



MEDIA RELEASE

EMBARGOED UNTIL 00.01am THURSDAY 5 MAY 2016

BEYOND CINEMA AT SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL

The 63rd Sydney Film Festival announces a new program of three FREE immersive experiences exploring cutting edge screen culture and new technologies, entitled **Beyond Cinema**, to debut at the Festival (8-19 June) across three Festival locations: the Festival Hub at Sydney's Lower Town Hall, the University of New South Wales and Carriageworks.

"The Festival's new immersive program expands the Sydney Film Festival experience by presenting three new ways of creating and experiencing film, art and storytelling," said **Sydney Film Festival Director Nashen Moodley**. "From virtual reality, to 360-degree 3D cinema, to a four-sided video art installation, the Festival encourages audiences to explore new worlds, new perspectives and new ways to enjoy film," he said.

At the heart of the Festival in Sydney's Lower Town Hall, **Down the Rabbit Hole – Virtual Reality at the Hub** (9 – 19 June) will screen nine virtual reality films, from four Australian and five international filmmakers. Designed to enchant, inspire, thrill and ultimately change viewpoints, audiences will put virtual reality headsets to the test including Samsung Gear VR and Facebook's new Oculus Rift.

VR experiences include: a stroll along the streets of Havana (***A History of Cuban Dance***), going on stage with the Sydney Dance Company dancers (***Stuck in the Middle with You***), going inside the world of a cattle farmer and one of Australia's top saddle bronco riders (***Warwick Gold - Australian Rodeo***), falling down the rabbit hole and into a Lewis Carroll inspired music video (***Fabulous Wonder.Land***), finding out what it's like to lose your sight (***Notes On Blindness: Into Darkness***), haunting an asylum (***Madeleine***), walking in the footsteps of a filmmaker's army officer father in Chile's Caravan of Death (***Assent***), experiencing the first ever fully hand-drawn VR experience (***Drawing Room***), and stepping into an animated encounter with a lonely rose (***The Rose and I***).

Creatives, industry and those interested in immersive storytelling will also be rewarded with a free panel discussion: **Diving down the VR Rabbit Hole** (Saturday 11 June, 12:00pm) featuring writer Mike Jones and a selection of the VR filmmakers who have works screening at The Hub.

The Festival's second Beyond Cinema experience is co-presented with the University of New South Wales at the University's 360-degree 3D world leading **iCinema** (8 – 18 June). Two interactive experimental films will have their world premiere at the Festival: ***Deluge***, dealing with devastating cyclone Yasi (QLD 2011), and ***Nebula***, a dream work exploring relationships between the human and natural worlds; created by **Dennis Del Favero**, celebrated Australian playwright **Stephen Sewell** and others.

The final Beyond Cinema Festival experience is presented in association with **Carriageworks** (9 June – 17 July) and is a four-sided video installation entitled: **HOSSEIN VALAMANESH: CHAR SOO** that places viewers at the intersection of an Iranian bazaar to contemplate movement, human interaction and the passing of time.

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SYDNEY CONTEMPORARY: AUSTRALIA IN FOCUS also returns to the Festival for the second year, presenting a free video art exhibition exploring the different ways in which moving image techniques, such as super-slow motion, can be adopted and adapted by visual artists in manners their movie-making cousins cannot. 13 Australian artists feature in a program that encourages new insights and ways of seeing.

The full Sydney Film Festival program will be announced on Wednesday 11 May at 11am. The Festival Hub program of talks, performances, parties and events will be revealed when the program is announced.

MEDIA ENQUIRIES

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***Sydney Film Festival Press Pack and Images Available [HERE](#)

EDITORS NOTES

ABOUT SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL

From **Wednesday 8 June to Sunday 19 June 2016**, the 63rd Sydney Film Festival offers Sydneysiders another exciting season of cinema amidst a whirlwind of premieres, red-carpet openings, in-depth discussions, international guests and more. Each year the Festival's programming team curates 12 days of cinema sourced from world-famous film festivals, including Cannes, Sundance, Toronto and the Berlinale; as well as Australia's finest productions.

Sydney Film Festival also presents an Official Competition of 12 films that vie for the Sydney Film Prize, a highly respected honour that awards a \$60,000 cash prize based on the decision of a jury of international and Australian filmmakers and industry professionals. Previous Sydney Film Prize winners are: *Arabian Nights* (2015); *Two Days, One Night* (2014); *Only God Forgives* (2013); *Alps* (2012); *A Separation* (2011); *Heartbeats* (2010); and *Bronson* (2009).

The Festival takes place across greater Sydney: at the State Theatre, Event Cinemas George Street, Dendy Opera Quays, Dendy Newtown, Skyline Drive-In Blacktown, Art Gallery of NSW, Hayden Orpheum Picture Palace Cremorne, Casula Powerhouse, the Festival Hub at Sydney Town Hall and SFF Outdoor Screen.

