

SOUTH BY SOUTHWEST ANNOUNCES SXSW ONLINE XR

Description

Posted by Larry Gleeson

Fantastical Virtual Versions of Congress Avenue and Red River Cultural District to Host Wide Array of SXSW 2021 Online Programming

Austin, Texas â?? South by SouthwestÂ® (SXSWÂ®) Conference and Festivals (March 16-20, 2021) unveiled the SXSW Online XR world and programming as part of the 2021 event. The condensed, fantastical artist representations of Congress Avenue and the Red River Cultural District, using the SXSW 2021 look and feel, will showcase live panels, Meet Ups, special events, a selection of 360Â° videos from the Virtual Cinema program, as well as 2D video feeds of SXSW programming.

Venues recreated in the space include The Paramount Theatre, the Contemporary Austin, Mohawk, Empire Control Room & Garage, and Cedar Street Courtyard. SXSW worked with world-renowned artists and the social XR events studio VRrOOm to design and produce the festivalâ??s virtual edition, which will be hosted on VRChat.

The complete Virtual Cinema Program, including previously-announced Virtual Cinema Competition and Virtual Cinema Spotlight projects, will also be accessible and downloadable via the VRrOOm store online. The VRChat worlds can be experienced on PC, PCVR and Oculus Quest headsets.

â??SXSW really wanted to create a space in the virtual world that brought Austin to life in a spectacular way,â?• said Blake Kammerdiener, XR and Film Programmer. â??So we came together with Louis Cacciuttolo and his company VRrOOm, whose recent work includes *Welcome to The Other Side* with Jean-Michel Jarre, and artist Vincent Masson to create this fantastical virtual space that honors Austin, and a few of the venues that we are gutted to not be using this year.â?•

â??Attendees can come together, explore these worlds, and watch content created specifically for the VR world and from the greater SXSW Online video channels,â?• Kammerdiener continued. â??Stop by the Paramount Theatre to snap a picture on the red carpet with your friends or head on over to the Red River Cultural District for a party. Be sure to find virtual Theon Cross rocking his tuba or stop by the Contemporaryâ??s rooftop bar to catch a live session.â?•

SXSW Online XR will also present a wide array of work outside of the VRChat world, including special live theatre performances of *Finding Pandora X* from Double Eye Studios and *Dream* from the Royal Shakespeare Company and Marshmallow Laser Feast.

SXSW Online XR Programming includes:

Live Sessions

Making of Reeducated: A VR New Yorker Documentary: *Reeducated* is a first-of-its-kind 3D 360 VR documentary about detention in Xinjiang, China, guided by the overlapping recollections of three men who were imprisoned together at the same facility. Part of a major multimedia project from The New Yorker, the 20-minute immersive film is based on more than a dozen hours of interviews and uses hand-drawn watercolor cel animation and ambisonic sound to visualize an otherwise inaccessible, authoritarian space. Filmmakers **Sam Wolson** and **Ben Mauk** discuss the making of this project and the difficulties of reporting on Xinjiang that led them to working with firsthand witness accounts, animation, and VR.

Shared Space: A Conversation About XR Public Art: Join New Frontiers Curator **Shari Frilot** and XR artist **Nancy Baker Cahill** to discuss XR art in shared public space. What constitutes public art or even public space in the digital era? How can these sites be activated for thoughtful discourse, inclusion and access?

Performing for New XR Audiences: A discussion about the future of theatre and performing for new audiences, from the team of *Finding Pandora X*, SXSW Spotlight program feature and winner of the Lion for â??Best VR Immersive User Experienceâ?• at the 2020 Venice International Film Festival. With Broadway doors closed through the summer of 2021, this panel offers forward-thinking techniques to creating live theatre in socially connected virtual worlds. Our cast and creative team will share insights into the embodiment of avatars and the differences between performing for a physical audience versus a virtual audience.

Virtual Cinema Special Events

Backstage Tours of Mount Olympus
Come take a tour of Mount Olympus, the stage for the Finding Pandora X! The team will take you through this beautiful world created in VRChat.

