



**OFFICIAL
SELECTION**

INTERNATIONAL
FILM FESTIVAL
ROTTERDAM
2025

LA CU NA

a production of **Podium Biarritz**
in coproduction with **Copper Views & Studio Biarritz**

a VR documentary by
Maartje Wegdam & Nienke Huitenga Broeren

Re-imagine what is lost



WWW.PODIUMBIARRITZ.NL



[STUDIOBIARRITZNL](https://www.instagram.com/studiobiarritznl)



Logline

Sonja has no memory of the crucial moment in her early childhood that saved her life. The discovery of three long-lost rings spark a riveting journey into imagination. Wander through a deeply personal VR documentary between what is left and what is lost.

A virtual reality scene of a courtyard. In the background, a large, multi-story building with many windows is visible. The courtyard is filled with greenery, including several tall evergreen trees and various bushes. In the foreground, there is a wooden deck with a table and chairs. The scene is lit with a soft, warm light, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and serene.

Project details:

Language: NL + ENG

Length: 34 min.

Country of production: NL

VR device: Oculus Quest 3 + PC

Contact:

Corine Meijers / Podium Biarritz

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www.podiumbiarritz.nl

Short Synopsis

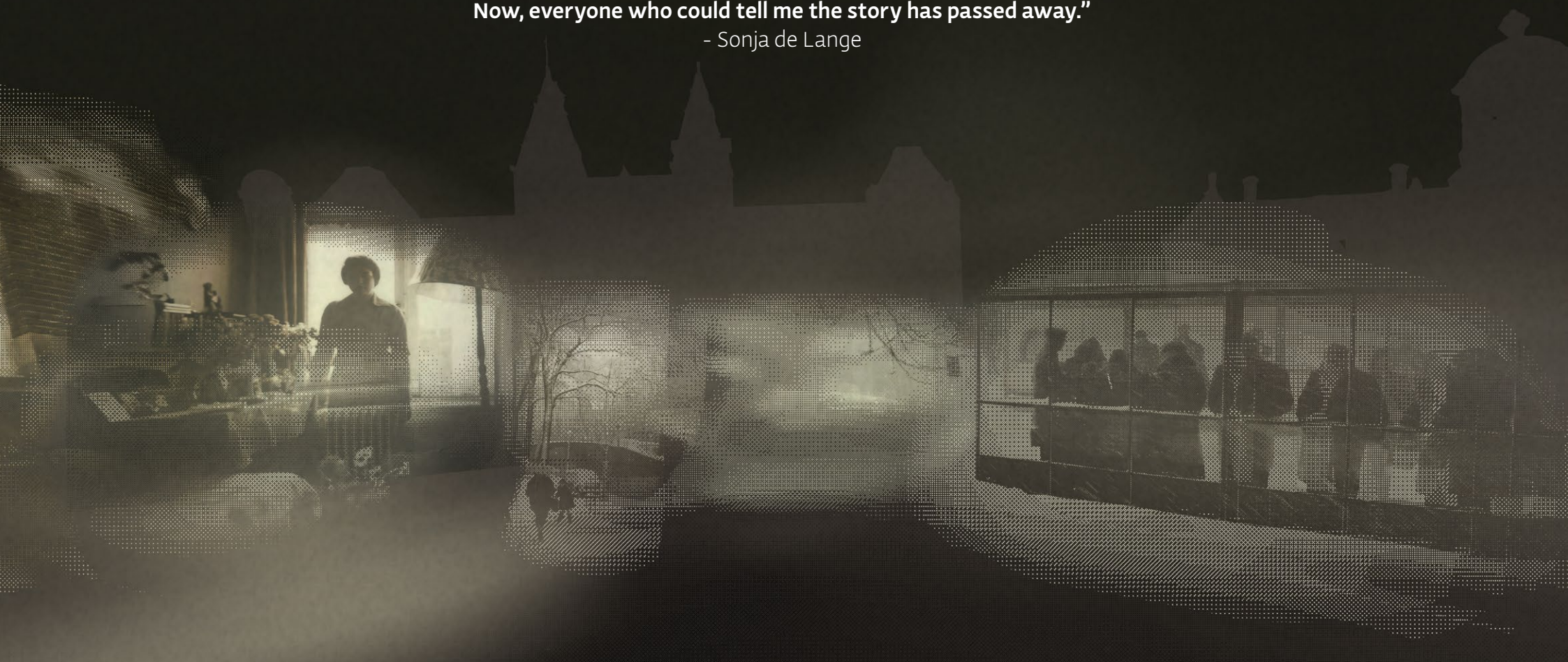
Sonja has no memory of the crucial moment in her early childhood that saved her life: the separation from her parents in 1943. The discovery of three silver rings that once belonged to Sonja's parents triggers the director to begin prompting her about the past. In the emotional journey that follows, you accompany Sonja through skewed memories, elusive images and re-

