Like so many North Forkers, Steve Bull is a quiet, modest fellow who’s full of surprises. The New York-born artist, who as a kid summered with his family on Shelter Island and now lives part-time in Greenport, has a diverse list of credits: shipyard worker, sailing enthusiast, amateur radio operator, tinkerer, electronic repair person, movie maker, cultural anthropology major and member of Microsoft cofounder Paul Allen’s think tank, Interval Research in Palo Alto, Calif.

“I worked on future technology stuff,” he says. Mr. Bull is now an independent video artist who employs “augmented reality” using cellphones. Here’s how it works:

A free AR web browser from Junaio.com is downloaded using an iPad or smartphone. Unlike an ordinary web page that shows an image, the augmented reality browser relies on the camera function of your personal device to create the image. So if you point your iPad or phone camera at your house or toward the bay, that is what you will see on the page. Junaio has lots of great things you can do with this.

Mr. Bull presents his original art on the AR browser. He just returned from the opening of his most recent installation, “Invisible Presence: Virtual Reality Busts,” at the Villa dei Pini and Gardens at the Liguria Study Center for the Arts and Humanities in Bogliasco, Italy.

Perched on a cliff overlooking the Mediterranean Sea near the medieval city of Genoa, this prestigious center, administered by the Bogliasco Foundation, offers residential fellowships to those working on creative and scholarly projects in the humanities. Each year an international roster of scholars and creative minds pursuing archeology, architecture, classics, dance, film/video, history, literature and the visual arts gathers to study, share ideas and enjoy the sequestered setting, with its winding paths leading down the craggy hillside to a road where Roman citizens once traveled from the ancient town of Ventimiglia to France.

The Bogliasco Foundation, established in 1996, commissioned Mr. Bull to do a project to commemorate its 15th anniversary, when the public was invited to visit the venue’s lush gardens. Wanting his art to connect the ancient Roman

REALITY BUSTS | PAGE 8A
REALITY BUSTS...

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1A

past with its contemporary pres- ent, he updated the tradition of the classical bust, the portrait in stone propped on a pedestal that immor- talized a great Roman hero, states- man or scholar.

For this installation, Mr. Bull took bust-proportioned photographs of his subjects — in this case the noted scholars who studied at the center in the past year — with his cellphone. Then, using latitude and longitude coordinates from Google maps, he strategically positioned the images so they would appear to smartphone and iPad users when they aimed the cameras in those doors for fantasy, fi c tion and fi ction. Mr. Bull knows this, and he’s hard at work developing an augmented reality program to record the history of Greenport. He’d like to create busts of longtime residents in front of their homes or schools. Mr. Bull believes the next step will be to allow viewers to include short video clips or images of the camouflaged yachts that during World War II searched for German submarines in the waters off Greenport, with voice-overs recording this incredible North Fork history. The technology might well see in this technology the potential for this kind of art as an education tool and as a means of generating art as an interactive conversation is mind-boggling. Mr. Bull considers that nothing has changed, really. It just gives a new twist to an old question: If a bust sits in the gar- den seat, in the woods. Mr. Bull believes the next step will be to allow viewers to include short video clips or images of the camouflaged yachts that during World War II searched for German submarines in the waters off Greenport, with voice-overs recording this incredible North Fork history. The technology would be available to tourists who want to know more about the place they are visiting, and to residents wishing to study local history.

The technology also opens new doors for fantasy, fiction and film. Mr. Bull believes the next step will allow viewers to include short videos within their browser page. It is a high-tech mix of the known with the fabricated might consider that nothing has changed, really. It just gives a new twist to an old question: If a bust sits in the gar- den and you don’t have a cell phone, does it exist?