Dream (United Kingdom)
Director: Robin McNicholas
Special access to a live, online performance set in a virtual midsummer forest. Theatre, music and groundbreaking technology combine in an extraordinary exploration into the future of live performance. Follow a sprite on a moonlit journey through the night until dawn. The Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC), in collaboration with Manchester International Festival (MIF), Marshmallow Laser Feast (MLF) and Philharmonia Orchestra will stage a live performance using motion capture as the culmination of a major piece of cutting-edge research and development (R&D).

Theon Cross â?? â??We Go Againâ?? (United Kingdom)
Director: Crispin Parry
Virtual avatar of Theon Cross performing We Go Again. This project was devised by British

Underground and produced by FKB to combine our two areas of interest at SXSW â?? new music and immersive technology. The motion capture was filmed at the world famous Abbey Road Studios during our Jazz re:freshed SXSW sessions. (World Premiere)

Welcome To The Other Side (SXSW Special) (France)
Directors: Jean-Michel Jarre, Denis Semionov
Electronic music pioneer Jean-Michel Jarre teams with French VR startup VRrOOm for a trailblazing concert-spectacular set in the virtual environment of the planetary landmark Notre-Dame de Paris. Also, for the very first time, experience excerpts from the show at your fingertips in the new standalone app for Oculus Quest! (World Premiere)

Welcome To The Other Side â?? After Party
Welcome to the after-party of electronic music legend Jean-Michel Jarreâ??s NYE concert spectacular in a virtual Notre-Dame! Enjoy the concert replay on a gigantic screen, enter each track in 360 and sip a cocktail in the Zeppelin hovering above Paris!

Welcome To The Other Side â?? Cryptoart
Following the electronic music legend Jean-Michel Jarreâ??s NYE concert spectacular in a virtual Notre-Dame, explore the crypto art exhibition based on the concert highlights, featuring digital pictures and videos authored by the French artist. (World Premiere)

Meet Ups and Parties

French Immersion, A Deep Dive Into the French Ecosystem
You are invited to meet in VR with â??la crÃ¨me de la crÃ¨meâ?• of the French directors, artists and producers. It will also be an opportunity to chat with some of the XR experts interviewed for â??FR//XR: A Handbook for Immersive Producersâ?• and to learn more about the program French Immersion, initiated by the Cultural Services of the French Embassy in the US.

IDFA DocLabâ??s do {not} play Meet Up
In this special edition of IDFA DocLabâ??s do {not} play, we invite you to meet other SXSW festival-goers, drink across time zones or join the 24/7 dancefloor of Distance Disco. Please make sure to use Google Chrome and a desktop computer/laptop.

VR/AR/XR Developer Meet Up
Come join the SXSW annual developer meet up for those working or interested in working in immersive development!

XR Industry Meet Up
Meet with other XR industry professionals.

SXSW Online XR Opening Party
Special performance by physicist and artist Byrke Lou.

Intermission party
With an exclusive AV set featuring never before heard tracks from Miro Shotâ??s upcoming album and

collaborations from within the Miro Shot Collective.

SXSW Closing Night Party
Join other XR aficionados and SXSW Online passholders of all stripes for a closing night celebration.

Poster Gallery

Check out the SXSW Film Festival Poster Gallery, on view in SXSW Online XR. The winning Poster design will be announced on Friday, March 19.

Art Program

Legacy
Artist: Nancy Baker Cahill
In Legacy, a VR and AR experience in 360Â°, Nancy Baker Cahill addresses the current discrete but connected threats of climate change and gentrification. The artwork illustrates these entropic forces by animating an abstracted tree as it twists, breaks apart, and coalesces. (World Premiere)

Previously announced Virtual Cinema programming that will be available in SXSW Online XR:

Virtual Cinema Competition
World and International Premieres of exciting immersive work.

