



LESBIAN SIMULATOR

A VR EXPERIENCE BY IRIS VAN DER MEULE



LESBIANSIMULATOR.NL



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Intro

'Lesbian Simulator' is an interactive virtual reality artwork and video game which will prompt users to experience the world from the perspective of a lesbian. While this artistic ode to love and sexual preference doesn't shy away from tackling serious issues as well, such as the discrimination and abuse that lesbians still face today, you can expect an uplifting experience full of joy, humour and a touch of glitter!

Project Details

Lesbian Simulator' is a VR film and game

Length: +/- 40 minutes

Language: English, Dutch and French

Created by Iris van der Meule

Produced by Corine Meijers

With Hanna van Vliet as the Lesbian Goddess

A Studio Biarritz production In coproduction with
Art et Essai, Cassette for timescapes and Podium Biarritz

<https://lesbiansimulator.nl>





SYNOPSIS



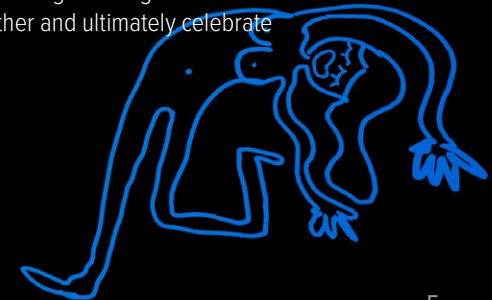
Inspired by the personal experiences of Iris van der Meule and those close to her, 'Lesbian Simulator' aims to create awareness in a playful manner. Users experience some of the key aspects in the existence of a queer girl such as: coming-out to various people, making new friends, going on a date but also the first time feeling discriminated or even verbally abused. 'Lesbian Simulator' mirrors the blind spots within our society in relation to the acceptance of lesbians (and indirectly, of queer people in general). It is an ode to love and sexuality, about the exploration of your sexual orientation and about being embraced by the lesbian and queer community. It is a celebration of diversity and inclusivity.

The experience is set-up as a game. Users build their own lesbian persona and navigate her through various challenging moments. The simulator sometimes requires participants to discover and interact with other characters. Other times they are given the space to reflect upon and analyze reactions of other protagonists, mirroring prejudices and misconceptions lesbian can also experience in the real world. The player gets to experience the way in which they are treated differently as a lesbian in terms

of inequality, discrimination and sexual harassment. But fear not, it's not all dark and gloomy. Next to these difficult situations, the users will also experience the positive side of life as a lesbian, such as the warm embrace of the queer community and celebratory moments like the annual Pride.

In each level of 'Lesbian Simulator' the player can earn 'Carabiners'. This prompts participants to not shy away and wholeheartedly explore the lesbian perspective. At the end of the experience their score will decide what Lesbian Rank they've earned. (So they can brag about it to their friends!)

By mapping aspects from the life of a lesbian in a fun and interactive way, 'Lesbian Simulator' invites all participants to open their hearts and minds in order to acknowledge and understand the challenges queer girls might be experiencing. Walking in the shoes of a lesbian girl can help us all better connect with each other and ultimately celebrate love in all its forms!



