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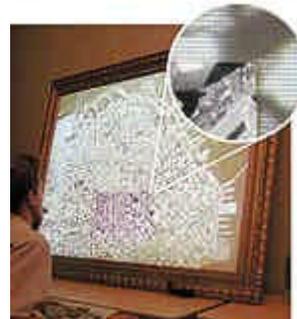
by **Tomas Hernandez, Jr.**

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The bottom line

At today's prices, a design professional should have a 19-inch or larger CRT monitor on his or her desk—their quality, reliability, and resolution are high, and prices are reasonable. The most costly CRTs tend to offer better quality than their flat-screen brethren. Of course, if desktop space is the issue, you should consider buying an LCD if you can afford one. Prices will continue to drop and their technology continues to improve, so these former barriers won't be a problem in the future. As more pressure-sensitive displays move from the labs into the mainstream, and as more software is released that allows for on-screen input, these interactive, haptic devices will become as commonplace as the CRT is today— particularly for design professionals, who often prefer drawing directly on a surface instead of using a keyboard and mouse.

The future will bring us even larger displays. Architects who have been accustomed to relatively small monitors, which require constant zooming and panning so they can work on the small details of large buildings projects, will be able to see their work on huge screens. Considering the size of typical drawings or rendering and the time it takes to manipulate through a CAD file, the need for this larger screen doesn't seem all that unreasonable. As the price of displays continues to drop, conference rooms and common pinup areas will also be benefactors of large flat-screen technology. Researchers at the Palo Alto Research Center (formerly Xerox PARC) have been developing something called "focus-plus-context screens," devices that impose a low-resolution, rear-screen-projected image over a high-resolution image produced by a flat-panel monitor. These devices will allow users to see one area of an image in detail, while still allowing them to view it in its overall context. Users say these new screens let them work much more quickly, compared to having to toggle between a large image and its blown-up details.



Palo Alto Research Center's new display lets you see both up close and in context.

This technology experimentation could one day be of great benefit to the design profession. Wouldn't a 36-by-48-inch display look great on your desk?