

HOME

Look Before You Buy: Virtual Reality Comes to Home Improvement

NewsUSA

(NU) - Sponsored by GAF- You're about to shell out a significant amount of money to upgrade your house, and the choices make your head spin. Traditional asphalt or slate shingles? Summer blue or teardrop blue paint for the walls?

Until recently, unless your imagination rivaled a sci-fi novelist's, you wouldn't know if you'd made the right choice till the project was finished. And then, if you'd gotten it wrong – if you had one of those “what was I thinking” moments – you'd either have to live with your mistake or spend even more bucks to fix it.

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But now, thanks to the explosion of online virtual reality, augmented reality, and 3D rendering tools, all that has changed to the point where consumers can get a pretty clear vision of what those shingles, say, would look like on their roof before committing.

“It's definitely the wave of the future, because it allows the general population to make design decisions without feeling hesitant or insecure,” Khoi Vo, a professor and the chair of the department of interior design at Savannah College of Art and design, told the New York Times.

Feel like playing architect and interior designer all at once? One of the more advanced programs, RoomSketcher, lets you do just that by creating your own floor plan, furnishing and decorating the space, and then visualizing your work in 3D “as if you are actually there.”

Heck, Better Homes & Gardens even has a tool that lets you create an elaborate garden design plan – complete with a pond – by dragging and dropping “more than 150 trees, shrubs and flowers.”

But back to those shingles.

Homeowners have had it (correctly) drummed into their heads how critical roofs are to a house's



A new online tool lets homeowners see what their roof upgrades would look like before committing.

curb appeal, so this is one decision you really want to get right. By using the brand new Virtual Home Remodeler launched by GAF (gaf.com), North America's largest roofing manufacturer, you can play around with different looks by first either downloading a photo of your own home or choosing from among the many styles – everything from Victorian to ranch to French country – pictured on the website.

“It's an easy way to see what would look best with your home,” says Paul Dellanno, assistant marketing manager at GAF. “Because what may work for a ranch-style house may not work for a Tudor or colonial. We've even designed it so that you can see how things look at different times of day and seasons.”

Once you've picked the house style, things get even more interesting. Are the antique slate color shingles from the company's Camelot Shingle line you clicked on, for example, more to your liking than the golden prairie color ones from the Glenwood Shingle line?

What about the house trim and exterior walls? White or something more daring?

It's worth noting that one of the nicer features of most of the virtual reality tools, including GAF's, is that they let you solicit feedback from others by sharing your finished creation via email or social media. That way – like having a friend along while trying on clothes at a brick-and-mortar store – you can get a second opinion on whether your choice is becoming or not.