VR

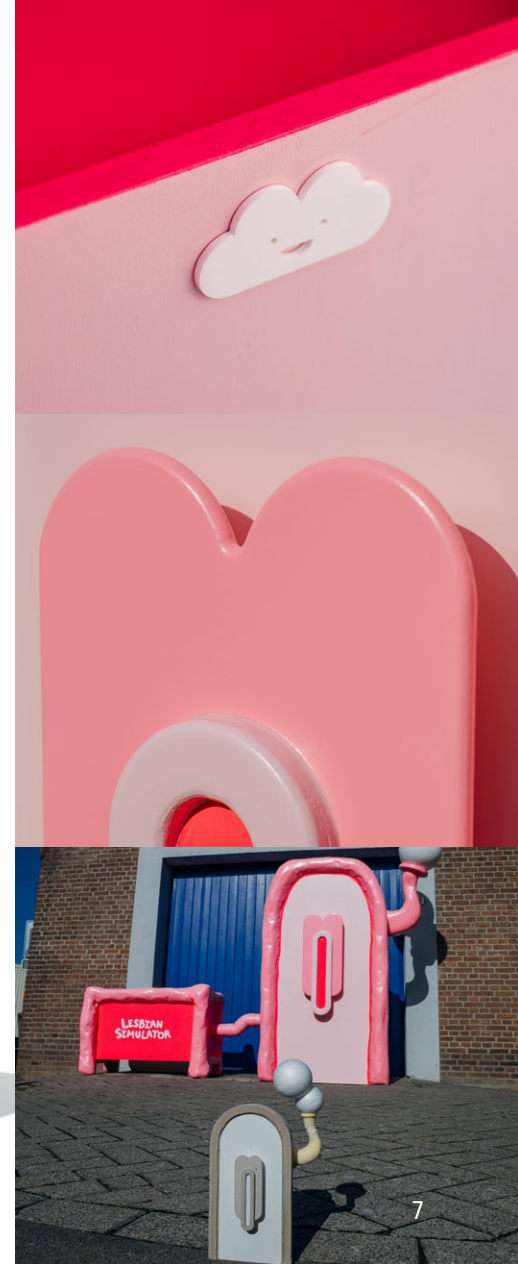
The immersiveness of VR is a strong tool to raise awareness and enhance peoples sense of empathy, which is why VR is my medium of choice for this project. Through VR I can share my personal experiences and perspectives as a lesbian with a crowd that might not be so familiar with this topic in the first place, and give insights in the inequality and discrimination that is still happening today. VR also gives the possibility to create worlds and experiences that reach as far as our own creativity. This creates new possibilities in how we tell stories and experience them. By not being bound by reality I can create scene's that use innovative and creative ways to inspire real life emotions by the viewer.

By presenting 'Lesbian Simulator' as a 'simulation video game' an interesting cross-over takes place between a socially relevant art work and a video game. By doing so multiple audiences will be reached; the queer community, (digital) art fanatics and gamers. By presenting 'Lesbian Simulator' as a colorful game I hope to attract other groups as well to play the experience, who normally might skip topics like this. Part of the experience will be build that way (as a humorist game) to meet expectations. At other parts of the experience the player will be confronted by discrimination and other obstacles who will be provocative and encourage the player to think about their own behavior in the real world.

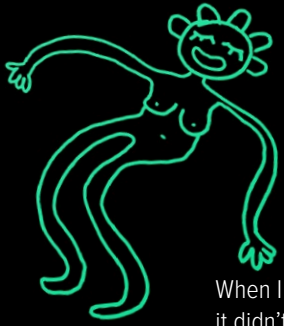


INSTALLATION

The story of Lesbian Simulator starts even before the player gets into the VR headset with the physical installation. The installation has been created in collaboration with artist/designer Caboor to lure the audiences to see the experience and set the tone for the world they are about to step into.







DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT



When I was 17 years old I came out as a lesbian. I had known myself a little longer, but it didn't feel safe enough to come out until I was out of high school. Luckily in my case my family was mostly sweet and understanding. However, my mother did express her concerns, that I wouldn't get an easy pass in life. At first I didn't really understand what she meant. But when I got a girlfriend and became 'openly gay' in the public space, I started noticing a difference in how people would react to me. I realized that a lot of people considered my sexuality a problem.

Contemporary Western culture is based on heteronormativity. Those who fall outside this norm still face forms of conscious and unconscious discrimination on a daily basis. Many people have fought for the equality and emancipation of the LGBTQIA+ community. This has resulted in gay marriage being legal now in 38 countries, among other laws that should protect the community better. But even in these countries the reality is still often experienced very differently. Many queer people still suffer from discrimination, homophobia and sexual harassment due to their sexual orientation. And even more so now as western countries seem to become more conservative, the rights that were fought so hard for are once again under threat. It saddens me that the fight for equal rights, emancipation, and social acceptance for queer people is still an ongoing and necessary fight.

