

REAL ESTATE

Sotheby's Realty aims to overcome visualization barriers with AR app

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Sotheby's new AR app gives customers a better look at what their homes could look like. Image credit: Sotheby's International Realty

By DANNY PARISI

Luxury real estate broker Sotheby's International Realty is leveraging augmented reality to give consumers the ability to visualize what a property would look like with various decor styles.

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A new mobile application called Curate by Sotheby's lets users view a potential home through the lens of their phone and project desired furnishings, wall art and more within the space to see how it would look. Sotheby's International Realty (SIR) has been at the forefront of using digital tools to enhance the property-buying process, with Curate the next step in that strategy.

"We have seen our sales associates sell homes without the buyer physically stepping foot in the property thanks to VR," said John Passerini, global vice president of interactive marketing at [Sotheby's International Realty Affiliates LLC](#), New York. "Next we anticipated how augmented reality (AR) could be used as a tool for both real estate agents and real estate consumers.

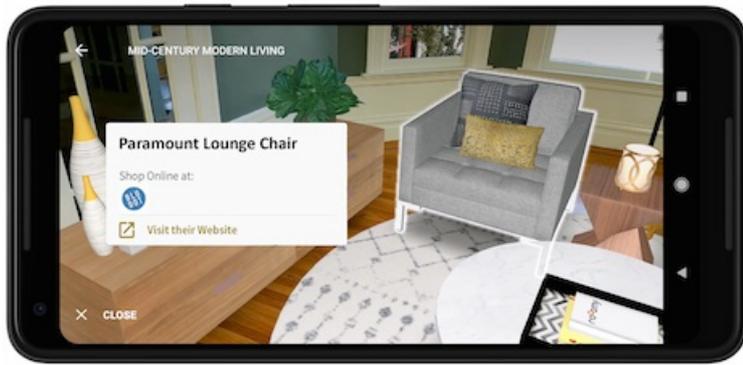
"We imagined it, and then we partnered with Google and RoOomy to deliver Curate by Sotheby's International Realty, our AR app," he said. "The app helps an agent with his or her staging needs while also helping the real estate buyer to visualize themselves in a home by creating interior decoration 'scenes,' options that allow users of the app to quickly change interior decoration styles as well as functions of rooms to fit their personal needs and style."

Augmented reality

Luxury real estate is one of the most lucrative markets in the world and the ultra-wealthy who are its primary customers expect the absolute best in customer service when buying a new home.

For SIR, achieving that world-class customer service has taken many forms, and the latest examples use innovative digital tools. In that vein, the realtor has released Curate by Sotheby's, an AR mobile app powered by Google's ARCore platform.

The app is simple in function but powerful in application. Customers can use the app while visiting a Sotheby's property to view what the home would look like with different furnishings and decor.



Customers can also shop from the app. Image credit: Sotheby's International Realty

Through augmented reality, prospective buyers can project different pieces into the home and see how they fit into the specific spaces they are looking to buy.

Customers can save different looks to compare multiple styles, and the app saves each product or home furnishing used in designing the home.

Additionally, the app serves as a commercial opportunity as well. If the customer decides that the pieces they see through AR, such as tables and beds, are exactly what they want in real life, they can purchase them right through the app.

"Real estate agents spend a significant amount of time and resources physically staging homes," Mr. Passerini said. "Our app, Curate by Sotheby's International Realty, allows homes to be virtually staged and viewed onsite using AR.

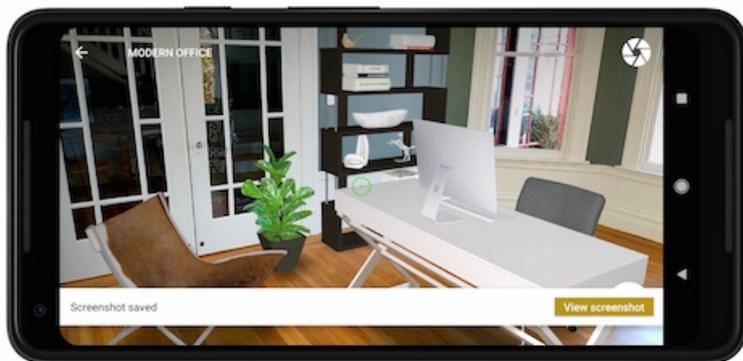
"For real estate consumers, we knew it can be challenging for them to visualize themselves in a home either because the home is empty or it is decorated with design tastes that may not be appealing to the potential buyer," he said. "We also knew that the first thing people do when they buy a new home is decorate, and our app can not only help visualize new decoration options, but also facilitate the purchase of furniture and accessories to fill the empty spaces that meets the new home owners' tastes."

Visualization problem

For SIR, the app helps alleviate one of the biggest hurdles when selling a home: visualization difficulties.

Often times, the best way to give an accurate sense of the scale and feel of a home is to show it completely empty, but this can also have the unintended effect of making a property that might otherwise be homey feel barren or sterile.

With Curate, SIR is hoping that customers will have an easier time visualizing what a home could look like once it has been completely decorated to help them get over the initial trepidation.



Customers can save screenshots of their different designs. Image credit: Sotheby's International Realty

Digital tools have been incredibly effective for Sotheby's International Realty and the Sotheby's auction house.

Previously, the brokerage made the search for a new home more entertaining and collaborative with the launch of a branded application for Apple TV.

From the app, available for download on the fourth generation of the devices, consumers can browse almost 50,000 properties on their television screen and take next steps on their favorites. A number of luxury brands from other

sectors have taken advantage of television's immersive qualities for shopping or content experiences ([see story](#)).

Auction house Sotheby's is also continuing to develop its fixed-price digital purchasing capabilities with the acquisition of high-end interior design ecommerce platform Viyet.

Viyet, an online marketplace for luxury furniture, accessories and other design elements of home dcor, will be taken over by Sotheby's, thereby expanding the auction house's inventory of fixed-price products available for purchase online. Sotheby's has been increasingly growing its presence outside of auctions into ecommerce, becoming a major player in online luxury shopping ([see story](#)).

"We see a real synergy between interior decoration and real estate and we think Curate by Sotheby's International Realty is the beginning of the connection between real estate and retail," Mr. Passerini said. "We also see this app as an opportunity for the agent and the Sotheby's International Realty brand to create a lasting relationship with buyers beyond the homebuying transaction."

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