



Picture: Siemens

Walkinside shows the related objects from the Comos P&ID in 3D (blue coloured pumps)

SIEMENS WALKS INSIDE THE VISUALIZATION MARKET

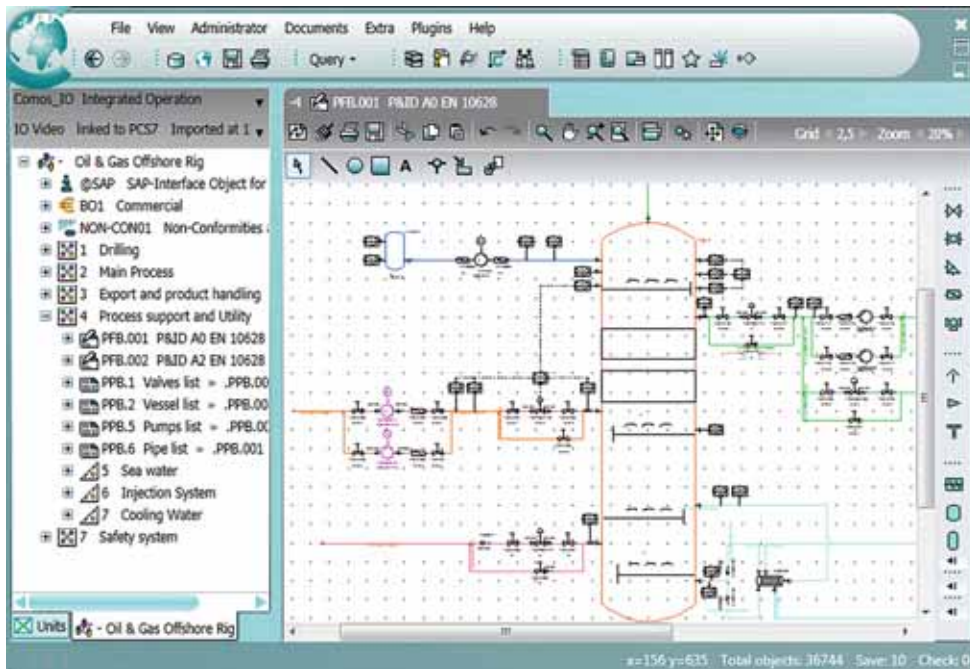
Siemens Industry Automation has announced the expansion of its industrial software portfolio with the acquisition of VRcontext. The Virtual Reality software company offers VRcontext Walkinside, an internationally accepted product line in high-performance 3D technology to display complex data in ship engineering and plant construction. The purchase price has not been disclosed.

VRcontext was incorporated in 2000 and is based in Brussels/Belgium. It is a spin-off of Tractebel Engineering, a member of the GDF Suez Group. With an office in Houston, US state of Texas, and its strategic partners and a global network of more than 20 value-added resellers, VRcontext enjoys global reach with certified support capability to guarantee the quality of its technology deployment. Benefitting from over 75 man-years of R&D, Walkinside is now becoming the worldwide standard in the Oil & Gas, Process and Energy industries, with applications in the Architecture/Engineering/Construction (AEC) and Homeland Security markets. "The integration of the Walkinside 3D visualization and training software of our long-standing partner VRcontext into our industrial software portfolio will benefit our customers significantly. Using intelligent 3D models can

make plant engineering and operation safer and more efficient in a great many sectors of industry," Eckard Eberle, CEO of the Siemens Industrial Automation Systems Business Unit, motivates the taken-over in a press release. Before, the Siemens plant design portfolio did not include its own 3D viewing technology. VRcontext bridges the gap between the engineering design activities and the lifecycle of critical and massive assets, including operations and maintenance, safety, training, simulations of potential incidents, disaster recovery planning and execution, and decommissioning. Collaboration, full immersive standard operation procedure (SOP), simulation and networked avatars (integrated human simulation model) allow various disciplines to better understand, communicate, monitor and manage their assets remotely. "Real-time visualization for both greenfield and existing

assets is becoming a de-facto requirement for enhancing efficiency and safety. Benefitting from its mature technology, our customers can accelerate and increase the value and ROI of their projects, by using Walkinside in conjunction with the Comos portfolio," says Tommy Wehrli, responsible Product Manager with Siemens, to our editors. The open viewing technology already has an interface to Comos.