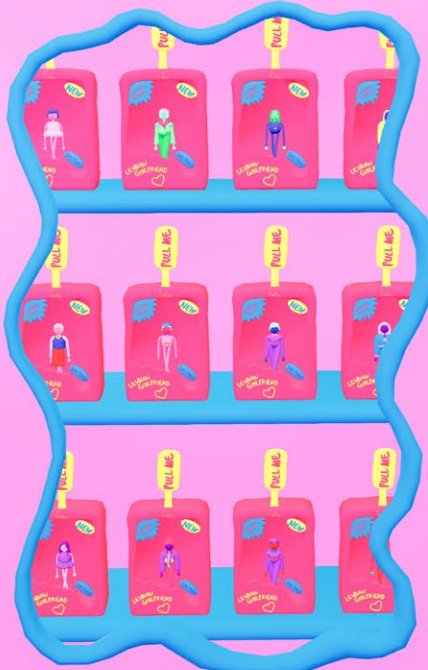
Heterosexuals quickly label themselves as "open-minded," indicating their acceptance/tolerance of queer people. But often times I hear people say things like *"I have nothing against gay people, as long as they act normal."* What does acting normal mean? While walking hand in hand on the street is normal for a straight couple,

it's apparently not for a queer couple and is labeled "provocative behavior." When I talked to close friends and family about my experiences with discrimination and homophobia in the public space, they acted surprised. They're simply unaware that these things still happen in an 'open minded' country. *"Isn't the Netherlands an accepting country? You can get married here, right?"* That's true, but social acceptance goes much further than that. These reactions stem from heteronormative privilege. Straight people simply don't experience what it's like to be discriminated against based on their sexual orientation, which makes it harder to empathize with queer people.

With 'Lesbian Simulator' and the immersive nature of VR, I hope to awaken this empathy among straight people. At the same time I didn't want to 'alienate' the queer community too much. I wanted to show that being queer isn't only a 'miserable' experience. Being queer is also beautiful, it's fun and it's so freeing! So I created a balanced narrative highlighting both of these sides, allowing the viewer to learn in a playful way using lot's of game elements. Even though the goal of the work is to inspire awareness, I also wanted it to be a form of representation for the queer community. I played around with lot's of references and inside jokes to lesbian and queer culture in the narrative and virtual world. By using a very cartoony style I hoped to make the work feel light and fun, and make it feel more approachable for a wider audience.

'Lesbian Simulator' gives food for thought and opens up the conversation about improving LGBTQIA+ acceptance in society in a fun and playful way. Everyone is welcome.

LESBIAN GIRLFRIENDS





LINKS

Stills - <https://we.tl/t-G3P0ngA2aJ>

Logo - <https://we.tl/t-oilwPclSQr>

Poster - <https://we.tl/t-dXiangwa3j>

PR photo Iris van der Meule - <https://we.tl/t-bnDX3xsquP>

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY IRIS VAN DER MEULE

PRODUCED BY CORINE MEIJERS, STUDIO BIARRITZ

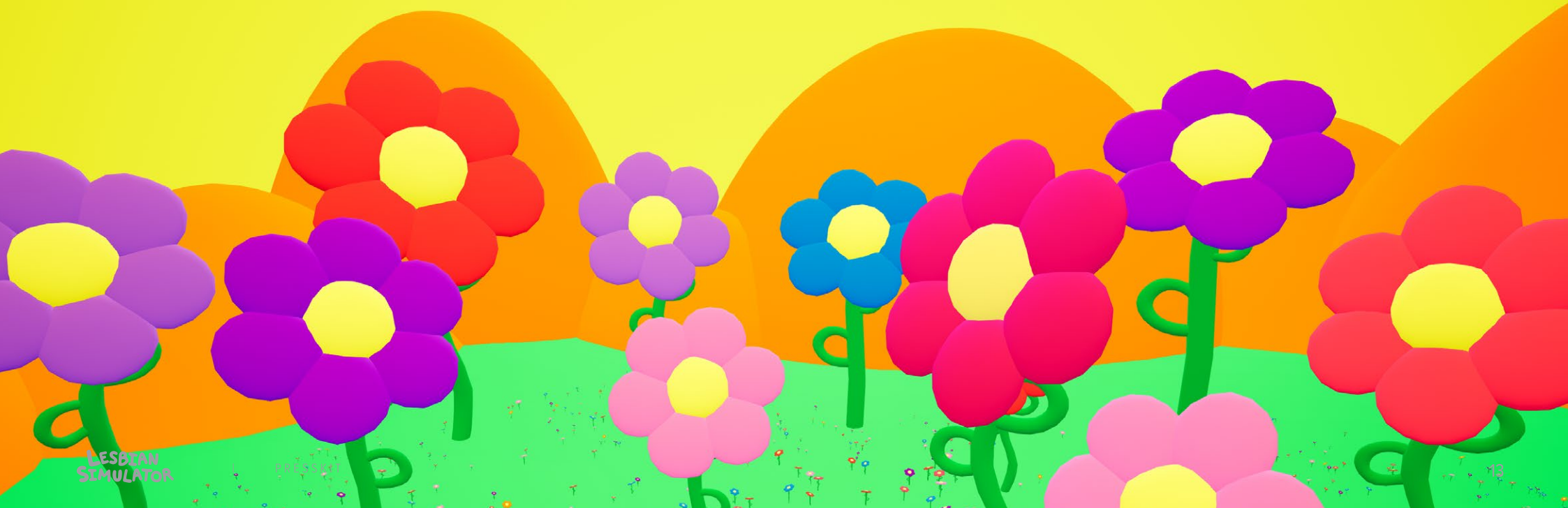
CO-PRODUCED BY JEANNE-MARIE POULAIN, ART ET ESSAI
CO-PRODUCED BY AN OOST & EMMY OOST, CASSETTE FOR TIMESCAPES

