

We generally think of visual mappings as vast projections onto buildings, viewed by crowds at large public events.

Now one Belgian-based company demonstrates **there's a market for small-scale visual mappings for smaller groups of people—and maybe a whole new market to be discovered in restaurants.**

An artistic collective run by Antoon Verbeeck and Filip Sterckx in Belgium uses 3D projection mapping techniques to tell stories via projections on buildings, in boxes, on shapes or simply on the ground.

Belgians are renowned for their food skills so it's no wonder that **Skullmapping** (OK, it's not an appetizing name but they didn't expect to end up in the restaurant industry) decided one day to create *Le Petit Chef* -- the story of a tiny animated chef who is projected onto diners' plates and proceeds to 'cook' their food, on their plates in front of them.

"Originally we created 'Le Petit Chef' for an event or two, to show people what was possible with mini-mappings," says Antoon Verbeeck, co-director of Skullmapping. "Then, when a large amount of restaurants and hotels started calling us after the first video, we realised that this concept could really bring visual mapping into the hospitality sector."



Once ‘Le Petit Chef’ went viral on the internet, Skullmapping was contacted by various high end hotels and restaurants from across the world, ranging from Russia to Dubai, to see if it would be possible to licence the use of the animation or make custom made projections.

For the projection of their mini-mapping, the Skullmapping team chose to use **Panasonic PT-VZ570 LCD-projectors**
. The projectors feature a contrast ratio of 10.000:1 with a brightness of 4,800 lumens. This meant that the team at Skullmapping could use a resolution of 1920 x 1200, vital for their productions.

In traditional projection mapping displays there is a distance between the spectator and the projection. However for this project it was important to have this high resolution because it is focused on miniature elements, with spectators extremely close to the screen. Without high resolution, images become pixilated, making the animation less readable.

The skullmapping team create the animation by acting out the motion capture in a studio. It takes approximately four to five weeks to develop one video, from the development of the concept to when the video goes live online.

"People think that the 3D effect that you see in the movie is a hologram or a 3D projection. It's actually a normal projection, but it is a specific optical illusion that we use. By using a long distorted image from the right point of view, you get a 3D effect or illusion," adds Sterckx.

It's a new way of thinking about visual mappings: Initially the mapping focused on a main meal. The video proved such a success on YouTube (4.3 million views in the first 10 months that Skullmapping added an entrée, a fish dish-- and even came up with the second story, the bouillabaisse. Now the mapping consists of a full meal including an entrée, main course and dessert.

"The concept of *Le Petit Chef* originated from a request from a client who wanted a table mapping for an event," Verbeek explains.

"Naturally, table mappings had been done before, but these were mostly graphic mappings. We found it interesting to do something with a little figure on the table that cooks your food."

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What's not an illusion is the solution of an age-old problem: Skullmapping has found a value-added way for high end restaurants to keep their clients entertained while waiting for prepared food.

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