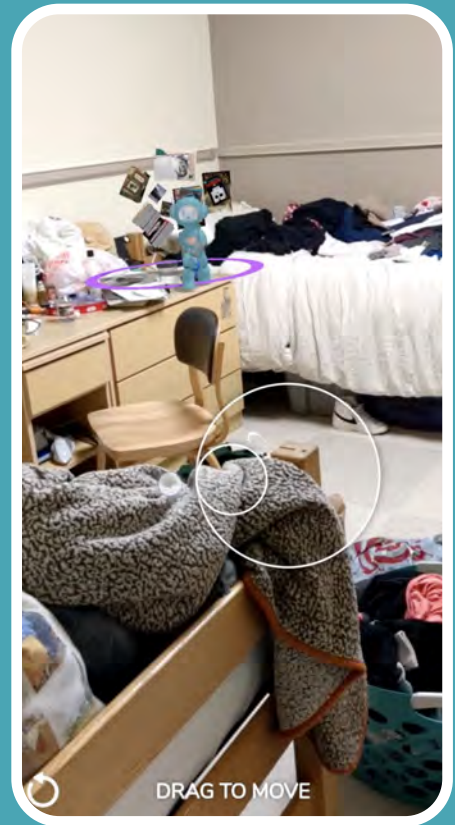
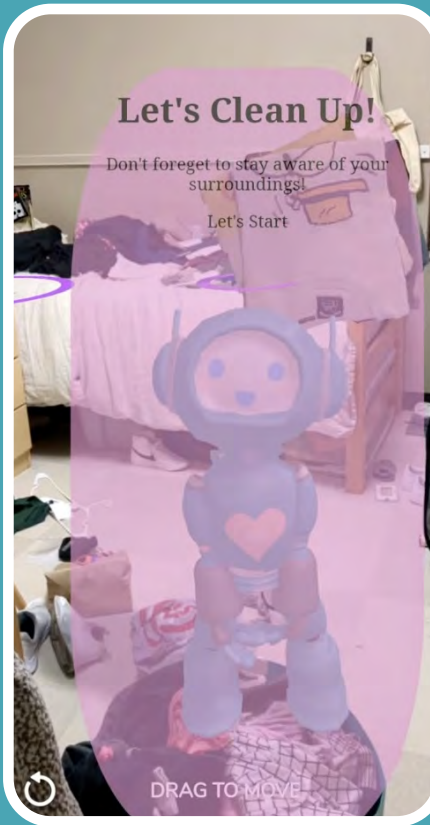


My Mental Buddy:

2nd Place:
Best in Show

Meet Mira! Your mental health buddy designed to help you manage your executive dysfunction.

Leveraging real scientific insights about combating executive dysfunction, this AR experience gamifies cleaning your room. Transforming a once overwhelming chore into a fun and manageable set of mini-tasks. With plans to expand to other household chores, Mira aims to be a long-term solution for users seeking to get things done and conquer executive dysfunction.



Try Demo Here:





What We Hear:

**3rd Place:
 Best in Show**

Sharing the lived experiences of POC students as they face microaggressions in the classroom

Discover the power of empathy and take a walk in someone else's shoes using Augmented Reality. Step into interactive 360-degree portals and embody the perspective of a person of color. Experience the true-to-life microaggressions that you would face during an average school day. All while learning ways to avoid accidentally creating microaggressions in your own life.



Try Demo Here:



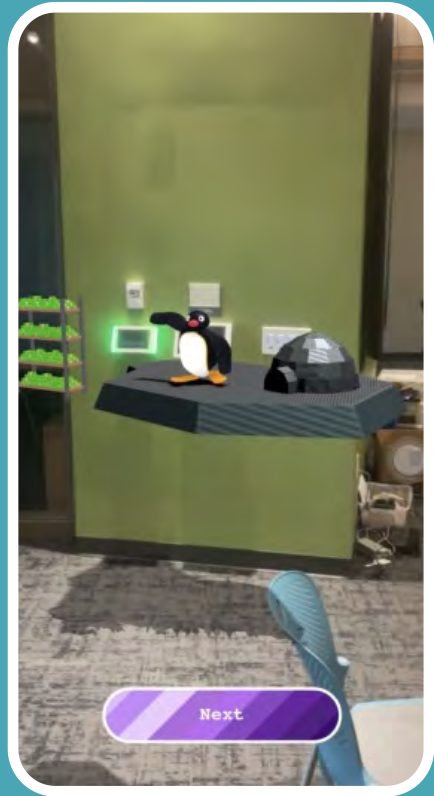
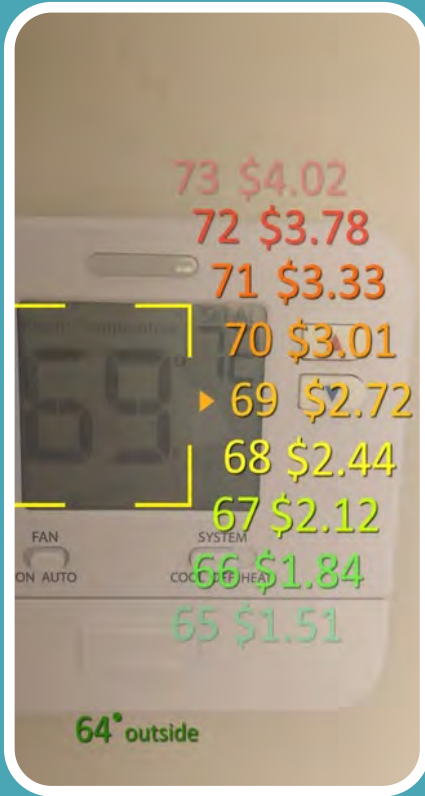


EcoAR:

**Play Big
Award Winner**

See whether your heating and air conditioning habits are environmentally sustainable!

Help create a greener world with EcoAR, this innovative AR experience that instantly visualizes the environmental impact of your thermostat adjustments. Scan the QR code on your thermostat and see real-time energy consumption insights that make it easy and intuitive to make climate-friendly choices with your AC/Heat. All while saving you some money in the process!



Learn More:

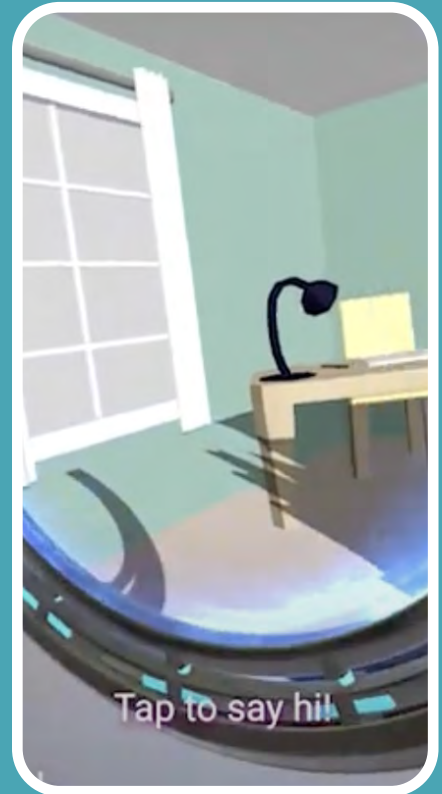




Mind Space:

Meet your therapist virtually and visit their office, making that first therapy session so much easier!

Say goodbye to therapy jitters! This AR experience eliminates the fear of starting therapy with a new therapist. Get acquainted with your counselor avatar, familiarize yourself with the therapy space, and engage in interactive exercises that help you feel confident and prepared for your first session. Supporting your mental health journey in a fun and inviting way!



Try Demo Here:

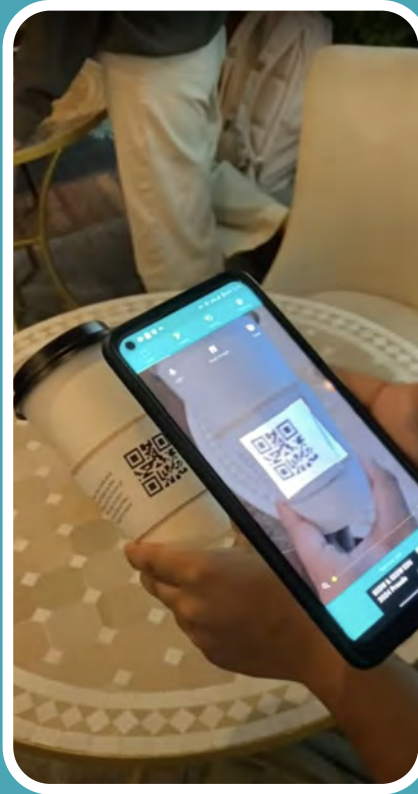




Giving Voice to History:

Teaching patrons of a west campus coffee shop the historical importance of the building they're in.