	MAIN CAST			BELGIUM
LESBIAN GODDESS GIRLFRIEND	HANNA VAN VLIET SOFIE HELLEMONS	SCRIPT COACH AND DUTCH TRANSLATION SCRIPT COACH (DEVELOPMENT PHASE)	SARIEKE HOEKSM MAUD WIEMEIJER	CASSETTE FOR TIMESCAPES EMMY OOST
	CREW	CONCEPTUAL COACH	MARLEINE VAN DER WERF	PRODUCER PRODUCER
THE NETHERLANDS	STUDIO BIARRITZ AND PODIUM BIARRITZ	CONCEPTUAL COACH	KLASJEN VAN DE ZANDSCHULP	BUDGET CONTROLLER IMPACT PRODUCER
WRITER AND DIRECTOR PRODUCER	IRIS VAN DER MEULE CORINE MEIJERS	CONCEPTUAL COACH	ALI ESLAMI	
		SOLID BASE MANAGEMENT	GWEN MADURO	
ART DIRECTOR AND CONCEPT ARTIST ADDITIONAL CHARACTER DESIGN	IRIS VAN DER MEULE MACKENZIE FINCHAM	ENGLISH VOICE ACTING COACH	LORA MANDER	
				DEMUTE FRANÇOIS FRIPIAT
		INSURANCE	WE INSURE	AUDIO DIRECTOR COMPOSER, AUDIO LEAD, SOUND DESIGN
		LEGAL	ROLAND WIGMAN, LIAISE ADVOCATEN	COMPOSER, SOUND DESIGN
		FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION FINANCE AND CONSULTING	JACKY JONGENELEN TRUST	COMPOSER COMPOSER
LEAD DEVELOPMENT DEVELOPMENT DEVELOPMENT	FRANK BOSMA LILLIAN SOUWER TOM SEMEIJN			AUDIO PROGRAMMER, SOUND DESIGN AUDIO ENGINE
		DEVELOPMENT STIPENDIA	PLAYGROUNDS NEXT FILM FORWARD (VRIJPLAATS) CITY OF BREDA	
ANIMATION DIRECTOR ANIMATION AND RIGGING PROTOTYPE ANIMATION LEAD PRE-PRODUCTION	PIP WILLIAMSON LOTTA ANDRIESSE ROEL VAN DE SANT			ADDITIONAL VOICE ACTING EMI HAZLETT MELISSA DE GIER DAAN LUCAS
		CANADA	ART ET ESSAI	ROMEE VAN DER SCHOOT SEBASTIAAN AUER
3D LEAD AND ANIMATION PROTOTYPE 3D LEAD AND VFX 3D MODELLING 3D MODELLING	MAURITZ SEERDEN IRIS VAN DER MEULE SAKIBE VAN SOEST CATHARINA BROES	PRODUCER	JEANNE-MARIE POULAIN	LILLIAN SOUWER FRANK BOSMA JAKE PATRIDGE PIP WILLIAMSON MAURITZ SEERDEN ROBIN BUTEL LAURA FIORINI
DESIGN & PRODUCTION - PHYSICAL INSTALLATION LBE PRODUCTION AND PLANNING IMPACT PRODUCTION	KEVIN CABOOR ROMEE VAN DER SCHOOT STUDIO BIARRITZ AND PODIUM BIARRITZ	ASSOCIATE PRODUCER	IRÈNE BESSONE	IRIS VAN DER MEULE SHANA BOSSMANN JOOST DE HAAS SOFIE HELLEMONS
		ASSOCIATE PRODUCER	HIPPOLYTE DE CHANLAIRE	
RECORDING ENGINEER AND EDITOR RECORDING ENGINEER AND EDITOR	SELLE SELLINK JOOST DE HAAS	ASSOCIATE PRODUCER	RÉMI DUFRESNE	
		ASSOCIATE PRODUCER	ANAËLLE BÉGLET	
		ASSOCIATE PRODUCER	SOPHIE MICHON	
DIGITAL STRATEGY DESIGN CAMPAIGN WEBSITE DEVELOPMENT	MARIA DICIEANU CHRISTIAAN DE ROOIJ - ORKA VISUAL MEDIA AART JAN VAN DER LINDEN	ADMINISTRATIVE COORDINATOR	JUSTINE DESSUREAULT	SUPPORTED BY NETHERLANDS FILM FUND, CREATIVE INDUSTRIES FUND NL SODEC QUEBEC, FLANDERS AUDIOVISUAL FUND (VAF) FONDS 21, CITY OF UTRECHT, AMSTERDAM FUND FOR THE ARTS (AFK), KF HEIN, BAILEY BEADS FOUNDATION
		ACCOUNTANT	OLIVIER BILODEAU	
		AUDIT	BENOÏT GAUTHIER	
		LEGAL FIRM	LUSSIER & KHOUZAM	
		INSURANCE	GLOBALEX	
		ANIMATION PRODUCER	COLEGRAM	
		3D ANIMATION (LEAD ANIMATOR)	VINCENT BILODEAU	
		3D ANIMATION AND RIGGING	DAVID BARIL	
		3D ANIMATION AND RIGGING	ANASTASIA FADOUS	
		3D ANIMATION AND RIGGING	MARC-ANTOINE RÉHEL	