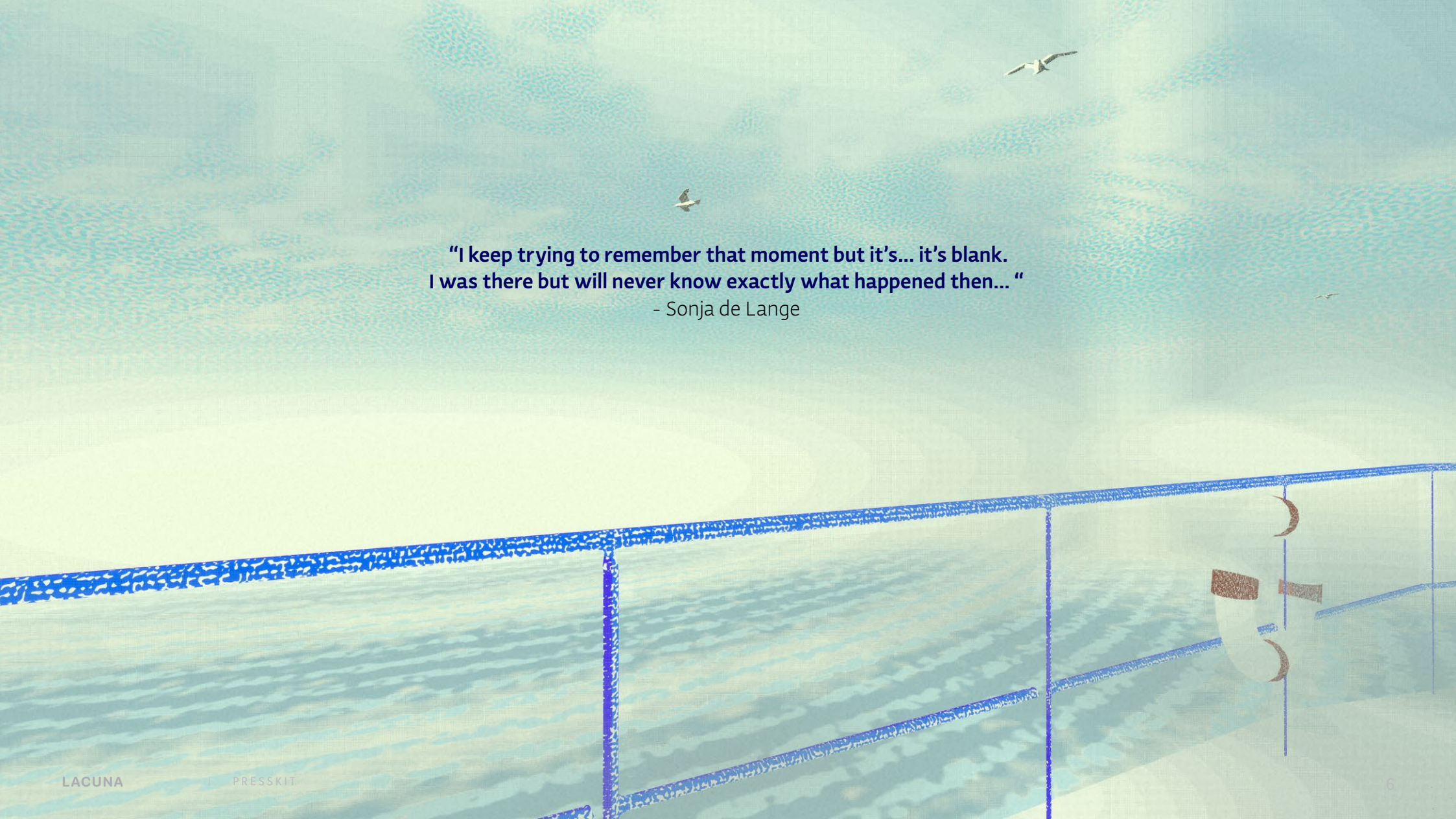
imaginations towards one moment of loss and grief during the Second World War. A true story that leads you from Paramaribo to Amsterdam and into a psychiatric facility called Het Apeldoornsche Bosch. Combining conversations with Sonja, mesmerizing 3D modelling, animation and personal footage, Lacuna explores who we are in relation to who we were. Meanwhile you will find truth in imagination, beauty in the unknown and an act of unconditional love.