The Festival is a major event on the New South Wales cultural calendar and is one of the world's longest-running film festivals. For more information visit: www.sff.org.au.

The 63rd Sydney Film Festival is supported by the NSW Government through Screen NSW and Destination NSW, the Federal Government through Screen Australia and the City of Sydney. The Festival's Strategic Partner is the NSW Government through Destination NSW.

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DOWN THE RABBIT HOLE – VIRTUAL REALITY AT THE HUB

Programmed by Mathieu Ravier and presented in association with Jumpgate VR.

Dive into the brave new world of immersive cinema. Don a virtual reality headset and transport yourself to the streets of Cuba, to an outback rodeo or on stage with the some of the best dancers in the world.

A HISTORY OF CUBAN DANCE

UK, US, Cuba | Lead artist: Lucy Walker

Oscar-nominated documentarian Lucy Walker (*Waste Land*, SFF 2010) invites you to the streets of Havana to discover the exuberant and spontaneous dances that embody Cuba's rich cultural heritage.

ASSENT

Australia | Lead artists: Oscar Raby and Katy Morrison

Media artist Oscar Raby puts the viewer in the footsteps of his army officer father, in the aftermath of the 1973 coup in Chile.

DRAWING ROOM

The Netherlands | Lead artists: Jan Rothuizen and Sara Kolster

Step into a small room on the roof of a department store in the centre of Amsterdam, in the first ever fully hand-drawn VR experience.

FABULOUS WONDER.LAND

UK | Lead artists: Toby Coffey, Lysander Ashton and Ollie Lindsey

Fall down the rabbit hole and into this VR music video inspired by *wonder.land*, Damon Albarn's National Theatre musical and Lewis Carroll.

MADELEINE

Australia | Lead artist: Piers Mussared

A ghostly character takes you through the Asylum that she haunts and on a journey through her troubling history in this vivid VR experience. Not for the faint-hearted.

NOTES ON BLINDNESS: INTO DARKNESS

UK, France | Lead artists: Arnaud Colinart, Amaury La Burthe, Peter Middleton and James Spinney
Inspired by the documentary *Notes On Blindness*, this is an exploration of one man's cognitive and emotional experience of blindness.

STUCK IN THE MIDDLE WITH YOU

Australia | Lead artists: Matthew Bate, Gideon Obarzanek

Find yourself on stage with the Sydney Dance Company dancers, interrupting a frenetic performance and challenge your concept of what it means to be a performer.

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THE ROSE AND I

US | Lead artists: Eugene Chung, Jimmy Maidens and Alex Woo

Inspired by Saint-Exupery's classic *The Little Prince*, *The Rose And I* is an animated encounter with a lonely rose living in the unlikeliest of places.

WARWICK GOLD - AUSTRALIAN RODEO

Australia | Lead artists: ABC R+D, ABC Regional and Pixelcase

Go inside the world of cattle farmer Michael Maher and one of Australia's top saddle bronco riders, as he prepares to contest the National Rodeo Championships in Warwick, Queensland.

PANEL DISCUSSION: DIVING DOWN THE VR RABBIT HOLE

SFF HUB (Lower Town Hall) – Saturday 11 June at 12:00pm – FREE

2016 is the year Virtual Reality goes mainstream – and comes of age as a creative medium. As everyone jumps on the bandwagon and technology catches up with content (or is it the other way around?), it's a good time to ask: 'what makes good VR?' Meet the virtual reality experts and sample their work at this free panel for creatives, industry professionals and anyone curious about immersive storytelling.

Moderated by writer Mike Jones

Speakers include Matthew Bate (Closer Productions, *Stuck In The Middle With You*), Amy Nelson (ABC R&D, *Warwick Gold – Australian Rodeo*), Oscar Raby (VRTOV, *Assent*), and Piers Mussared (Jumpgate VR, *Madeleine*).

iCINEMA

LENZ

Interactive artificially intelligent experimental film, 2016

Director: Dennis Del Favero

Adapted from *Lenz* by Georg Buchner

Lenz is an experimental cinematic adaptation of the 1835 novella of the same name by George Buchner. While traditional interpretations of the novella see it as depicting the last days of the writer Jakob Lenz, as he progressively succumbs to madness while trekking across the German Alps, *Lenz* resets the novella as a dream work that explores the conflicted yet inextricable relationship between the human and natural worlds, using iCinema's world leading 360-degree 3D cinematic theatre.

Buchner, best known for his revolutionary drama *Woyzeck*, was also a biologist and one of the first scientists to argue that all things are interconnected, constituted as they are by the same primary matter, namely particles.