Biolum (France, United Kingdom)
Director: Abel Kohen, Screenwriter: Jon Rowe, Producers: Igal Kohen, Katharina Weser, Paul Kirsten
Biolum is an interactive, narrative VR sci-fi experience which immerses you in the mysterious beauty of deep sea life on a dive that takes a shocking turn for the worse. (World Premiere)

(Hi)story of a Painting (United Kingdom)
Directors: GaÃ«lle Mourre, Quentin Darras, Screenwriter: GaÃ«lle Mourre, Producers: Charlotte Mikkelborg, GaÃ«lle Mourre
(Hi)story of a Painting journeys into the story behind La Grande Jatte, an iconic painting by Georges Seurat that we all know but donâ??t actually truly knowâ?¦ until now. Follow us as we learn how Georges went from underdog to world-renowned artist. (World Premiere)

Of Hybrids and Strings (Australia, France, Germany)
Director: Lauren Moffatt, Producer: Fabbula
Of Hybrids and Strings is a fabulatory immersion into possible human and non-human connectedness. In a forest, at night, one becomes strangely entangled to plants and creatures. Until the forest starts to crystalliseâ?¦ (World Premiere)

The Passengers: Her & Him (Canada, France)
Director: Ziad Touma, Screenwriter: Nicolas Peufaillit, Producers: Ziad Touma, Oriane Hurard
Enter the thoughts of one of the Passengers, and help them face a pivotal moment in their lives. Welcome aboard an interactive VR experience, in which your gaze and voice influence the story. (International Premiere)

Poison (Republic of Korea)
Directors: Meesol Yi, Cooper Sanghyun Yoo, Screenwriter: Hyunsoo So, Producer: Wooyeol Jeon

Through *Poison*, an immersive VR experience, users are expected to feel the intelligence of the virus and its danger intuitively. Our primary goal is to let the people be alert, be aware of our enemies, and think about what we can do for our lives. (World Premiere)

A Promise Kept
Directors: Ken Winikur, Ariel Efron, Screenwriters: Susan Abrams, Ariel Efron, Kelley Szany, Ken Winikur, Producers: Susan Abrams, Kelley Szany
This gripping virtual reality experience takes you on a journey back to the notorious Auschwitz killing center with Holocaust Survivor, Fritzie Fritzshall as she fulfills her promise to the 599 women who helped save her life. (World Premiere)

Reeducated
Director: Sam Wolson, Producers: Ben Mauk, Sam Wolson, Nicholas Rubin, Matt Huynh
Reeducated takes viewers inside a â??reeducationâ?• camp in Xinjiang, China, guided by the recollections of three men who were caught in what is likely the largest mass-internment drive of ethnic and religious minorities since the Second World War. (World Premiere)

Samsara (Taiwan)
Director/Screenwriter: Huang Hsin-Chien, Producer: Tsau Saiau-Yue
Samsara Episode 1 VR explores the concept of the Embodied Cognition. In this experience, the audiences will be transformed into different beingsâ?? bodies and experience the world from entirely new perspectives. (World Premiere)

Space Explorers: The ISS Experience Episode 2: Advance (Canada, United States)
Director: FÃ©lix Lajeunesse, Screenwriters: FÃ©lix Lajeunesse, Paul RaphaÃ«l, Producers: Felix & Paul Studios in association with TIME Studios
The largest production ever filmed in space, *Space Explorers: The ISS Experience* is an epic four-part immersive series that invites you to join eight astronauts on life-changing missions aboard the International Space Station. (World Premiere)

Virtual Cinema Spotlight
Shining a spotlight on acclaimed immersive works.

4 Feet High VR (Argentina, France)
Directors: Maria Belen Poncio, Rosario Perazolo Masjoan, Damian Turkieh, Screenwriters: Greta Molas, Javier Correa Caceres, Elisa Gagliano, Rosario Perazolo Masjoan, Maria Belen Poncio, Delphine Agut, Ivana Galdeano, Gabriela Vidal, Producers: Ezequiel Lenardon, Marie Blondiaux
Imagine your last year of High School in a wheelchair. *Cast List: Marisol Agostina Irigoyen, Florencia Licera, Marcio Ramses, Natalia Di Cienzo, Francisca Spinotti* (Texas Premiere)

Finding Pandora X
Director: Kiira Benzing, Screenwriter: Alyssa Landry, Producers: Kiira Benzing, Lara Bucarey, Chris Dawes, Alyssa Landry
With the passing of ages, the Gods of Mount Olympus have faded away until only two remain: Zeus and Hera. Now they are in danger of disappearing if they canâ??t recover the box of hope that Pandora removed. (North American Premiere)