**“When I had the opportunity to ask, I didn’t feel the need.
Now, everyone who could tell me the story has passed away.”**

- Sonja de Lange





**“I keep trying to remember that moment but it’s... it’s blank.
I was there but will never know exactly what happened then...”**

- Sonja de Lange



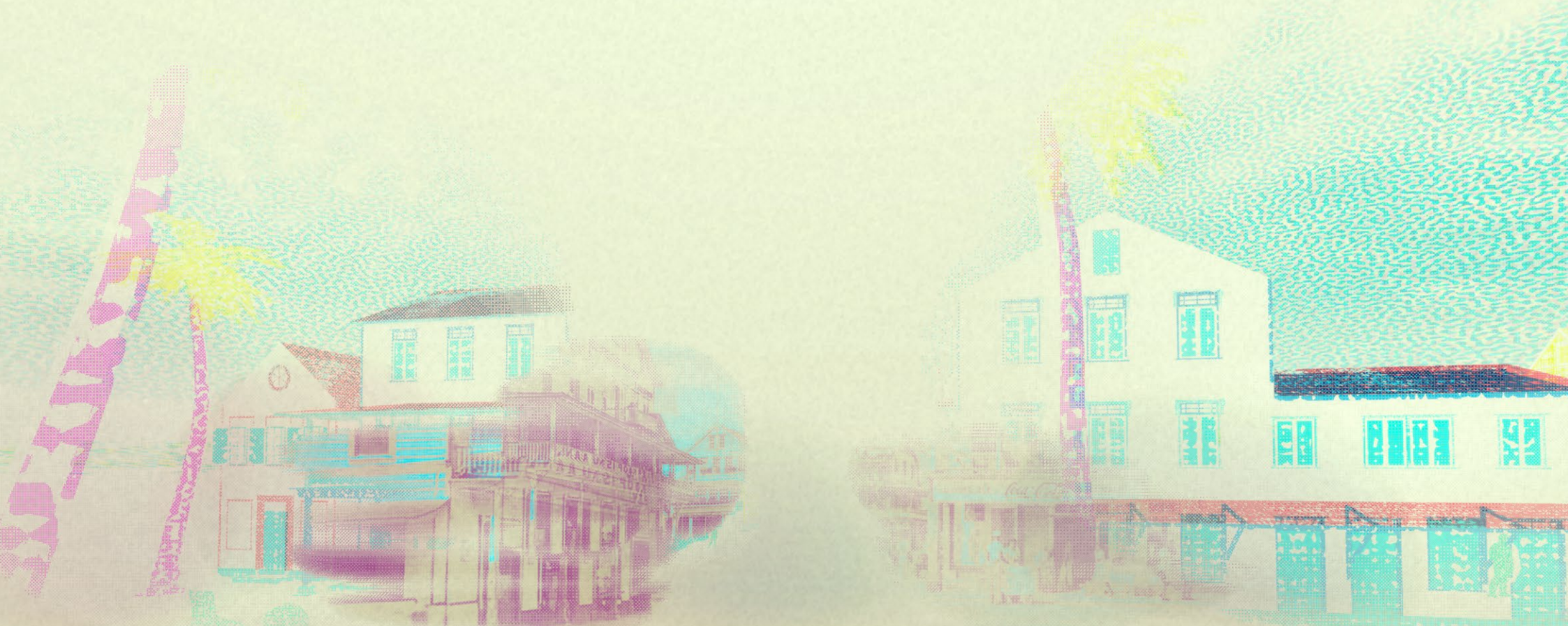
Long Synopsis

Sonja has always known that the people she grew up with were not her real parents, but during her childhood years in Surinam she never took much notice. Only a single photograph reminded her of her real father and mother and her childhood years in Amsterdam during the Second World War.

In 2020, a stranger hands Sonja three silver napkin rings that had once belonged to her parents. These rings were dug up from a garden during a renovation, on the grounds of a former Jewish psychiatric facility. Sonja and her parents used to live near the facility for a short period after the war broke out. Until one horrific night on January 21st 1943 the institution was raided and its patients and staff were deported and murdered. It must have been Sonja's parents that buried those rings in that garden around that time. But why? Her parents were never able to answer Sonja's questions. They both were killed in Auschwitz.

Now, over 80 years later, the rings prompt the director to start asking Sonja about what actually happened in 1943. In conversation Sonja explores what she no longer remembers: the impossible decision her parents made that ultimately saved her life. As a visitor you embark on this journey with her. Sonja guides you through echoes of the past, snippets of crucial scenes from her life and that of her parents towards one forgotten moment of loss and grief.

You swivel between Paramaribo of the 1950's, Amsterdam of the 1960' and 1930's and witness the building threat to Sonja's parents that gradually leads to persecution on the grounds of the psychiatric institution during the war. While the lost memory is never found, the story immerses you in the dynamic, fragmentary forest of recollections and imagination. In LACUNA Sonja remains your companion, helping to anchor your experience throughout this exploration. Together, you will reimagine a virtual presence of what was lost and ultimately help Sonja reclaim her story.



