

Naked Truth: Sports Illustrated Swimsuit Takes Virtual Reality Too Far

The 52-year-old *Sports Illustrated* Swimsuit issue, known for scantily clad models on sunny beaches, is exploring a new reality for this year's issue, which hit newsstands last week.

For the first time ever, SI is inviting readers to "virtually" join the magazine and the models on photo shoots by equipping them with cardboard virtual reality viewers that, coupled with a smartphone and an app, give readers access to behind-the-scenes videos, reports *USA Today*. The short videos feature the models seemingly looking right at the viewer in come-hither poses.

Evangelical leader Dr. Richard Land is president of Southern Evangelical Seminary, which has been a leader in exploring the ethical relationships between technology and faith through its "Ethics of Emerging Technology" program. The initiative delves into research subjects such as robotics, bionics, human enhancement, artificial intelligence, trans-humanism, nanotechnology and more.

"The same year *Playboy* announced it would start putting the clothes back on, *Sports Illustrated* is taking so-called 'intimacy' to a new level with 'virtual reality' videos for the 2016 Swimsuit issue," said Land. "At what point, however, does the virtual become too realistic? When does technology go too far, and virtual reality replaces reality? The pornography industry has been embracing cutting-edge technology for decades. CNN has reported that artificial intelligence in porn might be next, where a simulated porn star could 'interact' with the user."

Is it technology gone too far, maybe even into the world of

softcore porn? SI itself reports that the new endeavor gives readers “intimate access,” answering the oft-asked question, “What’s it like to be on a *Sports Illustrated* swimsuit photo shoot?” But online, the videos that give a “little tease” really aren’t about a photo shoot at all, but rather focus on models crawling tantalizingly toward the viewers and even seductively tugging on their swimsuits while looking straight into the camera.

“As we push the technology envelope more and more, at what point do we become desensitized to what is actually around us—to what is actually real?” Land continued. “And at what point do we lose touch with how we interact with real human beings? Technology is from God, and He has created great technological minds, but when it separates us from His creation, perhaps it’s time to get back to reality, or do we need to call it ‘real’ reality?”

“And as the father of two daughters and the husband of one wife, I feel compelled to denounce this blatant use of women as sexual objects with all of its dehumanizing impact.”