

NIMRUD RISING

How Virtual Reality Will Resurrect and Rebuild a Lost Masterpiece

The world's shared cultural heritage is threatened across the globe. The causes are many—cultural racketeering; encroachment; and war, terrorism and cultural cleansing that seek to destroy the past of another people. The loss of objects and sites that form our links to history is strongly felt by all civilized people. In a world divided by borders, ideology and mutual misunderstanding, we recognize the unrivalled creations of our forebears as the expressions of our collective genius.

In March, 2015, reports from the Iraqi Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities confirmed that agents of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) had attacked the ancient Assyrian capital city of Nimrud in northeastern Iraq, just eighteen miles southeast of Mosul. Then, on April 12, 2015, the terrorists of ISIS released a video documenting the willful demolition of the Northwest Palace. After 3,300-years of history, the militants had wiped the most famous and culturally significant building at Nimrud from the face of the earth.

To combat these losses, the Antiquities Coalition and Learning Sites, Inc. have created **NIMRUD RISING**. Offering an alternative to the dynamiting of the Northwest Palace, we are using innovative digital technology solutions to create an immersive virtual reality recreation of Nimrud, where anyone can visit the palaces, learn about that ancient culture, and understand how the palace was lost and why.

Donning a virtual reality (VR) headset will transport the participant to northern Iraq in a realistic, fully immersive, 360-degree environment. The virtual world will allow the visitor to walk through the citadel of Nimrud and see its architecture and its art, resurrecting and reinstating the palaces of the great kings Shalmaneser III, Ashurnasirpal II, and Tiglath-pileser III, with their magnificent sculptures and elaborate wall carvings. Our goal is to use 21st-century technology to provide a digital replica of the palace of Ashurnasirpal II and the surrounding citadel area.

Taking advantage of Learning Sites' extensive experience programming virtual worlds for multiple interactive output



ISIS video showing the willful dynamiting of the Northwest Palace, Nimrud



Rendering showing a reconstruction of the throne room of the Northwest Palace; from the virtual reality model of the palace by Learning Sites, Inc.

formats, **NIMRUD RISING** builds off of their existing 3D computermodel of the Northwest Palace and its surrounding context. Incorporating supplemental video, sound, and graphics that create learning modules embedded in the VR experience, **NIMRUD RISING** will become the most comprehensive, detailed, and accurate model of the citadel and allow virtual visitors to explore its buildings, plazas, courtyards, and gateways as if having a personalized virtual guidebook at their fingertips. With immersive VR, viewers see, hear, and sense the environment, travelling across the site and into key buildings while stopping to explore and learn. This digital environment becomes a replacement for the destroyed site and a virtual prism to understand the current situation in the Middle East.