Downloads

TRAILER: [VIMEO.COM/1079341235](https://vimeo.com/1079341235) MP4: [HTTPS://WE.TL/T-ABNHytVEGK](https://we.tl/t-ABNHytVEGK)

KEY ART: [WE.TL/T-BDH37MRCMI](https://we.tl/t-BDH37MRCMI)

STILLS (SELECTION) [WE.TL/T-QPPIHCBC68](https://we.tl/t-QPPIHCBC68)

STILLS (EXTENDED SELECTION) [WE.TL/T-705CYQBG8G](https://we.tl/t-705CYQBG8G)

FLYER [WE.TL/T-GHLpDBQPHK](https://we.tl/t-GHLpDBQPHK)

POSTER [WE.TL/T-KF0ZY4XFM2](https://we.tl/t-KF0ZY4XFM2)

TITEL LOGO LACUNA, LOGOS PRODUCERS [WE.TL/T-0F7CJROC39](https://we.tl/t-0F7CJROC39)

PORTRAITS DIRECTORS [HTTPS://WE.TL/T-7MQG50IT04](https://we.tl/t-7MQG50IT04)

Artist statement


Maartje Wegdam

Sonja lives with many questions: “What was I like back then, what was our life like, what were my parents like? I notice the discomfort caused by these gaps in her memory. When I bring this up, Sonja responds: “When I had the opportunity to ask, I didn’t feel the need. Now, everyone who could tell me the story has passed away.” Circling around the gaps, LACUNA is meant to be both a remembrance project as well as a broader reflection on how our memories (as well as the lack of them) shape our identity. It reflects our search for new narrative forms, a new creative language and in pushing the boundaries of the documentary genre.

When I met Sonja for the first time in 2020, three silver napkin rings that had once belonged to her parents had just been returned to her. Three rings that had been dug up from a backyard, dulled and oxidized. Sonja tells me that it must have been her

parents that buried those rings almost 80 years ago, in the middle of World War 2. I’m eager to know more and start firing all sorts of questions at Sonja. Why did her parents bury those rings? Did they think they would come back later to get them? What happened to them? I would like to know more about little Sonja as well. About what it is like to be separated from your parents as a toddler in the middle of a war and put on a boat to Surinam, never to see your parents again. Not only to lose but also to forget those who brought you into the world, who tried to teach you everything they know and who tried to protect you. Sonja shrugs, then apologizes and responds that she cannot tell me more.

When Sonja lets me read the one thing she has left of her parents, a collection of letters written by her parents, I become fascinated with what’s between the lines. That what is not being said, what falls outside the photo. I become obsessed by the not knowing,



by the matter of the black holes that are so prominent among the scarce puzzle pieces. The frayed edges and the silences, the letters that are missing, the moments before and after a photo.

Meanwhile Sonja does share some details as they pop up in her head during our conversations. There's this fragment of memory of her and her little sister, a flash really, on the deck of a ship. The ship seems very high and the quay very small. On the pier a woman is waving in the distance. The moment after, they are off the boat and the lady is hugging them. I notice that I immediately start to imagine a scene. Two toddlers without a family on the ocean for three weeks, bobbing on the waves. Not knowing what awaits them on the other side. They have left their familiar ground and the sounds of home far behind them. I replay this scene over and over again in my head, even though there is no image or photo of that specific moment. I also wonder why Sonja remembers the rain on her skin, but not her mother's kiss when they said goodbye? I try to fill in the story gaps with different images and scenes. I become determined to do something with exactly that fact. Interweaving the tension between the itch to know more and the simple fact that there is not more to know. Staying with and chewing on that idea.

Sonja's deeply personal story circles around the question: how does our idea of our past shape our self-image in the present? Who decides what can be forgotten and what should be kept? And what do we do with the gaps that remain after we have "de-memorized" something? Questions that we face on a personal level as well as on a community and societal level. Our collective memory consists of a billion of those individual stories. Often filtered out in history books, personal stories can provide additional insight in complex history. As such, Lacuna shows how the details of a personal experience, or even moments that are not remembered, matter. In the words of Aleida Assmann, researcher on communicative memory:

‘A memory is created in the present, refers to the past but always looks to the future. At any time, it is worth re-asking the question of what to remember, why and how.’

-Aleida Assmann - literary scholar

LACUNA is a very personal eyewitness testimony on the raid on psychiatric facility ‘Het Apeldoornsche Bosch’, a highly underreported crime committed by the Nazi’s on Dutch ground during the war, thereby unlocking a personal archive for the audience and connecting perspectives from different generations from before, during and after the war. It is a story of common people living common lives when they are suddenly confronted with exclusion, persecution and systemic violence. Extreme circumstances lead them to take extraordinary decisions that they never anticipated having to take. As such this documentary experience is putting emphasis on the personal implications of persecution, specifically on the unimaginably hard decision by parents to separate their children from them to improve their chance of survival. A daily reality in current conflicts around the world.