BIOS

IRIS VAN DER MEULE

Iris van der Meule (she/her) is a queer digital artist and director based in Amsterdam. Iris researches immersive storytelling and creates VR experiences, animation films, illustrations and other interactive curiosities. In her work she discusses socially relevant theme's, like discrimination against the LGBTQIA+ community, climate change, mental health and gender inequality. In her work she explores innovative ways to hold a mirror up to society. Her projects are equally cutting as they are light hearted, usually wrapped in a layer of humor and sarcasm.





CORINE MEIJERS

As founder and creative producer at Studio Biarritz & Stichting Podium Biarritz, Corine Meijers released numerous award-winning projects such as Symbiosis (multi-user, multi-sensory VR Installation) by Polymorf, premiered during IDFA Doclab @ Eye Film Museum in 2021. I am a Bastard (linear TV documentary / 55 min.) by Ahmet Polat, premiered @ Movies that Matter festival Den Haag in 2021; The Imaginary Friend (Interactive VR live action & animation 28 min.) by Steye Hallema, premiered @ Venice Immersive 2023; Floating with Spirits (cinematic hybrid VR 33 min.) by Juanita Onzaga, premiered @ Venice Immersive 2023; Home (fiction, short / 17 min.) by Floortje Pols, premiered @ Netherlands Film Festival in September 2024. Future Botanica (AR, fiction

30) by Polymorf, premiere during Dutch Design week @MU Hybrid Art House and IDFA Doclab (in competition) @Droog, in October, November 2024. and SXSW 2025. Lacuna (VR documentary, 34 min) by Maartje Wegdam and Nienke Huitenga. Premiere @ IFFR 2025 and part of the Immersive competition at the Cannes Film Festival 2025 and nominated for a Golden Calf - Digital Culture at the Netherlands Film Festival. DEEP SOUP (participatory sci-fi short film, 18 min.) by Luna Maurer and Roel Wouters, in premiere in competition at IDFA Doclab 2025. Lesbian Simulator (interactive VR animation, 40 min.) by Iris van der Meule, in premiere in competition at IDFA Doclab 2025.