The Cauldron Coffee Shop in west campus has a deep and important history that most students living nearby have never heard. This AR experience hopes to change that. By scanning a QR code on your coffee sleeve, you'll be transported back in time as Reverend Jacob Fontaine shares the story of "The Gold Dollar," the South's first Black newspaper which operated out of that building until segregation forced him to move.



Learn More:

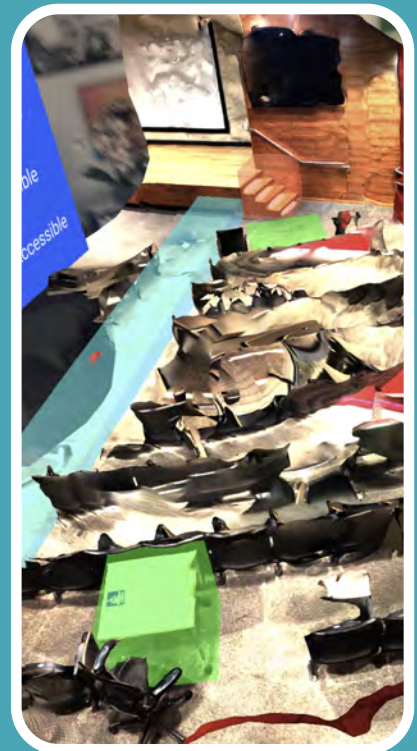
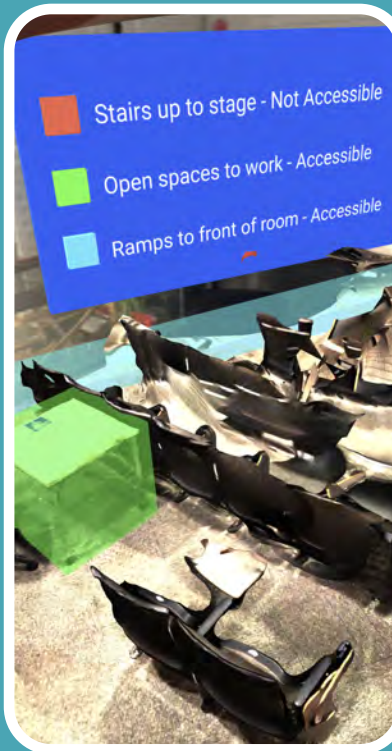




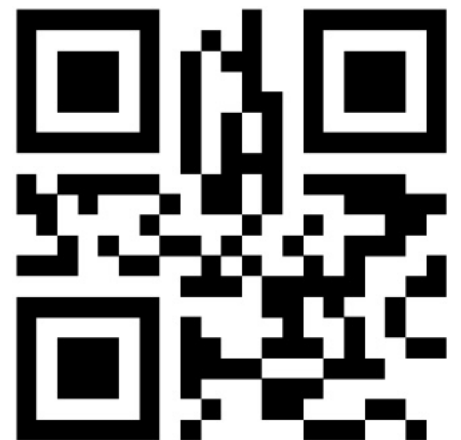
Less Stress Access:

Increasing accessibility on campus by highlighting accessibility barriers in classrooms.

This experience revolutionizes classroom accessibility, offering AR-enhanced virtual classrooms with highlighted information about that space's accessibility for disabled students. Features that support accessibility such as ramps and accessible seating are highlighted in green while accessibility barriers such as narrow passageways are highlighted in red. This experience takes away the guesswork and anxiety that disabled students go through each time they travel to a new space on campus.



Try Demo Here:





Tillie Nelson:

A family-friendly AR Scavenger hunt designed to make learning about sustainability fun for all ages!

Join Tillie the turtle on a fun-filled AR adventure to clean up Lady Bird Lake and learn about local sustainability initiatives! Tillie will play interactive mini-games with you and teach you fun and digestible lessons about the importance of environmental conservation in Austin's natural spaces. As you explore together, you'll discover the vital role each of us can play in protecting our beautiful city.



