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Adventures in 3D printing with the Sculpteo iPad app

3D printing sounds really interesting - now there's an app so people can try it out

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How much would you pay for a miniature coffee cup with a profile picture of your face on it? What if that mug was made using a 3D printer?

The answer probably isn't €39.

Sculpteo's 3D printing iPad and iPhone app might sound rather nifty, but in practice it is poorly executed to the point of being laughable.

I put together two products, with limited success. One was a customised iPhone case and the other a mug with a profile image of a face on it. The app doesn't work as it should and customising designs was a chore. At the time of writing the Buy button on the app isn't working, so I couldn't test the process of buying a mug.

When I did buy one it cost €39. For this I get an

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espresso sized mug with a vague approximation of my face on it in profile. To create it I got my glamorous assistant/reviews editor Alan to take a picture of my face using the iPad and then traced the outline of it in the Sculpteo app. This might sound easy, but for some reason the line I needed to move to trace my face wouldn't move. This caused me to jab furiously at the iPad until I got bored and went and made a cup of tea.

Eventually it did work and my glorious face was outlined and ready to go. The mug was ordered and I sat, eagerly waiting. Two months later - and after having to email Sculpteo a picture of my face for them to check it - the mug arrived. Small it might be, but the mug isn't perfectly formed. The handle had some rough edges, as did the relief sections of my face in profile.

The iPhone case was slightly more successful. It cost €35 and we could select the design, add some custom symbols and even some text. The end result was a neat looking customised iPhone case.

It might sound cool, but this 3D printing app is overpriced and clumsy.

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