The experience ultimately emphasizes the importance of not only re-telling but also to actively asking and inquiring about one’s personal history, taking the material that can be verified as a starting point for inquiry on what else is there and what are the gaps. Sonja has never consulted her own step-parents about what happened and she has never had children of her own who can question her. Her, and our, aim is therefore to encourage young people to ask their parents and grandparents about their own history. Our history depends on the stories we tell each other.

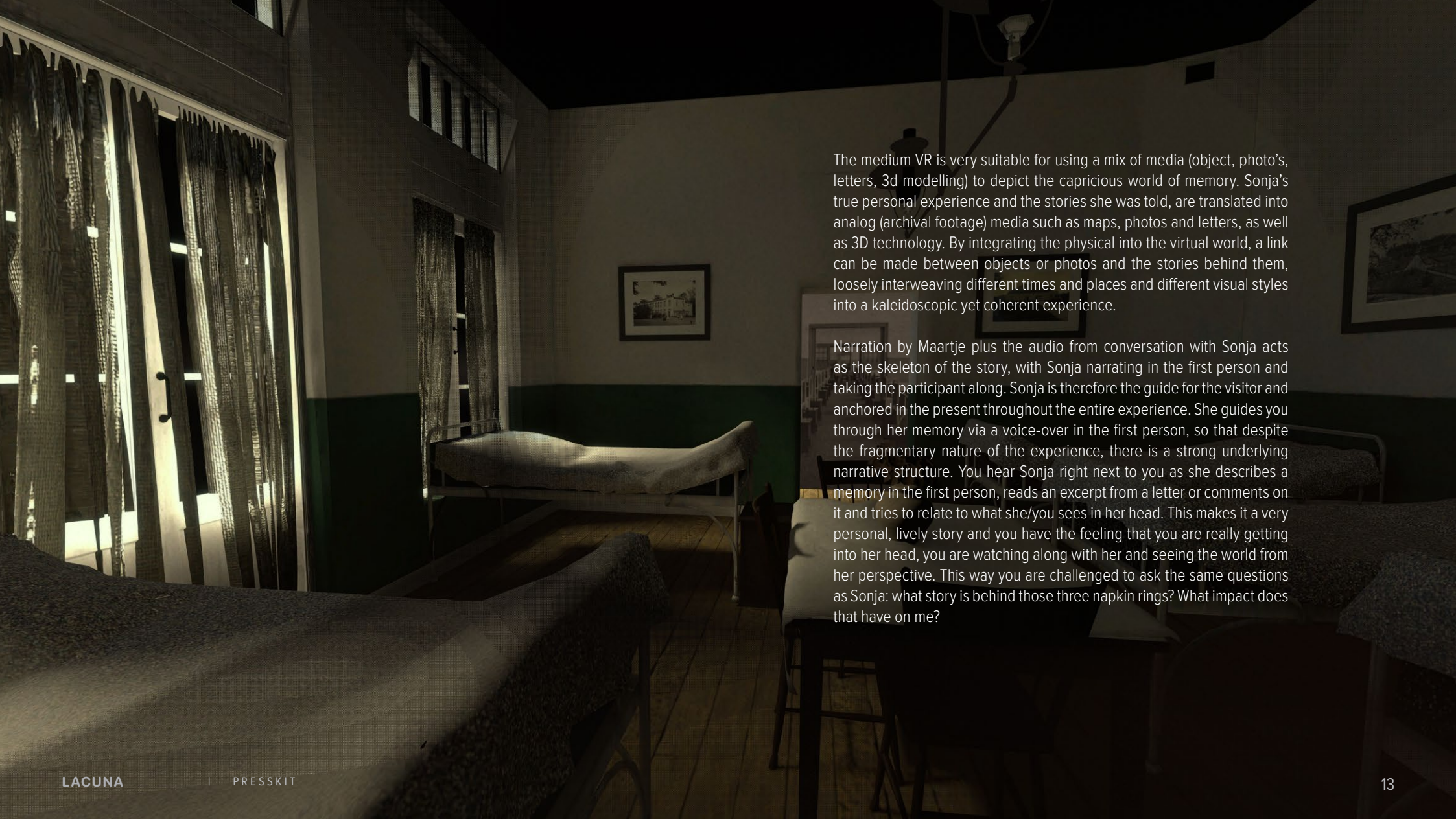


A void and a world trying to emerge: on finding an audiovisual language

The title of LACUNA points to an omission in the main character's memory of a life altering moment in her early childhood. This lacuna is represented by the void-like space the visitor enters at the beginning of the experience. There's actually quite a bit of this emptiness throughout this VR experience. From that void, images and sounds of memories and secondary memories emerge.