Lenz interactively accompanies the protagonist as he traverses a spectrum of interconnected dream worlds generated through an Artificially Intelligent particle visualisation system, ranging from worlds composed by the microscopic particles of his body, through to worlds created by the macroscopic

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particles of the atmosphere as he floats 30,000 kilometres above the earth. Each world a door that opens unexpectedly onto the next.

DELUGE

Interactive experimental film, 2016

Director: Dennis Del Favero

Script: Stephen Sewell

Deluge is an interactive experimental film based on the events surrounding the devastating Yasi cyclone that hit Queensland in 2011. Based on a script by the award winning screenwriter Stephen Sewell, it follows a young woman as she explores a series of post-cyclonic scenes, projected within a 360-degree 3D cinematic theatre.

In one scene she desperately looks for something she has lost in a landscape where everything has been washed away. In another she tries to stand absolutely still in the middle of cyclonic winds as they tear her clothing apart. As she tests the endurance of her mind and body, she questions what she can really believe when everything she believed in no longer exists.

Each of these scenes act as a 'thought experiment' in which she tries to imagine the impossible — what it is like living through a devastating cyclone. By forcing herself to imagine the impossible, she invites us to imagine a world made strange by climate change.

DENNIS DEL FAVERO BIO

Dennis Del Favero is a research artist and research professor whose work has been widely exhibited in major group exhibitions including ISEA, Film Cologne, International Film Festival Amsterdam, Biennale of Architecture Rotterdam, Biennial of Seville, Sydney Film Festival and Battle of the Nations War Memorial Leipzig (joint project with Jenny Holzer) and in solo exhibitions in museums and galleries such as Sprengel Museum Hannover, ViaFarini Milan, Neue Galerie Graz and ZKM Karlsruhe. His work is focused on exploring artificial intelligence based visualisation and spatial aesthetics.

He is Executive Director of the Australian Research Council | Humanities and Creative Arts, a Scientia Professor and Director of the iCinema Research Centre at UNSW, Visiting Professorial Fellow at ZKM, Germany, and Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna, Visiting Professor at University IUAV of Venice, Italy and City University Hong Kong. He is represented by William Wright Artists Projects, Sydney.

HOSSEIN VALAMANESH: CHAR SOO

HOSSEIN VALAMANESH (in collaboration with Nassiem Valamanesh): CHAR SOO, 2015 is presented from 9 June – 17 July 2016 at Carriageworks. This video installation places viewers in a four-sided Iranian bazaar to contemplate movement, human interaction and the passing of time. *Char Soo* is a metaphor for Iran, a country which has been subject to invasion, religious and cultural interaction for centuries.

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Hossein Valamanesh was born in Iran in 1949 before immigrating to Australia in 1973. His work combines cultural elements from both countries and, while deceptively simple, is imbued with cultural meanings and personal associations, playing on imagination, memory and emotion. With minimum manipulation of raw resources, he is able to create elegant works with maximum emotional impact while also asking philosophical questions about life and existence.

'Char Soo' means 'four directions' or 'four sides'. In terms of a bazaar, the char soo is its main intersection. Made in 2015 in collaboration with his son Nassiem, Hossein Valamanesh's video installation films all four directions of the intersection, and then places the audience at its centre. Watching four stationary camera shots, the viewer is immersed in the grand bazaar's scenes and sounds. In the midst of colourful goods from myriad shops and the char soo's traditional architecture of pointed arches, brick ceiling and a tiled pool, the viewer is able to follow the movement of people from screen to screen. The camera is fixed so as not to dictate what the viewer sees, but to simply observe as the artist did.

HOSSEIN VALAMANESH (in collaboration with Nassiem Valamanesh): **CHAR SOO, 2015** will be presented at Carriageworks in association with Sydney Film festival from 9 June until 17 July 2016. The exhibition is free to public and will be open from 10am until 6pm every day.

SYDNEY CONTEMPORARY: AUSTRALIA IN FOCUS

This year we investigate some of the ways in which film and video art are similar and yet very different. Similar in that both are mediums for an artist or group of artists to express themselves; dissimilar in the way the audience experiences the work. Super-slow motion can be employed in a movie to great effect, but usually not for a lengthy period, as this would disrupt the storytelling and the suspension of disbelief. However one of the works in this year's hub explores the experience of super-slow mo and how it affects our sensory perception and experience of time over a period of five hours. Indeed, it can make us question our modern day experience of time outside of the context of the work – who has time to watch a 5 hour video!

"Once again I invite you to enjoy the ways in which artists use the moving image to create new insights and ways of seeing." Barry Keldoulis, CEO and Group Fairs Director, Art Fairs Australia Pty Ltd

Participating artists: Liam Benson, Tim Bruniges, Shoufay Derz, Caroline Garcia, Jess MacNeil, Emily Parsons-Lord, Simon Pericich, Hannah Raisin, Elvis Richardson, Sylvia Schwenk, Soda_Jerk and Brie Trenerry

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