VRcontext's visualization enterprise solution includes the Walkinside Builder, Viewer and its WebServer as well as a software developer kit (SDK), delivering a photorealistic, immersive environment for real-time, multi-user interactive navigation experiences and intuitive contextual information access to complex industrial plants in 3D. The recently released Walkinside WebServer combined with Citrix 3D remote visuali-



Picture: Siemens

Comos P&ID shows a P&ID with a vessel and the related equipment (relevant are the two pumps in magenta colour)



Eckard Eberle is CEO of Siemens Industrial Automation Systems Business Unit



Tommy Wehrli is Product Manager for Comos Process

Picture: Siemens

lization technology offers a thin client solution that enables authenticated users to conveniently access 3D models and associated data on low-end PCs, tablets and smart phones. It also includes the Seabed Builder option for subsea asset model building. As complex assets become more geographically dispersed, whether onshore or on the seabed, specific tools and functionalities are required to assemble automatically a correct 3D model of the complete infrastructure, using ESRI ArcGIS data. Walkinside's SDK supports direct access to all the VR Model geometry data and enables custom-built, bi-directional links to external applications, developed on top of Web Services technology.

Workflow transformation opportunities are presented in total for four asset-based target markets: engineering, operations, maintenance and safety/training. Activities such work order processing and management of change

(MOC), decision support, emergency response planning and safety and hazop reviews can be effectively optimized with immersive simulations that realistically replicate standard actions and procedures routinely required in the plant, for field operator training.

Walkinside facilitates contextual access to critical enterprise asset information, such as native engineering databases, document and maintenance management systems and other ERP and SCADA applications, with a 3D customizable dashboard that can be remotely shared between users, leveraging real-time sensor information published in the 3D model.

"Owner/operators can improve personnel safety and training, by simulating catastrophic events to help prepare for facility evacuations and emergency response planning. Through real-time and intuitive data access, decision-makers can effectively access vital data and help address unexpected situations, delivering enhanced return on investment for major capital projects, by reducing operating expenses and increasing asset up-time and safety," Mr Wehrli explains.

As the Product Manager assures us, stand-alone licences for Walkinside will remain available. However, more interesting will be the tight integration into Comos, Siemens' integrated plant design and operation suite including Simatic PCS 7. "Leveraging this new, more flexible architecture, Comos – complemented by Walkinside – makes it possible to implement a wide range of use cases sup-

porting 3D through all the lifecycle phases of an industrial plant or unit," Mr Wehrli says.

Testimonials

For Siemens, the VRcontext acquisition is a big deal because it is extending its footprint in new market segments. For instance, BP teamed up with VRcontext to deploy technology in the North Sea Schiehallion field to help steer an ROV around complex seabed equipment, and to monitor real-time pressure and temperature parameters, while managing asset integrity data. And Walkinside already helps Total E&P Angola to simulate real-life workflow situations using different training mode options, with diverse immersive scenarios specifically designed for the planning, the scheduling and the execution of SOPs.

With the acquisition of several software vendors, Siemens Industry Automation Division is executing a clear expansion strategy to become a leading player in the market for industrial software. All acquired companies had a remarkable footprint in their respective segments, as UGS (USA, 2007), Innotec (Germany, 2008), Elan Software Systems (France, 2009), Active Tecnologia em Sistemas de Automação (Brazil, 2011), Vistagy (USA, 2011), and in 2012, IBS (Germany), Perfect Costing Solutions (Germany), and now VRcontext (Belgium).

INFOCORNER

For further information visit www.siemens.com/comos