Why 4D technology ruins movies

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Designers are on the constant lookout for ways to enhance the movie-screening experience. It's easily seen in the evolution from silent films to talkies to color to HD and 3D movies. Obviously, I've whittled down the progress list a little, but the point is it's a changing technology. Oftentimes, now that 3D has made a (dismal) debut in homes and a (really expensive) debut in theaters, 4D is being tossed around as "the next big thing."

Luckily for those of us who have no actual desire to experience smell-o-vision—I'm all set with not knowing what London actually smelled like when Henry Higgins lived there—it's been a largely unsuccessful process. Of course, exceptions like Disney's Bug's Life and The Muppets show exist in theme parks specially outfitted with different immersion technology, but it's far from mainstream.

But that hasn't stopped Shogo Fukushima, a doctoral student from the University of Electro-Communications in Tokyo, from creating the "Chilly Chair" to give movie goers a little extra scare.
The "Chilly Chair [1]" was designed as immersive technology that replicates feelings of fear or nervousness in the viewers at scary or anticipatory moments in a horror film.

Essentially, once you're sitting in the chair, you place your arms on the armrests and under the "arms," which are made from an insulating dielectric place [2], an electrode, and a rubber plate. As you're watching your movie, the chair sends electricity through the electrode, effectively polarizing the dielectric plate, which causes the hair on your arms to rise -- facilitating a similar sensation to what happens when you're naturally nervous or scared.

For the sake of full disclosure, I don't like horror films or the feeling of being scared,

but this doesn’t seem like that great of an immersion. The whole point is to feel like you’re IN the movie, right? But doesn’t this technology—and a lot of other 4D technology—just serve as a cold bucket of water to the face (sometimes literally), pointing out the fact that you’re actually sitting in a chair in a theater? Call me a curmudgeon, but I don’t think any of this enhances the experience as much as it takes away from it. Plus, as far as fear goes, I think having a decent storyline—a dark room, a long pause before the killer jumps out, a monster you can’t quite get a glimpse of—will go a lot further in scaring people than a smoke and mirrors chair.

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