IDFA DocLab Domesticating Reality: Exploring new homes for immersive art

With IDFA 2019 around the corner, the festival is pleased to present its complete new media program, IDFA DocLab.

This year marks the move to a new main location (Tolhuistuin) and the expansion to several other sites across Amsterdam, including Central Station, the ARTIS-Planetarium, Eye Film Museum, and a real-life living room at a secret address. Now in its 13th year, DocLab’s exploration of new physical locations aims to open up immersive documentary art to new audiences, while still embracing the interdisciplinary and ‘platform-agnostic’ nature of emerging media. DocLab launches on November 22 and runs until December 1 as part of IDFA.

DocLab Theme: Domesticating Reality

This year’s theme is Domesticating Reality, exploring the many ways that we shape technology, and technology shapes us. Within the theme, DocLab invites visitors to explore the nature of physical space in computational times. Audiences can actively experiment with emerging media and participate in various new tactics of ‘story-telling’ and ‘story-finding’—between makers trying to communicate a particular narrative, and users being free to explore and find their own—often different—stories.

DocLab Exhibition moves to Tolhuistuin

Tolhuistuin, home of the main DocLab Exhibition, features 30 immersive projects, ranging from digital storytelling to virtual reality (XR) and artificial intelligence. Interactive room-scale installations include the world premiere of Rozsypne—Nienke Huitenga-Broeren and Lisa Weeda’s new work on the MH17 crash—and the international premiere of A Symphony of Noise VR by Michaela Pnaceková and Jamie Balliu. Duncan Speakman’s site-responsive audiowalk Only Expansion takes audiences through the city, while the world premiere of Nerd_Funk by Ali Eslami and Mamali Shafahi, supported by the Film Fund DocLab Interactive Grant, presents a VR experience that constructs a post-physical reality through archives of the digital now.

Other projects supported by the Interactive Grant that are now premiering include: the multimedia exhibition The Space Between Us, which combines the photography from Benedicte Kurzen and Sanne De Wilde with the surveillance art of Tong Wu and Barak Chamo; Nadja van der Weide’s Look Inside, a ‘documentary explore room’ that lets the visitor roam around a stranger’s real house; and Reflector by Piotr Winiewicz, Dawid Gorny, and RNDR, which takes the next step in the integration of AI into the film industry with an autonomous AI engine that arranges and edits a film in real time.

Other notable AI experiments in the DocLab Exhibition include the world premieres of Ontroerend Goed’s immersive theater pilot Artificial: Room One, and Recoding Art by
Bruno Moreschi and Gabriel Pereira.

**VR: From individual to collective experience**

Several works take immersive media beyond the headset and into new contexts. At the ARTIS-Planetarium, DocLab presents a series of collective dome experiences by Adrian Lahoud, Metahaven, Agnieszka Polska, Molécule, and Francesca Panetta, among other artists.

At Eye Film Museum, the world premiere of *Ayahuasca – The Shamanic Exhibition* re-envisions a VR-work from acclaimed director Jan Kounen as a special exhibition developed by Diversion cinema and co-presented with Eye.

VR also finds a new screening context at DocLab’s VR Cinema, this year housed at Lil’ Amsterdam inside Amsterdam Central Station. Selections include the world premiere of *Lagos at Large* by Jumoke Sanwo, the Dutch premiere of *Last Whispers* by Lena Herzog, and the Dutch premiere of *The Waiting Room VR*, a poetic exploration of director Victoria Mapplebeck’s experience with breast cancer.

**Pop-up Exhibition inside Amsterdam Central Station**

Under the train tracks of Central Station, Lil’ Amsterdam and DocLab present a Pop-Up Exhibition that features, among other works, *Far Away From Far Away*—an interactive installation by Bruce Alcock, Jeremy Mendes and the National Film Board of Canada—and *Through the Wardrobe* by Rob Eagle, an augmented reality installation about gender roles.

**DocLab and MIT enter second year of R&D program**

Now in its second year, the IDFA DocLab R&D Program uses the festival as a living lab for research and development of new works and experiments commissioned by DocLab and various industry partners. Main partner MIT Open Documentary Lab will unveil the research results from the first year of the R&D Program, as well as a new research question for the coming year. This year, the starting point will be the tension between strategies based on ‘story-telling’ and those based on ‘story-finding.’

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**Editors’ notes:**

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For additional information on DocLab and requests for images, interviews and more, please contact Michel Langendijk.
Press tour of IDFA DocLab: Domesticating Reality
A press tour of IDFA DocLab, including the opportunity to view projects, will take place on Thursday November 21st at 12:00 at Tolhuistuin. Please register by November 20th by contacting Michel Langendijk at michel@idfa.nl.

IDFA DocLab is a festival program for new media within the International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam (IDFA). The mission of IDFA DocLab is to showcase interactive documentaries and other new digital artforms that successfully push the boundaries of documentary storytelling in the age of the interface. Projects are curated and presented online, as well as during live cinema events, exhibitions, workshops and industry panels.