Learn More:

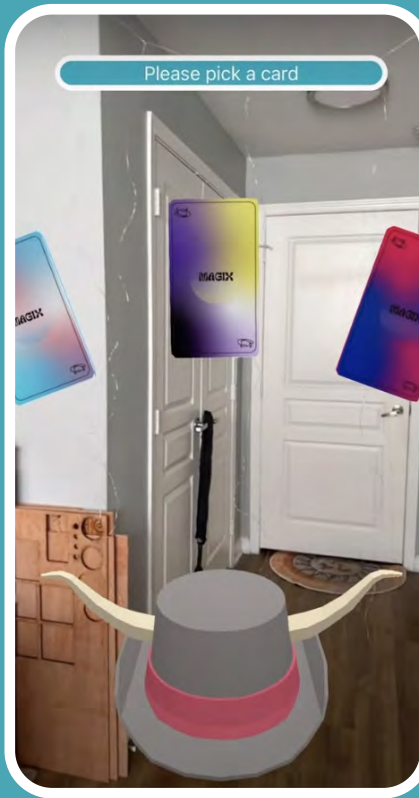




Magix:

Educating about the wide spectrum of gender identities through an AR magic show!

Delve into the wonders of gender inclusivity with Magix, a mystical AR magic show. Dazzling animations, colorful pride flag cards, and captivating facts come to life before your eyes as you navigate the intricate and diverse realm of gender identity. Embrace the enchanting experience that fosters understanding and empathy, transforming the way we perceive and celebrate individuality.



MAGIX

Try Demo Here:





Exploring the Urban Divide:

Explore how I-35 limits access to everyday necessities for people living in East Austin.

Learn about the harsh truth of economic and racial segregation across I-35 as it is visualized for you in this compelling AR experience. You will meet a character from West Austin and one from East Austin. Through their stories, it will become clear how building this highway has severely limited access to essential resources like hospitals and grocery stores for people in East Austin.



Hi, I'm Samantha!

I work at the grocery store and as a part-time musician. I take the bus everywhere!
 I was born and raised in East Austin, but living here has



Nearest Hospital

Commute Time: 28 minutes. The medical center has financial struggles. The hospitals that tend to



Try Demo Here:

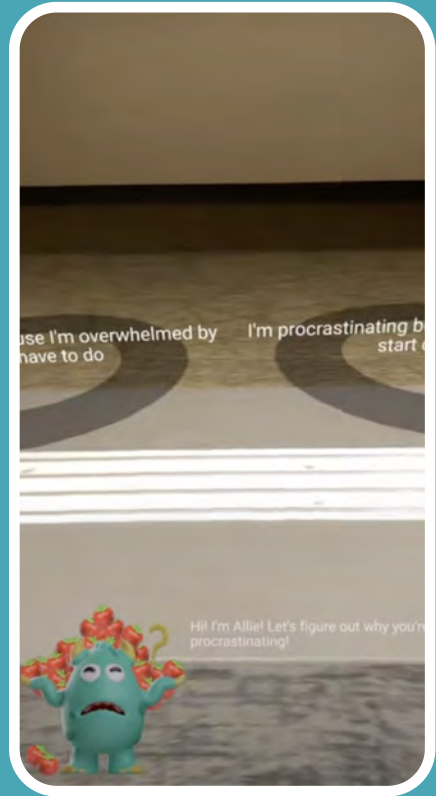
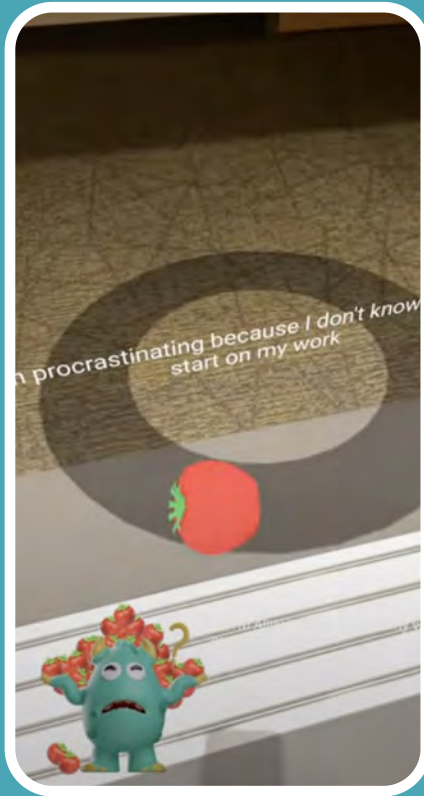




Allie:

Conquer anxiety and easily achieve your goals by helping Allie on her AR adventure!

Make maintaining your mental health fun and easy. Help Allie unload all of her heavy tomatoes by tossing them into rings corresponding to a variety of mental health checkup questions. After helping Allie, she will help you by providing personalized advice to help you tackle procrastination, reflect on bad habits, and reduce your general anxiety levels.



Try Demo Here:

