



International
Documentary
Film Festival
Amsterdam

Amsterdam, Wednesday, September 28th, 2021

IDFA announces Focus Programs, DocLab theme, and 15th DocLab anniversary for 2021 edition

The International Documentary Film Festival Amsterdam (IDFA) is delighted to unveil the two focus programs of its upcoming edition: **The Future Tense** and **unConscious Bias**. The festival also announced plans for the fifteenth edition of IDFA DocLab, and the corresponding theme program **Liminal Reality**. Nineteen titles have now been added to the IDFA 2021 selection. The 34th edition of the festival runs from November 17 to 28 in Amsterdam.

[Focus Program: The Future Tense](#)

As humanity finds itself in a time of great change, is it possible to already see the future in what surrounds us now? Always lying beyond reach, the future occupies a central place in our imaginations, orienting our sense of the world and helping us make meaning from the here and now. Taking this precipice as a starting point, **The Future Tense** presents a mosaic of cinematic reflections and contemplations of the future, exploring what might lie beyond the vanishing point. Through **ten selected titles**, both old and new, the program looks to filmmaking as a precious yet powerful tool to comprehend the abstraction of what is yet to happen, and the potential of the documentary art form, composed of images of past and present, to peer over the horizon of time.

Program highlights include the international premiere of ***I'm So Sorry*** by **Zhao Liang**, a slow, meditative reflection on nuclear disaster and what scars we may leave for the next eon. **Yael Bartana's** ***Two Minutes to Midnight*** explores the performative side of nuclear threats, with real-life experts staged in a fictitious setting, while ***Homo Sapiens***, the acclaimed 2016 film by **Nikolaus Geyrhalter**, basks in the aura of abandoned ruins, imagining a time when humans no longer exist.

Other films look to imagined futures that are already past, as in **Kidlat Tahimik's** ***Perfumed Nightmare***, the 1970s postcolonial classic that playfully dreams of the idealized West—subverting the notion of “progress” as place. Still other films look smaller in scale, such as **Peter Brosens** and **Dorjkhandyn Turmunkh's** 1998 gem ***State of Dogs***, a mystical docu-fable of interspecies reincarnation, and anticipating the next life. More titles to be announced.

Focus Program: unConscious Bias

Consisting of **eleven new and previously released titles**, **unConscious Bias** explores today's discourse on the meaning of the colonial past, and the many ways that this past continues to leave its mark on the present. Despite the brutal role played by the Netherlands and other European countries in colonization, challenging the dominant Western narratives has only just begun. With documentary filmmakers leading the way, how do we look at our collective past? And what do we see?

At the center of the program is the 25th anniversary of **Johan van der Keuken's** iconic ***Amsterdam Global Village***, a journey through the city and its many intertwined cultures and inhabitants. Other films shift the gaze to other European cities, investigating how the colonial past is hidden in their very social fabric: **Hito Steyerl's** early essay film ***The Empty Center*** considers the new walls that went up after German reunification; Senegalese-French filmmaker **Alice Diop's** new film ***We*** travels the Paris RER B train route to encounter the seemingly incongruous city dwellers who still make up a collective whole.

Several new films look to the systemic nature of colonialism and its lasting grip on economic and social spheres, asking the question, who decides what counts as history? **Jean-Gabriel Périot's** ***Returning to Reims (Fragments)*** delves into the archives to tell a more inclusive story of the French working class in which marginalized communities also get a say. Other titles take a personal approach, looking to generational shifts in perspective within the filmmakers' own families: ***Now Is the Past*** by **Shin-ichi Ise** considers how the lineage of colonial propaganda lives on through memory and displacement, from Japan to Indonesia to the Netherlands; ***In the Billowing Night*** by **Erika Etangsalé** brings together myth and memory to tell, for the first time, a deeply personal story of slavery, uprooting, and intergenerational pain from Réunion. More titles to be announced.

IDFA DocLab: Fifteenth anniversary & Liminal Reality theme program

In celebration of **IDFA DocLab's fifteenth anniversary**, the festival presents the special theme program **Liminal Reality**: a celebration of ambiguity in life, tech, and art. Referring to an in-between state that is both familiar and unknown, Liminal Reality reflects on the collective ambiguity we now find ourselves in: somewhere between the old normal and a post-COVID world; on the threshold of digital, physical, and hybrid realities; all the while inhabiting fluid identities and (post)human bodies on a rapidly heating planet.

Poised at the cusp, the upcoming DocLab program also looks back on fifteen years of the interactive and immersive field, where it is now, and where it is going. In this critical moment when new media is no longer new, the Internet is both everywhere and nowhere, VR begins to find its ecosystem, and the boundaries between traditional and emerging media are increasingly in flux, artists are continuing to

transform and take on new forms in their work. Such platform pluralism, at the heart of DocLab's programming, gives cause to take stock of where the digital revolution has brought us, and to speculate together about what comes next.

The fifteenth edition will see IDFA DocLab return to physical locations in Amsterdam, including **Tolhuistuin**, **Eye**, **Vlaams Cultuurhuis de Brakke Grond**, and **ARTIS-Planetarium**, in addition to events and performances online and inside virtual worlds. Unique to this year, the long-standing **Interactive Conference** will be spread over five days, filled with talks and live performances and presented in collaboration with leading immersive artists and thinkers **Rahima Gambo**, **Lauren Lee McCarthy**, **Polymorf**, **Anagram**, and many other special guests. More details of the DocLab program and selection will follow this autumn.

About IDFA 2021

The 34th edition of IDFA will be an in-person event, celebrating the art of documentary film from November 17 to 28 in cinemas across Amsterdam. In accordance with the Netherlands' National Institute for Public Health and Environment (the RIVM), the festival will feature comprehensive health and safety measures, prioritizing the wellbeing of all in attendance and [updating attendees as soon as the situation changes](#).

Tickets go on sale November 1 for Friends of IDFA and accredited guests, and general ticket sales begin November 3. [Accreditation](#) for industry professionals is now open. Program announcements will follow throughout the month of October.

IDFA's audience program is made possible by [Vriendenloterij](#), [VPRO](#), [Fonds 21](#), [de Volkskrant](#), [Gieskes-Strijbis Fonds](#), [WeTransfer](#), [Ammodo](#), [NPO 2DOC](#), [Oxfam Novib](#) and [IDFA Vrienden/DikkeVrienden](#).

IDFA DocLab is supported by the [Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate Policy of the Netherlands](#), [CLICKNL](#), [Gieskes-Strijbis Fonds](#), [Netherlands Film Fund](#), [Flanders Audiovisual Fund](#) and [Special Friends+](#).

Editors' notes

For film stills, please [click here](#).

For DocLab official campaign images, please [click here](#).

For more information, please [click here](#) or contact our press office.

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For more information about **what's on offer when visiting IDFA**, please visit our website or just **[click here](#)**. You can also find all **key dates [here](#)**.

IDFA presents new festival selections from September 21 onwards. **The final competition titles will be announced on Monday, November 1, during the IDFA 2021 press conference—available to stream online at idfa.nl.**