3-D Takes Another Step Towards The OR

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Sharp's latest 3-D displays deliver bright, clear imagery without the cumbersome glasses usually required for such technology. Now the bad news: They only work on a 3” screen held 1’ from the viewer's face.

Sharp recently demonstrated liquid crystal screens for mobile devices that showed 3-D animation, touch-panel screens that switched from one 3-D photo to another and a display connected to a 3-D video camera.

The drawback until now has been the need for special glasses, which show different images to the right eye and the left eye. Sharp's 3-D technology doesn't require them because the displays are designed to shoot different images to each eye.

The technology may be applied to TVs in the future, said Executive Managing Officer Yoshisuke Hasegawa. But he acknowledged it now works better when the distance between the viewer and the screen is fixed. The smaller displays are intended for mobile devices such as cell phones, game machines and digital cameras.

The 3-D animation on the handheld screen looks like a miniature version of the 3-D animation we are used to seeing on larger TV screens, though images were less convincing than those seen in a darkened cinema. Photos on the touch screen were less clear and even a bit blurry from certain angles, though Sharp said its latest technology does away with such ghosting effects.

Still, the system promises technology fans the potential for pop-up e-mail messages and taking 3-D photos. The technology is likely to show up in the next DSi portable game machine, which Nintendo says will be 3-D. Sharp refused to confirm the names of companies it was supplying.

Sharp expects 3-D to replace two-dimensional displays the same way color replaced black-and-white in movies and television. Sharp tried to sell 3-D products in the past but failed, largely because of poor image quality. Mass production is set to start in the first half of fiscal 2010, which began April 1.

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