It's been a journey to find the language for the void as well as for the emerging snippets of memory. A Virtual Reality environment offers the technical and narrative possibility to create the experience of being present. 'Getting inside the head' thus becomes a physical experience. In the void, Maartje and Sonja are represented through the different shades of resonating mist. You purposely never see an image of them. Yet by seeing the resonance of their voices in space, you feel that they exist and are somewhere around you. Your own presence is also being acknowledged in a similar way, through the possibility of subtly opening the dark matter with your gaze.

The visitor's interaction with the world is important yet subtle and intuitive. You are encouraged and invited to physically move through the vr-space and unveil the world with your gaze. Not only are you able to look around but you can also very subtly interact with the story world by 'unlocking' the fragments yourself. In the VR installation this is translated by the void cracking open and images and sounds emerge, distort, then explode or flow into the next memory. As a participant you experience how memories can come and go abruptly, flow into each other seamlessly, slip out of your hands or evaporate. These images are often associative and sometimes abstract, with the focus on a few small details. Depending on where you stand or look, you see different parts of one same fragment. As such, LACUNA gives you the feeling that it makes a difference that you are there. The visitor has a metaphorical role to witness, to take note of the fragility of (personal) histories, and the lacunas they leave for us to hold.



The medium VR is very suitable for using a mix of media (object, photo's, letters, 3d modelling) to depict the capricious world of memory. Sonja's true personal experience and the stories she was told, are translated into analog (archival footage) media such as maps, photos and letters, as well as 3D technology. By integrating the physical into the virtual world, a link can be made between objects or photos and the stories behind them, loosely interweaving different times and places and different visual styles into a kaleidoscopic yet coherent experience.

Narration by Maartje plus the audio from conversation with Sonja acts as the skeleton of the story, with Sonja narrating in the first person and taking the participant along. Sonja is therefore the guide for the visitor and anchored in the present throughout the entire experience. She guides you through her memory via a voice-over in the first person, so that despite the fragmentary nature of the experience, there is a strong underlying narrative structure. You hear Sonja right next to you as she describes a memory in the first person, reads an excerpt from a letter or comments on it and tries to relate to what she/you sees in her head. This makes it a very personal, lively story and you have the feeling that you are really getting into her head, you are watching along with her and seeing the world from her perspective. This way you are challenged to ask the same questions as Sonja: what story is behind those three napkin rings? What impact does that have on me?

WRITTEN BY **MAARTJE WEGDAM**
DIRECTED BY **MAARTJE WEGDAM** AND **NIENKE HUITENGA BROEREN**
PRODUCED BY **ILJA KOK** AND **CORINE MEIJERS**

A PRODUCTION OF **PODIUM BIARRITZ**
IN COPRODUCTION WITH **COPPER VIEWS FILM PRODUCTIONS** AND **STUDIO BIARRITZ**

A VERY SPECIAL THANK YOU TO **SONJA DE LANGE**

CREW

HARM VAN DE VEN	CREATIVE DEVELOPER AND ART DIRECTOR
RIK NIEUWDORP	SOUND DESIGNER AND COMPOSER
ANJET BLINDE	PRODUCTION MANAGER
FRANK BOSMA	VISUAL DESIGNER
MATUNDA GROENENDIJK	VISUAL DESIGNER
ARON FELS	VISUAL DESIGNER
KATHARINA SMETS	NARRATION COACH
STILL - SOUND DESIGN	ADR RECORDING
LAURA VAN SCHENDEL	TRANSLATION AND SUBTITLES
ADO ATO PICTURES	SCENARIO COACHING
WEMAKEVR	3D SCANNING RINGS
JOHN BENJAMINS PUBLISHING	DIGITIZATION PERSONAL ARCHIVE SONJA
SUSANNE KEILHACK	DESIGNER LOGO, POSTER AND CREDITS
CHRISTIAAN DE ROOIJ	DESIGNER PRESSKIT AND SOCIAL MEDIA
FILM INCOMPANY	PRESS RELATIONS
INNA VAN ENGEN	COMMUNITY BUILDING NL
JESSIE VAN VREDEN	COMMUNITY BUILDING NL
RECHTSBUITEN	LEGAL ADVICE
WENDY VAN RIJN	PRODUCTION INTERN
YULIN YAO	PRODUCTION INTERN

ARCHIVE

PERSONAL ARCHIVE SONJA DE LANGE
CITY ARCHIVE AMSTERDAM
FILMBANK GRONINGEN / GRONINGER ARCHIVES
NATIONAL MUSEUM OF PHOTOGRAPHY
SURINAME MUSEUM FOUNDATION
ED VAN DER ELSKEN
PIET GOEDE
ROEL TEN KLEI

THANKS TO THE FINDERS OF THE RINGS FOR RETURNING THEM TO SONJA
WITHOUT YOU THIS STORY WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN BROUGHT TO THE SURFACE

Biographies

Maartje Wegdam (WRITER & DIRECTOR)

Maartje Wegdam is an independent documentary director exploring personal and psychological perspectives on what makes us human through innovative ways of storytelling. She previously directed the award winning feature documentary [No Place for a Rebel](#) about former child soldier Opono Opono. Sixteen years after Opono was kidnapped by the rebel army LRA he returns home as an adult war commander. In the documentary you follow Opono in his attempts to find his place in civil society while coming to terms with being a victim as well as perpetrator. The film was screened at national and international film festivals and had a theatrical release.

Over the years, Maartje has been developing a hands-on method whereby she explores her subjects closely together with her protagonists. She always records her research in film or audio, gradually finding the story through collaborative moments. The story then is further developed hand in hand with the form or medium. In the case of Lacuna the idea to use VR came from the research conversations in which Sonja recalls her first person memories in present time. Around that idea the work of Lacuna slowly took shape in close collaboration with the multidisciplinary team.

Nienke Huitenga Broeren (WRITER & DIRECTOR)

Immersive director Nienke Huitenga Broeren blends digital art and immersive experiences. Her creative career unfolds through captivating online transmedia work like Human Birdwings and [The Modular Body](#) (by Floris Kaayk). The last claimed the prestigious Golden Calf in 2016 for pioneering interactivity. Her first VR work [ROZSYSPNE](#) (2019) in co-direction with Lisa Weeda, depicting the onset of the war in East Ukraine in 2014 and the downing of flight MH17. It premiered in competition at IDFA DocLab. Last fall she explored generative techniques in audio, where she created [DRIFT](#) (2024) together with VPRO Medialab. A post-climate Netherlands emerges for your ears, co-written by writer Minem Sezgin, ai and algorithmic processes.

Her artistic practice is influenced by an interdisciplinary approach on mediated experiences: technology is never the starting point in her work, yet an important tool for addressing societal, cultural and personal experiences. Through collaborative projects like the consensus-debate-experience [WINWIN](#) (with hacker James Bryan Graves) and [This Conversation is Off the Record](#) (by Nirit Peled) she explores her fascination with how technology shapes our perception of humanity. — Operating from Utrecht, she heads Studio ZZZAP.

BIO PODIUM BIARRITZ & STUDIO BIARRITZ

PODIUM BIARRITZ: A stage for stories without borders

Podium Biarritz Foundation, launched by Corine Meijers in the beginning of 2025, initiates, produces and distributes audiovisual projects that cross borders. Podium Biarritz is the stage we want to give to impressive and relevant stories, films, installations, immersive experiences and cross-disciplinary projects. We aim to do that through various events, partnerships, festivals and tailor made gatherings together with YOU!

We cross borders in 1) form, technology and subject matter, 2) in collaboration with filmmakers, artists & partners and 3) in audience reach, distributed on multiple platforms. The Podium Biarritz Foundation is related to Studio Biarritz but not limited by this bond in any way, and is open to many kinds of collaborations in the Netherlands and abroad. We develop our own projects, but we also love collaborating with filmmakers, artists and partners from all over the world to produce and stage stories with a lot of heart that are relevant to our trying times. www.podiumbiarritz.nl

STUDIO BIARRITZ: A production house that was founded by Corine Meijers in 2019. www.studiobiarritz.nl

PROJECTS RELEASED STUDIO BIARRITZ

Symbiosis (a multi-user, multi-sensory VR Installation / 45 min.) by Polymorf: Marcel van Brakel and Mark Meeuwenoord. Released in 2021. www.Symbiosis.show

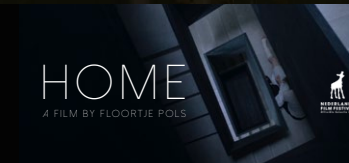
Ik ben een bastaard (a 55 min. linear documentary) by Ahmet Polat, in coproduction with NTR/Het Uur van de Wolf (I am a bastard) Released in 2021. www.wijzijnbastaard.nl

The Imaginary Friend (a 28 min. Interactive VR live action & animation) by Steye Hallema. in coproduction with Cassette for timescapes (BE) and Submarine Channel (NL). Released in 2023. www.TheImaginaryFriend.nl