STUDIO BIARRITZ

Founded by Corine Meijers in 2019, Studio Biarritz is a production house that specializes in audiovisual projects that cross borders. Studio Biarritz develops its own projects, but we also love collaborating with filmmakers, artists and partners from all over the world to produce stories with a lot of heart that are relevant for our trying times. We cross borders in 1) form, technology and subject matter, in 2) collaboration with filmmakers, artists & partners and 3) in audience reach, distributed on multiple platforms.

PROJECTS RELEASED STUDIO BIARRITZ

LESBIAN SIMULATOR (interactive VR animation, 40 min.) by Iris van der Meule, in premiere in competition at IDFA Doclab 2025.

<https://studiobiarritz.nl/project/lesbian-simulator/>

DEEP SOUP (participatory sci-fi short film, 18 min.) by Luna Maurer and Roel Wouters, in premiere in competition at IDFA Doclab 2025.

<https://studiobiarritz.nl/project/deep-soup/>

LACUNA (VR documentary, 33 min) by Maartje Wegdam and Nienke Huitenga Broeren. A Podium Biarritz production in coproduction with Copper Views Film Productions (NL) and Studio Biarritz (NL). In premiere @ IFFR 2025. In competition at the Immersive competition at the Cannes Film Festival 2025 and nominated for a Golden Calf - Digital Culture at the Netherlands Film Festival.

<https://studiobiarritz.nl/project/lacuna/>

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>

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/>

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

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

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

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

www.Symbiosis.show



CASSETTE FOR TIMESCAPES

An Oost and Emmy Oost - co-producers

Cassette for timescapes produces films and XR projects that merge innovative storytelling with social and political engagement. As a leading Belgian company for author-driven documentary and VR, we have successfully co-produced projects with partners in the US, UK, France, Germany, the Netherlands, and Finland. Our films are distributed worldwide, often accompanied by tailored impact strategies.

Recent highlights include *A LONG GOODBYE* by Kate Voet and Victor Maes (Venice Immersive Achievement Award 2025), *THIS IS MY MOMENT* by Lieven Corthouts (DOKFest München 2024), *FLOATING WITH SPIRITS VR* by Juanita Onzaga (Venice 2023, Cannes 2025), and *ALL-IN* by Volkan Üce (CPH:DOX & Hot Docs 2021). Previous co-productions include *SHADOW WORLD* by Johan Grimonprez (Tribeca FF 2016) and *THE IMAGINARY FRIEND VR* by Steye Hallema (Venice FF 2023).

Cassette for timescapes is led by a team of women —An Oost, Magalie Dierick, and Emmy Oost— who have collaborated for over a decade. VR producer An Oost has pitched at VR Days, NewImages, IFFR CineMart, Darkroom, and the Venice Gap-Financing Market, and served on the FIPADOC Smart Jury. In 2019 Magalie Dierick won the EAVE producers network award at When East Meets West. Emmy Oost began her career producing films for internationally acclaimed Belgian filmmaker Johan Grimonprez (*DOUBLE TAKE*, Berlinale & Sundance 2009). She received the Flanders Prize for Film in 2016 and in 2019 founded FilmImpact, an organization promoting social impact through film in Flanders.





LESBIAN
SIMULATOR

| PRESSKIT

ART ET ESSAI

Founded in Montreal in 2012, art et essai has established itself both as a film production company as well as a creative laboratory. Our eclectic editorial line enables us to explore a wide array of film genres and formats, from thrillers to fantasy tales and from traditional fiction to innovative narrative forms. We are committed to producing works with bold form and expressing daring points of view that truly showcase Quebec cinema.

We collaborate with filmmakers with sharp visions with whom we are proud to grow. From Berlin and Sundance to Venice, Locarno and TIFF, our short and feature films have made their mark on the world stage at major festivals, in theatres and on multiple platforms.

Lead by an all-female and non-binary producing team, art et essai has been further diversifying since 2019, developing documentaries, series as well as virtual reality projects. We are driven by the goal of expanding the limits of the collective imagination through stories that are authentic, ambitious and extraordinary.

Our devoted team is also actively involved in the Quebec cultural scene, spearheading initiatives like writing workshops for young creators, collaborating on the CNCT (Conseil national du cinéma et de la production télévisuelle) and serving on the advisory boards of L'inis (National Institute of Image and Sound) and the UPPCQ (Union des producteurs et productrices de cinéma du Québec).

studio
BiARRITZ

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