

Red Sea International Film Festival Announces Virtual Reality Competition

The Festival will present a selection of the latest leading immersive experiences in competition,

Red Sea: VR will showcase four Saudi projects in collaboration with Ithra's Creative Solutions Program

Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, November 18th 2022

The Red Sea International Film Festival announced today the program for their Virtual Reality Competition, celebrating innovative immersive art and entertainment. The program will feature ten virtual reality productions representing the best of international VR creativity from 2022, which will be in competition with each other for the Gold and Silver Yusr Awards. The Gold Yusr Award is worth \$10,000.

Red Sea: Virtual Reality will also collaborate with Ithra Creative Solutions Program, the first development program for immersive works in Saudi Arabia, to showcase four projects from this year's cohort. These will include The Anticipation of Rain, Alqatt al-Asiri, Wamdah – a Glimpse to the Future, and Story of Science – Reflection on the Cosmos.

Kaleem Aftab, Director of International Programming, said, "The Red Sea International Film Festival is extremely proud to present this year's Virtual Reality Program. The selection of pieces represents the very best immersive experiences from all over the world, coupling art with cutting-edge technology and building the future of storytelling".

Liz Rosenthal, curator of Red Sea: Virtual Reality program, added, "We have some truly phenomenal pieces in this year's selection, including one of the first multi-player mixed reality experiences. These artists are testing the boundaries of creative possibility in a thought-provoking and inclusive way".

The ten works in competition include **(Hi)story of a Painting: The Light in the Shadow**, directed by Gaëlle Mourre and Quentin Darras, winner of the Special Jury Prize at SXSW 2022. The animated, immersive and interactive experience aims to engage young audiences in the story of Artemisia Gentileschi, a female Baroque artist who found success against all odds, becoming one of Europe's most celebrated and in-demand painters of her time.

Directed by German Heller and winner of the Special Jury Prize, Venice Immersive, Venice International Film Festival, **Eggscape** is a mixed reality multi-player game in which participants use controllers to protect their terrified little egg struggling to survive in various challenging environments. Through the VR headset, you'll be able to see through into the real world and interact with your surroundings and with other players in a never-before-seen way.

Elele means 'hands meet hands' in Turkish and is produced by a Turkish-Dutch team and directed by Sjoerd van Acker. Using controllers, a VR headset and an original electronic soundtrack, it invites participants to dance using only their hands – but the experience makes the dancer question, whose hands are they really?

Directed by Celine Daemen, **Eurydice, a Descent into Infinity**, is a Virtual Reality opera inspired by the ancient myth of Orpheus and Eurydice, the audience walks a solitary journey to an in-between space, between matter and

eternity, in which time fades and the laws of space become obsolete. Eurydice's hypnotic singing draws you deeper and deeper into a labyrinth of corridors, ruins and balustrades, beyond which dizzying depths and vistas open up.

Interactive animation **From the Main Square** by Pedro Harres, which won the Grand Jury Prize for Venice Immersive at the Venice International Film Festival, takes the viewer on a journey through time and the rise and fall of civilizations – all from the perspective of a single main town square.

Emmy nominated **Kingdom of Plants With David Attenborough**, is an immersive documentary that uses cutting-edge photographic technology to bring the viewer to the very heart of the battles and dramas raging in the otherwise unassuming undergrowth. This three-part series allows viewers to sit inside some of the rarest blooms on our planet, be consumed by fungi or entrapped by the infamous Venus Flytrap. Combining spectacular time-lapse footage with macro live-action and computer graphics, narrated by the world's most famous naturalist

Based on true events, **On the Morning You Wake to the End of the World** is an animated documentary that tells the story of a regular Saturday morning in 2018 when the entire population of Hawaii received an SMS to inform them of an impending ballistic missile attack and were instructed to seek shelter immediately. It explores the threat of war and the moving responses of those who believe they have only minutes to live. Directed by UK, British team, Mike Brett, Steve Jamison, Pierre Zandrowicz and Arnaud Colinart, the project was the winner of the Immersive Jury Award at this year's SXSW Film Festival

In a female-centric re-telling of a Brothers Grimm folk tale, directed by Julie Cavaliere, **Nyssa** tells the story of a fearless but naïve young witch who goes in search of her toy broom. Along the way, she meets a familiar spirit called Blue, but must save her village from Temencaag, the creature of darkness.

Directed by Ellen Utrecht, Shores of Loci is a fantastical world-building puzzle game that maximises the full potential of Virtual Reality to immerse the participant into epic environments of mythical creatures to help them rebuild their magical worlds. A rich visual and auditory experience transporting the player into captivating and surreal worlds where a peaceful journey awaits to create and complete a universe where puzzled pieces are assembled and transformed.

The Man Who Couldn't Leave directed by Singing Chen won Best Immersive Experience, the Top Prize for Venice Immersive at the Venice International Film Festival. This stunningly directed live action experience integrates several stories and testimonies of political victims from the White Terror, a time of imprisonment and persecution during the 1950s Taiwan, within the setting of the former Green Island Prison.

The Virtual Reality program will be on display at the Ritz Carlton Hotel between 14:00 – 22:00 from 2- 8 December 2022. Audiences will be required to book tickets in advance for access: for non-accredited guests, tickets will be sold at 20 SAR for a single title and 100 SAR for a full pass to view all ten projects.

For more information visit <https://redseafilmfest.com/>

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About the Red Sea International Film Festival

The second edition of the Red Sea International Film Festival will bring the best in Arab and World Cinema to Jeddah, nestled on the eastern shore of the Red Sea. The Festival will showcase a compelling slate of new and diverse films, alongside a retrospective program celebrating the masters of cinema as well as introducing audiences to exciting new voices from the region and beyond. The Festival will provide a platform for Arab filmmakers and industry professionals from around the world to connect, host feature and short film competitions, and present a series of events, masterclasses, and workshops to support emerging talent.

Running alongside the Festival is the Red Sea Souk, the Festival's industry market, designed for global exchange and partnerships between the international and Saudi film industries. The four-day market will offer a packed program of curated events to foster co-production, international distribution, and new business opportunities. The Souk offers unbeatable access to the new vibrant Saudi scene, as well as the best of the Arab market through pitching sessions, one-on-one meetings, screenings, industry talks, and networking events.

The Red Sea International Film Festival will take place from December 1 -10, 2022.

For further press information:

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