Meet Mortaza (France)
Director: JosÃ©phine Derobe, Screenwriters: JosÃ©phine Derobe, Mortaza Jami, Producers: Oriane Hurard, Quentin Noirfalisse
An immersive experience telling the journey of an afghan refugee. (U.S. Premiere)

Namoo
Director/Screenwriter: Erick Oh, Producers: Larry Cutler, Eric Darnell, Maureen Fan, Kane Lee
A narrative poem brought to life as an animated VR film, and an ode to a grandfatherâ??s passing, this story follows the journey of a budding artist â?? and his tree of life â?? from beginning to end. (Texas Premiere)

Odyssey 1.4.9 (France)
Director: FranÃ§ois Vautier, Producer: Jeremy Sahel
A breathtaking VR journey into the visual heart of *A Space Odyssey*. A personal tribute unveiling the secrets of Stanley Kubrickâ??s masterpiece. (U.S. Premiere)

Once Upon a Sea (Canada)
Director: Adi Lavy, Screenwriter: Heidi Miller, Producers: Ina Fichman, Nimrod Shanit
Once Upon a Sea is a stunning, immersive trip to the Dead Sea region, the lowest place on earth â?? and it is our call to action. If nothing is done, the Dead Sea as we know it will be gone for good. (North American Premiere)

Paper Birds (Argentina)
Directors: German Heller, Federico Carlini, Screenwriter: German Heller, Producers: German Heller, Federico Carlini
Paper Birds is the story of a short sighted child with an exceptional talent for music. He must find his way through the world of darkness to bring back his sister, taken away by the shadows.

Potato Dreams
Director/Screenwriter: Wes Hurley, Producers: Mischa Jakupcak, Wes Hurley, Mara Auster, Jonathan Caso
Russian mother and son narrate this innovative 360 documentary which traces their nightmarish past in the USSR. (Texas Premiere)

Under the Skin (Brazil, China, Germany, Luxembourg, United States)
Director: JoÃ£o Inada, Screenwriters: Thamyra ThÃ¢mara, Andressa NÃºbia, Jon Thomaz, Rafael Cruz, Raull Santiago, JoÃ£o Inada, Producer: Diogo Dahl
Under the Skin is an interactive VR documentary that brings users to Complexo do AlemÃ£o â?? Rio de Janeiroâ??s most notorious favela complexâ??during a surprise police operation, meeting residents who face police abuse and structural racism. (North American Premiere)

WebbVR: The James Webb Space Telescope Virtual Experience
Director: Chad Smith
Join the James Webb Space Telescope in orbit beyond the Moon and explore the universe from its perspective. Planetary systems are born, galaxies form, and stars emerge from within colorful nebulasâ??all before your eyes.

XR Online images here
Film Stills can be found at: http://fif.sxsw.com/media
Publicists for projects in program: Publicists List

In addition to full access to SXSW Online XR, passholders also have access to the full range of content available during SXSW Online including Film Festival screenings, Conference Keynotes, Featured Speakers, Mentor Sessions, Networking Meet Ups, Music Showcases, Comedy Festival Showcases, Creative Industries Exhibition and Professional Development. For more information on everything SXSW Online has to offer, please visit sxsw.com.

About SXSW Film Festival
Now in its 28th year, SXSW Film Festival brings together creatives of all stripes over nine days to experience a diverse lineup and access to thousands of SXSW Conference sessions with visionaries from all corners of the entertainment, media, and technology industries.

About SXSW
SXSW dedicates itself to helping creative people achieve their goals. Founded in 1987 in Austin, Texas, SXSW is best known for its conference and festivals that celebrate the convergence of the interactive, film, and music industries. In 2021, the event moves to a digital format. SXSW Online offers conference sessions, music showcases, film screenings, exhibitions, and a variety of networking and professional development opportunities. An essential destination for global professionals, SXSW Online 2021 will take place March 16 â?? March 20. For more information, please visit sxsw.com. To register for the event, please visit sxsw.com/attend.

SXSW Online 2021 Platinum Partners are White Claw, High Grade Hemp Seed, Showtime and *The Austin Chronicle.*

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