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Virtual Reality Comes to the Portland Art Museum

The Museum and NW Film Center are the only U.S. partner for Venice VR Expanded 2020, the virtual-reality competition of the prestigious Venice Biennale.

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Still from *Kinshasa Now*, directed by Marc-Henri Wajnberg. Belgium, Congo, Wajnbrose Productions / RG Créatifs Associés. VIVE headset, 25 minutes.

IMAGE: [COURTESY NW FILM CENTER](#)

For 11 days in September, Portland will be the virtual center of the country.

The virtual reality center, that is. The Portland Art Museum and Northwest Film Center are the exclusive U.S. partner for [Venice VR Expanded 2020](#), the virtual reality arm of the prestigious Venice Biennale, and from Sept. 2 to Sept. 12 Portlanders can be among the first in the world to experience premieres of virtual storytelling from 24 countries on VR headsets installed in the museum's ballroom.

The virtual reality medium offers an intimate manipulation of space, allowing viewers who don VR headsets the ability to enter a realistic or artistically rendered 360-degree experience through visuals and soundscapes. The [immersive, interactive virtual reality experiences](#) in Venice VR Expanded 2020 are wide-ranging, including works from creators and actors well known from cinematic blockbusters as well as moving and socially relevant creations from up-and-coming artists around the globe.

Gnomes & Goblins Upload VR Showcase Trailer (W...



[Gnomes and Goblins](#), an animated, story-driven game from Jon Favreau (*Iron Man*, *The Lion King*) and Jake Rowell (*The Animatrix*), allows viewers to encounter inhabitants of a fantasy land, build a relationship with them, become part of their society, and save them from their foe. [Baba Yaga](#) features the voices of *Star Wars*' Daisy Ridley as well as Jennifer Hudson and Kate Winslet, inviting viewers into a haunting fairy-tale world shaped by the enigmatic witch Baba Yaga, a familiar character in Russian folklore. And the Danish offering [Smagen af Sult \(A Taste of Hunger\)](#) places the viewer at the center of a love triangle that includes Nikolaj Coster-Waldau (*Game of Thrones*' Jaime Lannister).



Agence - Pre-Launch Trailer (1min)

de [Transitional Forms](#)

01:00

[Agence - Pre-Launch Trailer \(1min\)](#) from [Transitional Forms](#) on [Vimeo](#).

The interactive experience becomes even more personal in Japanese director Keisuke Itoh's [Beat](#), which builds its story around the viewer's own heartbeat. In the algorithmic universe of the animated Canadian creation [Agence](#), the fate of artificially intelligent creatures is in the viewer's hands. And on our own planet, the emotional impact of real-world social crises is brought home in projects such as [Kinshasa Now](#), which lets viewers experience the plight of children abandoned by their families after witchcraft allegations in Kinshasa, Congo, and [Om Devi: Sheroes Revolution](#), following three women in India engaged in a day-to-day fight for gender equality.



Still from *Smagen af Sult (A Taste of Hunger)*, directed by Christoffer Boe, David Adler. Denmark / Sweden / France, MAKROPOL / Zentropa / Atlas V / Zentropa Sweden. Oculus Quest headset, 15 minutes.

IMAGE: [COURTESY NW FILM CENTER](#)

Venice VR Expanded 2020 is presented in the Fields Ballroom of the Portland Art Museum's Mark Building, accommodating 14 guests per hour with safe social distancing. Viewers have a choice of three headsets for their 50-minute VR experiences: The Oculus Quest and VIVE headsets, which come with hand controllers to help navigate the space, and the Oculus Go, which uses just the headset for the most accessible experience. All headsets will be thoroughly sanitized between sessions using the latest technology, Clean Box.

Many of the projects visitors will experience at PAM are finalists in this year's VR competition of [La Biennale di Venezia](#), the Venice Biennale. For 125 years, the prestigious Biennale has been a global cultural touchstone, drawing throngs to Venice for its celebrations of the best in art, music, cinema, architecture and more. But this year, with the coronavirus pandemic keeping many from making the trip, Venice is coming to them. For the first time, the Biennale is offering its programming both online and at a handful of select venues around the globe. Venice VR Expanded 2020, the creative VR competition within the Venice International Film Festival, is offering access to immersive VR projects at just [15 partner venues globally](#), including the Museum and Film Center here as the only venue in the United States.

Beat [Trailer]



Paris, Amsterdam, Taipei ... Portland? How did our city join this club?

The answer, says Michel Reilhac, the founder and head of the Venice Biennale's virtual reality competition, is vision. Reilhac has long worked with Amy Dotson, who came to the Portland Art Museum last year as the Northwest Film Center's Director as well as Curator of Film and New Media, and in past years he has tapped her as a leader for the Venice Biennale's College Cinema and Virtual Reality programs. Earlier this year, Reilhac came to town from Amsterdam to receive the

Northwest Film Center's 2020 [Cinema Unbound Award](#), celebrating storytellers and innovators who bring us new ways of seeing.

"Amy and I have been collaborating on projects for years, and her vision is far-reaching," said Reilhac. "As soon as I shared with her our idea for bringing Venice VR Expanded to Portland, she immediately said, 'We are in!'"

Buy tickets and learn more about Venice VR Expanded 2020 on [Portland Art Museum's website](#).

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