The storytellers of NorthernLight

They designed the Rijksmuseum app, which this year won several awards, and will release what they believe is the new standard for museum apps in October. TU alumni Steven Schaeken and Peter Slavenburg talk about their passion for design and technology.

"Cross an architect with a game designer and you get us," says Schaeken. As engineers, however, they couldn’t resist adding all kinds of new technology to the app, such as photo navigation to show people the way in the building, and 3D audio, which allows visitors standing in front of a winter landscape to actually hear the skaters passing them by.

"Children’s book"

Two years later, they used PDAs (personal digital assistants, the personal computers that were the precursor to the smartphone) for Kelvingrove Museum in Glasgow. Teenagers used them to go on a digital tour and record the tasks they carried out along the way in a personal finale. ‘It was very ambitious’, says Slavenburg now. ‘Technically speaking, it led to the idea that you could do things in the museum using a mobile, intelligent device without needing to make any physical changes.’

‘A multimedia experience, therefore, without the need for screens on the wall. The rise of smartphones offered new opportunities. In 2012, NorthernLight produced an interactive children’s book for the iPad for the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden. And then the Rijksmuseum app was released this year, with Kiss the Frog from Delft responsible for the technology. Through audio and short films, the visitor is given information about the various museum pieces.

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