Floating with Spirits (a 30 min. cinematic hybrid VR) by Juanita Onzaga. a production of Cassette for timescapes (BE), in coproduction with Studio Biarritz (NL) and Tarantula (LUX). Released in 2023. www.FloatingWithSpirits.com

Home (short 17 min, fiction) by FLOortje Pols. Premiered at the Netherlands Film Festival 2024 (Debut Competition). Release in 2024. <https://studiobiarritz.nl/project/home/>

Future Botanica (an Augmented Reality app, fiction 30 min) by Polymorf, released during Dutch Design week @MU Hybrid Art House, and IDFA Doclab (in competition) @ Droog, in 2024. <https://www.polymorf.nl/interaction/future-botanica/>



Copper Views Film Productions

Foundation Copper Views Film Productions is an award-winning production house. Its mission is “a better mutual understanding.” Copper Views achieves this mission through the production and distribution of audiovisual projects that spark dialogue. With its projects, Copper Views aims to contribute to a global society where stereotyping, neo-colonialism, othering, and framing are set aside, making more room for understanding, hospitable actions, and equality. Copper Views’ projects are showcased on television, at film festivals, and are used in education. Its sub-audiences are diverse, but young adults always form the primary target group.

Copper Views film productions aim to create a better mutual understanding, and overcoming prejudices and stereotypical thinking, regarding topics as social conditions, culture clashes and issues concerning globalization and related matters.

How we do that? By utilizing the impact made by cultural and artistic opportunities, specifically film, television and digital/online media, to therefore reach as many people, (target)groups and organizations as possible, and achieve a shift towards positive behavior and opinion. And by media-projects that can be incorporated (with or without collaboration with external partners) within larger projects or campaigns operating within cultural, and/or educational fields.

www.copperviews.com

Filmography / a selection

Show Us Your Smile | The Netherlands | 2020 | Directed by Nicky Maas | Funded by The Netherlands Film Fund, Fonds ZOZ, and Lutfia Rabbani Foundation | Selected for the ‘Gouden Kalf’ Competition at Netherlands Film Festival (NFF) 2020.

De Boontjes | The Netherlands | 2020 | Directed by Anne van Helvoort | Produced by BNNVARA, The Netherlands Film Fund, and CoBO as part of Teledoc Campus | Selected for the Debut Competition at Netherlands Film Festival (NFF) 2020.

Dichterbij (Closer) | The Netherlands | 2020 | Directed by Caroline Keman | Produced by EO/IKON, The Netherlands Film Fund, and CoBO as part of Teledoc Campus | Selected for the Debut Competition at NFF 2020.

Meet the Millennials | Online series (6 episodes x 15 minutes) | Asia | 2019 | Created with Company New Heroes | International sales: 3boxMedia.

Het Geld van de Sjeik (The Sheikh’s Money) | The Netherlands | 2018 | three-episodes documentary series (25 minutes per episode) | Directed by Hank van Bosstraten, Patrick Bisschops, and Jalal Bouzamour | Produced by NTR | Broadcasted on Dutch Television in December 2018.

Aan de Andere Kant (On the Other Side) | The Netherlands | 2018 | 52 minutes | Directed by Willem Timmers | Produced by Omroep Brabant, Mediafonds, VSBfonds, and Prins Bernhard Cultuurfonds | Premiered at the Netherlands Film Festival (NFF) in September 2018 | Selected for the 'Gouden Kalf' Competition at NFF 2018 | Impact premiere held simultaneously at NFF and in Bakel, Senegal.

Nation | Russia | 2018 | 66 minutes | Directed by Julia Mironova | International co-production with Julia Mironova Productions, Saint-Petersburg Documentary Film Studio & Illume Oy Finland | Premiered at Ethnocineca in May 2018.

No Place for a Rebel | The Netherlands | 2017 | 76 minutes | Directed by Maartje Wegdam and Ariadne Asimakopoulos | Funded by The Netherlands Film Fund | Premiered at Movies that Matter 2017. https://www.imdb.com/title/tt6741676/?ref_=trt_ov

Jordy in Transitland | The Netherlands | 2016 | 6 minutes | Directed by Willem Timmers | Produced by VPRO as part of De Ontmoeting (The Encounter), NPO3.

Ni Hao Holland | The Netherlands | 2015 | 25 minutes | Directed by Willem Timmers | Produced by AVROTROS as part of Teledoc Campus | Broadcasted on May 10, 2015, on NPO3 | Accompanied by an educational program | Winner of 9 awards.

Framing the Other | The Netherlands | 2011 | 25 minutes | Directed by Willem Timmers | Screened at over 60 film festivals and broadcast on February 3 & 8, 2013, on Hollanddoc24 | Distributed over 350 times to (higher) education institutions (inter) nationally | Winner of 12 awards.

